

THE  
**QUARTERLY**

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

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**Cover:** Mary Barnett exemplifies the elegance she associates with Edwardian Ogdensburg. (*Photograph courtesy of Mary Barnett Burke*)

# Ogdensburg

by Mary Barnett Burke

*Mary Barnett was born in her parents' suite at the Arlington Hotel in Potsdam, a building her father owned at the time. Her delightful childhood memoirs, A Random Scoot (1983), deserve to be better known. One chapter, the second in the book, is reprinted here with Mary Barnett Burke's permission. A Random Scoot is available in local libraries.*

First, there was the matter of getting to Ogdensburg. My father's business kept him away from home a good deal. My mother deeply disliked Potsdam all her life there, and she was never really weaned from her girlhood home and particularly from the strong affection of her father, which was not in any way abnormal but a kinship of similar personalities set against the disappointments and frustrations of her marriage. So often, through the early years of my childhood, did we shuttle back and forth between Potsdam and Ogdensburg—by train, of course—that I daresay my total mileage traveled over the thirty-odd miles separating the two towns would have added up to transatlantic totals. As for the time required, that trip took an entire morning, including the time spent waiting for a train connection in DeKalb Junction at a wretchedly dirty station; in winter it was drafty and very cold unless one could get close to the big potbellied stove in the center of the room.

This is only one memory of departure that comes to mind. Remember "In winter I get up at night / and dress by yellow candlelight"? My cold winter awakenings were lit not by candlelight, to be sure, but by the flame from a pretty, green glass lamp that my mother carried into my dark room. Mother was ready for the trip in familiar travel garb: a skirt of dark, blue broadcloth, fitted around the hips but flaring out to its hem, which just cleared the floor. With it went a plaid, taffeta shirtwaist with a high, boned neckline edged with narrow white ruching. A small watch with a green cloisonne back was pinned to the shirtwaist by a green enameled pin shaped like a fleur de lis. I would have known without noticing, that she wore no other jewelry except her gold wedding ring. For both safety and decorum, a lady did not wear jewels when she traveled. Any rings and



*Three-month old Mary Catherine Barnett with her mother, Helen Brash Barnett. (Photograph courtesy of Mary Barnett Burke)*

brooches that she cared to take with her would be in a small chamois bag, fastened between her breasts by a stout safety pin to the top of her high corset. (The plaid shirtwaist buttoned down the back.) There was a fitted suit coat that matched the blue, broadcloth skirt. In deeply cold weather, there was a sealskin coat, reaching just above the knees, with a hint of bustle at the rear, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and a round matching muff. I don't remember my own costume of the morning. I can guarantee that it was topped by a navy chinchilla reefer, double-breasted, with brass buttons, a black velvet collar, and red flannel lining. Year after year, in futile rebellion, I wore a succession of such reefers: chinchilla in winter, blue serge in spring and fall. There might sometimes be buttons of smoked pearl to replace brass; a shepherd's-check lining in place of the red flannel, as the only variations. A few of my friends were similarly

afflicted by their mothers' ideas of what well-brought-up little girls should wear; but how we coveted bedraggled velvets, bold plaids, and plumed bonnets of the children of less conventional families! I know, too, that I would have been wearing gloves of some sort, which I was forbidden to remove under any circumstances until safe under my grandparents' roof, and that I carried an umbrella. A silk umbrella was de rigueur for traveling. My mother's was usually dark blue, mine maroon; alike except in size, with wooden handles on the smooth ends that were affixed by silver Old English Bs. Unless we set forth on a rainy day, the umbrellas were carefully rolled and tightly encased in matching silk. But, rain or shine, summer or winter, we always had an umbrella in hand. We rode in the dirty day coaches of a "local," which stopped at every station, sitting on scratchy and faded velour seats that gave forth a cloud of smoky dust at the

slightest movement. It seems that there were always a good many children on those trains—fortunate children with no gloves and no umbrella—who kept up an unceasing march between the water cooler at one end of the car with its common drinking glass and the W.C. at the other. I was taught to believe that this convenience was a real sinkhole of filth, but I never knew. Like royalty, I was trained to control both thirst and its resulting needs. Nor could I eat anything on the train. The other children ate constantly from paper bags and cardboard boxes, and it seemed as if they all ate bananas, filling the car with that fruit's peculiarly penetrating, volatile oil. No doubt this accounts for a ridiculous snobbism that to this day I have not entirely shaken. My mother, to be honest, was full of small snobbisms though never guilty of a large one. Her cool disapproval of those grimy, banana-eating children, though never expressed in words, made a deep impression on me. Though I often encountered and later served bananas duly presented at the table, I still feel a faint shudder of revulsion at one eaten in public, even at a picnic; I have a deep, subconscious image of the health-giving fruit as *declassé*!

The train had hardly got under way when it made its first stop at a dingy, little station, set on a flatland, with no house in sight, as lonely as a homesteader's cabin. In summer, one looked out over unbroken fields of waving grass; in winter over wide stretches of drifted snow. The silence was utter, complete; no sound even from the train's engine, until it was broken by the clatter of milk cans being loaded—the only purpose of the stop. Lonely as it was, the station had an odd history. Irving Bacheller, a very popular fiction writer of the day, had been born in the nearby hamlet of Pierrepont. His first great success was a book named after its central character *Eben Holden*. Reading it today, you would be hard put to account for its popularity. It was important, however, and remains on library shelves and reading lists for students of American literature because, along with Westcott's *David Harum*, it pioneered in the use of native, upper New York State material. The people of the area were rightfully proud of this new fame. They wanted to memorialize it, and they hit on the idea of calling the little station Eben Holden. This proved quite a mouthful for the brakemen calling out the station stop and was shortened to "Holden." Then, for what behind-the-scene reason I don't know, this was switched to "Eben." These switches of names provided a good deal of interest for the regular travelers on the line

before everyone settled down to the accustomed cry of "Eben" (pompous, long drawn-out, rising inflection); "Eben" (decisive downward inflection). Even today, given a quick word association test, I might very easily respond to "quiet" by saying "Eben," for never, even alone in a deep woods, did silence seem so profound. Next came Canton (we were still only ten miles from home!) and the stopover at DeKalb Junction. There were two more stops before we reached Ogdensburg, important in my memory only because they are typical illustrations of my habit of connecting sensory impressions of sound and color. Heuvelton was blue, of course, and Rensselaer was green; though the small windswept stations were as nearly colorless as possible. In summer, when a big, old willow on the outskirts of Rensselaer was in leaf, I took great satisfaction from the appropriate color.

As for Ogdensburg itself: In 1749, Abbe Francois Picquet built, at the confluence of the Oswegatchie and the St. Lawrence, a stockaded village where he gathered in the Iroquois families he had converted to Christianity for safety and called the settlement La Presentation. As I remember it, a granite obelisk in his memory stands somewhere on the riverbank. When, after the French and Indian Wars, the French lost all authority in the region, the British took over and fortified the village with the name Fort Presentation and held it during the American Revolution until 1796. The settlement, which had grown up around the fort, was then called Ogdensburg for Samuel Ogden, a New Jersey lawyer who had bought large tracts of land in the area during the period of lively land speculation in northern New York, which followed the war. During the War of 1812, it was an important part of the American line of defense, and in 1813 both fort and village were captured by the British and partly destroyed. In 1818, Ogdensburg was incorporated as a village and in 1868 as a city—a small city, to be sure, and one which has never grown much larger.

In my childhood, in the early twentieth century, there were still many people of French descent living there; most of them lived in a part of the city with which I was never familiar, on one side of the Oswegatchie, where they had their own Catholic church in which the sermons were still preached in French. Perhaps French influence showed in a few large, old, stucco houses near the river, washed in pale pastels and with wrought iron balconies, which looked more like they were in New Orleans than northern New York and were sadly out of place

on a snowy, winter day. In contrast to most northern New York towns, there were few large front lawns. The houses were built close to the street, with walled lawns and gardens at the rear, possibly another indication of European influence. But the atmosphere of the little city as I knew it in the early twentieth century was predominately and definitely English in attitudes and social customs. Most names were of English origin, with a sprinkling of Dutch, Irish, Scottish, and French. There were a few very small industries. A fair number of families were "comfortably off" in the George Apley sense, with money inherited from the days of the land speculation or made from the river commerce in grain and coal and lumber. More were comfortably off in the more literal sense of having incomes adequate to provide comfortable and pleasant homes and social life free for pleasure. There was a modest yacht club, and there were two men's clubs—havens of leather chairs and Oriental rugs, card rooms, and billiard tables, but also with ballrooms where sexes and generations mingled at holiday dances. The golf course and country club came later.

Curiously enough, when I think of Ogdensburg, I think of elegance. If you could see my grandparents' home this would seem like a ridiculous, childish illusion. It was a small white house in a slightly superior neighborhood. Early pictures show it as quite charming architecturally; it was probably built in the early nineteenth century. When I knew it, due no doubt to my grandmother who passionately desired all innovations, a wide veranda curved across the front and along one side. Much too large and heavy for the house, and ruining its early charm, it was undeniably comfortable with its porch swings and rocking chairs. During the summer, there were always great jars of sweet clover or black-eyed Susans, and palm-leaf fans were ready for use, stuck in the shutters of windows that opened there. At the front, on any state or national holiday, hung an American flag—an enormous flag better suited to a public building. Grandmother was always meticulous about correct procedure in hanging and removing the flag, and I had my first lessons in respect for our national emblem when, as her deputy, I was almost smothered in the heavy woolen folds trying to prevent even an inch of the flag from touching the ground.

Inside, the rooms were small and the old ceilings so low that my tall grandfather and his taller sons always gave the impression of ducking a bit as they went through the doorways. There was a "front parlor" with pale, yellow walls, rather formally furnished with carved,

black walnut upholstered in yellow brocade and too lavishly decorated by watercolors done by my mother. Portieres separated it from the "back parlor," which was the family sitting room. The furniture there was a mixture of old pieces that grandmother's best efforts had failed to dislodge: a massive secretary with desk and bookshelves; comfortable chairs and a sofa piled with a conglomeration of embroidered pillows; a marble-topped center table with a fringed, green rep cover falling to the floor; and a large nickel-plated lamp with a white shade for good reading light. All other light in the house was supplied by gas, which charmed me. I had been carefully warned never to touch the fixtures, but I always tried to be on hand when they were lit, bemused by the Bunsen burners that first glowed and then burst into exciting incandescence. The back parlor led into the dining room, then into the kitchen and a complex of summer kitchen, laundry, and woodshed strung out at the rear. There were only four bedrooms and one bathroom—this was disproportionately spacious since it had been installed in a former bedroom. I sometimes think that this was my grandmother's favorite room because it represented progress. The fixtures were gleaming and of the latest design. Towels hung from carved walnut racks attached to glass-covered needlepoint panels (one red and white, one blue and white, and both embellished through the designs with tiny opalescent beads). These towel racks disappeared soon. So did needlepoint chair covers. Grandmother's battle cry of "off with the old and on with the new" led to violently grained oak in the dining room and brass beds in the bedrooms as rapidly as possible. I suspect that grandfather occasionally put his foot down. Otherwise, the old Boston rocker belonging to his old home, and in which he told me his mother had often tied him for safety when she was busy with her large family, would never have survived in the back parlor. When the house was dismantled after grandmother's death, the rocker still remained there; in compliance with a promise I had once exacted from my grandmother, it was given to me to cherish.

At the sides and front of the house were small strips of lawn. At one side a walk led to a side porch dripping with morning glories; then came the service entrance and on through there a green-painted iron fence with a gate led to a fairly large back lawn, fenced in on three sides by high, wood fences and edged with bushes. It was typical of grandmother's clever French frugality that most of the shrubs and small trees did double duty; they were chosen to be



*Turn-of-the-century Ogdensburg elegance: the Spratt House on Washington Street in 1900. (Photograph courtesy of the Ogdensburg Public Library)*

both decorative and useful. One entire row of bushes bore fine raspberries, their canes concealed by double rows of peonies and lemon lilies. The small trees produced not only leafy shade but cherries and plums. A big, snow apple tree provided a central area of deep shade for lawn furniture and cushions. Planted artfully among the flower borders were wax beans, lettuce, tomato plants, mint and lavender. The total effect was charming; the total results practical. That was grandmother! Near the street was an old-fashioned rock garden with varieties of ferns, forget-me-nots, pansies, and bleeding heart. (I never admired this particularly, but an older generation must have. Part of the obituary that appeared in Ogdensburg papers after grandmother's death mentioned it.) Along the property line near the street grew a summer-long procession of beautiful roses. Grandmother was particularly proud of her deep red Jacqueminots. Each morning when they were in bloom, she reached up with a kiss and a pretty smile to put one in grandfather's buttonhole as he left for the office, and many of this friends often stopped by for a daily boutonniere.

It was a pleasant and comfortable background of middle-class life in a small city fifty-odd years ago, but where was there any elegance?

Of course, elegance was in the air of the Edwardian days and somehow spread in some small measure to our remote little communities. Translated to my background, it meant strict conventionality of conduct and fairly elaborate sense of form. Classless we Americans like to think ourselves, and,

indeed, we are becoming more so each year, but class distinctions were rigid in a place like Ogdensburg and surprisingly so even in the smaller towns. Domestic help was plentiful and grateful and knew its place. Before the standardizing influence of Seventh Avenue and drip-dry materials, there was an incredible difference between the clothes worn by different classes of women. The break came at the point where a woman was mistress—or servant or worker on farm or in factory; now from a short distance, it would be hard to distinguish one from the other. Poor, decent women wore cheap homemade cotton dresses or sleazy woolens, with one good, black silk saved for Sundays—or shroud. On an ascending scale of wealth, the more fortunate wore elaborate clothes from the skin out; clothes which were custom made and which required a vast amount of time for their care or just for getting in and out of them. For a day in the life of such very moderately well-to-do women as my mother and grandmother, all this might be required: a fine lisle undergarment to cushion the impact of a heavy corset; ruffled underdrawers reaching to the knees; a short, ruffled petticoat of the same length; a long matching ruffled petticoat, reaching almost to the floor; and a lace-trimmed corset cover. These were made usually of a very fine cambric or nainsook, known as "wedding-ring" fabrics because they were sufficiently fine and delicate to be pulled by the yard through the circumference of a wedding ring. They were trimmed by rows and rows of fine lace insertion, "whipped in" by hand with stitches so



*Ford Street in Ogdensburg near the Opera House. The trolley line is being shovelled; note the trolley car at right. In the center is Hill's Bakery, a place fondly remembered by Mrs. Burke. (Photograph courtesy of the Ogdensburg Public Library)*

small as to be almost invisible, and by rows of beading in which pale pink or blue ribbons were run. Consider the time involved in hand laundry and weaving in and out of ribbons before the ritual of clothing oneself! Then there was long hair that must receive 100 brush strokes night and morning to keep it glossy, and must be coiled and knotted and tortured into a pompadour and pinned in place. A comparatively simple dress sufficed for mornings at home, but no dresses were really simple then. They were tucked and ruffled and trimmed with braid. White ruchings broke the severity of high collars and heavy wool braid was sewed around the bottom of skirts to protect them from pavements. Unless one were entertaining or going out in the evening, a dress donned in mid-afternoon did for the rest of the day. Going out to shop usually demanded a suit; of wool in winter, of linen or pongee in the summer. Each street outfit required a suitable hat and an assortment of proper hat pins to anchor it. Gowns for afternoon teas and receptions and evening gowns were triumphs of overornamentation. Perhaps my daugh-

ters can tolerate a description of two evening gowns of my mother's which I particularly liked. One was made of heavy, very stiff, black moiré silk, with rows of black velvet leaves appliqued around the hemline, ruffles of black mousseline de soie encircling the décolletage and a large cerise bow on one shoulder. With this, she poised a stiffly wired, point lace butterfly in her hat. The other was of some soft gray material, with a simple, flowing skirt over a heavy, silk underskirt. The entire bodice consisted of rows of narrow velvet tabs, each ornamented with a circlet of pale green or turquoise blue velvet with a rhinestone set in each center. As if this were not enough, from beneath the tabs fell a cascade of narrow velvet ribbons in the same blue and green. An aigrette in her hair topped this one! Between the putting on and taking off of these various outfits came an assortment of peignoirs, long ones or short ones known as dressing sacques, and very charming trifles they were of fluted dimity or soft albatross, lace trimmed and ribbon tied. Then there were "combing jackets," short utilitarian

garments to be slipped on if one's hair needed adjustment when time was too short to remove a dress. And, when night came, there came with it an elaborate nightgown that matched the day's underclothing, usually with long, full sleeves. If you will consider again that I am describing parts of a wardrobe of people who lived simply . . . The dots mean that words fail, indeed. This preoccupation with the details of clothing is pertinent here because I was part of the feminine side of a household that was very much concerned with them. In Ogdensburg, I spent most of my time with the grown-ups of the family, since I knew very few children. I did, for a time, attend a small private kindergarten where French was taught by songs and games. There I feared and dreaded, among strange children and with one brighteyed, a spiteful nun named Sister Eudoxia who boxed our ears for any small deviation from discipline. (Yes, that mnemonic connection of sounds is vividly accurate.) I also had a strange experience in social customs. "Nice" Ogdensburg children were taught dancing by an elderly German who

was always called Professor Bowen. When he learned that my mother and I were to be in Ogdensburg for several months, he asked that I be brought to one of his classes so that he could say that he had taught three generations of the ladies of our family. I looked forward joyously to this experience, and with considerable confidence. Mother's younger brother, my much-loved Uncle Bill, and his friends had amused themselves during college vacations by teaching me to dance. I was a lively two-stepper and could manage a waltz; I was expected to shine among Professor Bowen's students. The first blow fell when I saw the apparition that was Professor Bowen. He was tiny, bent, shriveled and, in my still horrified memory, looked a thousand years old. He wore a sort of modified court costume. His coat I can't remember, because my gaze was riveted on the lower part of his apparel: black satin knee breeches, white silk stockings, patent leather pumps with silver buckles. We were lined up, boys on one side and girls on the other, to come forward to make our bows and curtsies. Then, we took our places for a minuet! No one had thought to prepare me for this; it was quite unfamiliar to me, and, in my sensitive child's pride at failing among barely suppressed snickers from the class, I was completely undone. The minuet, designed to teach grace and dignity, had the most opposite effect on me. No doubt, this opening number was followed by modern ballroom dances. I never knew. The fancy two-stepper stubbornly and sullenly refused to take the floor again, and the three generations of ladies left with what grace they could. I also was subjected to a long round of "calls." I hated these, but, at least long practice had taught me how to conduct myself: to make my curtsy, seat myself (all too often on slippery horsehair), and remain entirely mute, with no wiggling, while slivers of a lovely summer sun showed through heavily curtained windows—a layer of lace under sweeping folds of velvet or velours. We made the rounds of grandmother's older sisters and elderly cousins and a long list of mother's girlhood friends, whom I had been taught to call "aunt." Once, just once, I piped up to dispute some small statement made by my mother. Old Mrs. Burt, the object of our call that day, turned on me fiercely: "Mary, always remember that if your mother says black is white, then black *is* white." That was my last contribution to conversation on the calling circuit.

To finish off the inventory of clothing, this is what I wore: no doubt much time and thought went into dressing me attractively and properly—with emphasis on properly. But I remember

my clothes of those days as a dismal procession of Anderson gingham, chambrays, linens, or navy serge almost like uniforms; there were always three box pleats, back and front, and a patent leather belt. For dress-up wear, there was another procession, this made up of dotted swiss or dimity, trimmed with modest bits of lace or embroidery and worn over a pink or blue China silk slip, with sash and hair ribbons to match the slip. My hats had turned-up brims, like a chopping bowl; they were beaver or felt for winter, leghorn for summer, with ribbon or velvet streamers down the back, an occasional nosegay of field flowers or rosebuds, and an irritating elastic band under my chin. My shoes were a severe trial. One bright spot is the memory of two extraordinary pairs I owned when I was very young: black patent leather vamps with buttoned uppers of soft kid, one of



Mary Gerard Brash, Mary Barnett's Ogdensburg grandmother. (Photograph courtesy of Mary Barnett Burke)

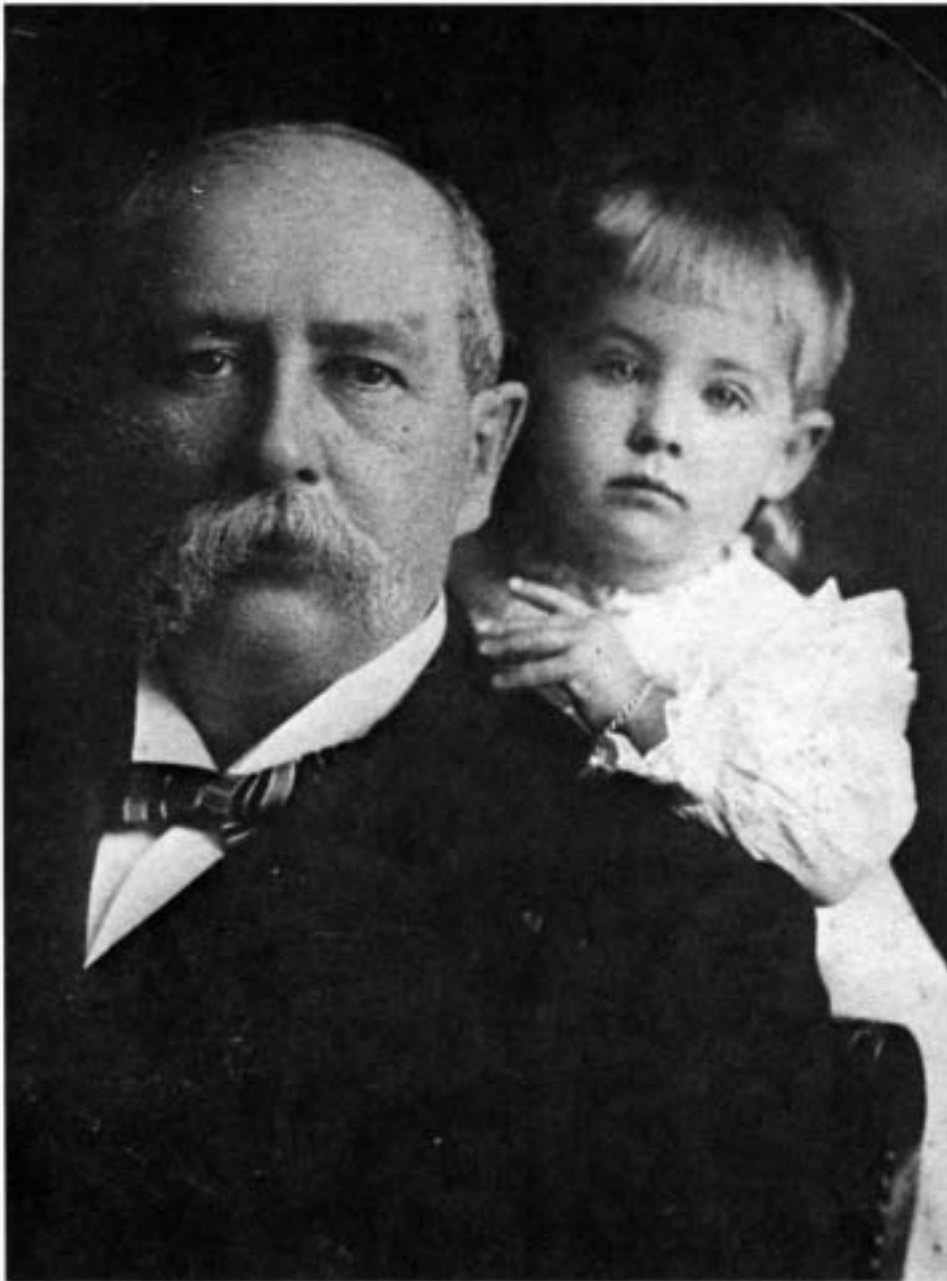
blue and one of pink. As soon as these were removed, the vamps were rubbed with vaseline to keep them supple, and the tops were cleaned with pink or blue powder that came from Cammeyers' in round wooden boxes. All my shoes came from Cammeyers' in New York, which made a speciality of "orthopedic shoes for growing feet." Subsequent proof of Cammeyer or heredity exists in my strong, old, peasant feet today, but I did once dislike the unknown gentlemen. As soon as parental punches indicated that my toes were coming to near the end of any current pair of shoes, I had to stand on a Cammeyer chart while an outline of my feet was drawn; my new shoes were promptly ordered. But, like my other clothes, the shoes all looked alike: patent leather

with black cloth tops, sturdy calfskin or white leather, with difficult-to-manage buttons, for both summer or winter. In only two ways did my mother flout convention in dressing me. I wore socks, long before other nice little girls had been liberated from long-ribbed stockings. This was considered bold and immodest by some of my grandmother's friends. One formidable old lady, when she took us for a summer airing in her carriage, insisted on covering my five- or six-year-old shame with a scratchy laprobe and I hated her. And I had bloomers to match all my "everyday" dresses, so that I might fall down or even try to somersault without the dangerous possibility of showing panties. Panties I did have and ruffled petticoats, but these were to be worn on dress occasions when even the thought of running or turning a somersault was ruled out.

There were, of course, some pleasant experiences that I shared with my mother and grandmother, but even these were most often on the decorous side. The one I loved was a walk uptown to Hill's. Hill was a fancy baker and caterer. The ground floor of his establishment contained glass cases of cakes and cookies. Beyond those rose a stately stairway with two landings, the second of which was partly enclosed by a long curtain of bamboo and colored beads. In the room upstairs, the walls were hung with red brocade, and the light fixtures dripped crystal. The round tables were covered in the same white damask used in a private dining room. There one might sit down in quiet and be served rich, French ice cream or maple parfait, or water ices made with genuine fruit juices, accompanied by a piece of any kind of cake du jour. It was minor elegance, to be sure, elegance nonetheless in contrast to a Coke machine!

There was a touch of elegance in the invariable quiet and order that pervaded my grandparents' home. Everything moved smoothly. Meals were occasions of dignity.

Though the menus were never elaborate, the food was excellent and the service flawless. At all family meals the white damask cloth and napkins, ironed while dripping wet, were stiff and shining. Only at ladies' luncheon parties did I ever see doilies, lace or embroidered linen, used on the bare table. Even breakfast was rather formal, this by decree of my grandfather. All members of the family were required to sit down to the table together punctually and well groomed and dressed. Severe illness provided the only excuse for disobeying this rule. There was some grumbling embarrassment on the part of my young uncle who might have been dancing late the



*Mary Barnett and her adored grandfather, George William Brash of Ogdensburg. (Photograph courtesy of Mary Barnett Burke)*

night before with college houseguests. Grandfather only remarked with unmoved serenity that anyone who cared to undress after breakfast and waste a valuable day in bed was quite free to do so!

For the mechanical details that made possible this limited air of elegance on a limited income, my grandmother deserved all the credit. Grandmother was small, with a prettily rounded figure, porcelain skin, light blue eyes, and the curly auburn hair of the Norman French. She concealed a shrewd mind and deadly efficiency under an almost too coquettish manner. Grandfather worshipped her and paid her charming attentions like an armful of American Beauty roses on each

wedding anniversary—one rose for each year of their married life. She was a strict mistress who kept her servants for year after year. The second maid had been dispensed with after the family had grown up, and all through my childhood there was only Maggie to do all the work, including the laundry. In those days, I never saw my grandmother do any housework at all, but, under her all-knowing and all-seeing eyes, Maggie got it done—and seemed happy and devoted. There were all sorts of clever economies. No scrap of fat was ever thrown out, but it was used instead to make soap for kitchen and laundry. This, along with the scented soap purchased for bathroom use, was spread uncovered on the floor

of an upstairs storeroom long enough to harden it well and thus make it last longer. No scrap of soap was ever wasted either. In some way, it was melted and mixed with a small amount of kerosene to make a marvelous cleanser for tubs and sinks. No bit of fruit ever spoiled, but it went into delicious jellies and preserves. Because it was a day of coal ranges in the kitchen, a pot au feu always simmered on the back of the stove to absorb odd bones and vegetables. Flour and sugar were bought thriftily by the barrel, coffee beans (ground freshly before brewing) by the bag, etc., etc., probably with many other economies that escaped my young eye. I sometimes went to market with grandmother and remember that Compeau, the butcher, eyed her with mingled respect and alarm. In turn, she treated him with an effective combination of condescension and subtle flattery. He stood ankle deep in the sawdust of his shop behind his big, wooden block and produced his meats for inspection until grandmother had found just what she wanted at the price she knew to be fair and ordered it delivered. She had a fine sense of style, too, and a discriminating eye for fabrics. I enjoyed her company, for she could be as gay as a child. She sang French songs to me in a clear little contralto. She made the loveliest doll clothes a small girl could desire. She was charming; she was practical; she read very seldom, and I think never had an abstract thought in her head. I came to think, after I was grown up, that her family never entirely appreciated how much they owed her, though they were a dutiful family, for in her slightly domineering ways and her unflagging determination, she often suffered the common defect of her virtues and antagonized her children.

Perhaps this happened to some extent because of the marked difference between her personality and my grandfather's. For him everyone, including his children, felt an affection tinged with awe and reverence. He was tall and broad shouldered but very fine boned, with the most beautiful hands I have ever seen on a man, with well-rounded but slim and tapering fingers. My place at the table was usually next to his, and my table manners were always improved when I watched the quiet economy of movement with which those hands manipulated knife and fork. A sense of humor was evident in the sparkle of his warm, brown eyes, but his dignity was never relaxed for a moment. From what source in a simple background he had drawn his personality, he was in all ways what was once known as a "born gentleman"; and, with no effort and no pretension, he left the stamp of his personality on everyone



associated with him. And this was part of the small elegance.

For me, he left many delightful memories.

He always wore formal black and gray striped trousers and always a stiff, white shirt with bat-winged collar; on Sundays, he wore tailored morning coat and top hat; for office wear, he donned a short, dark sack coat like an informal morning coat, with a derby or panama. After breakfast he moved with his characteristic deliberation to the hall for his hat and his goldheaded ebony cane. I was allowed to walk a block with him. Then, with greatest courtesy, he removed his hat, bent down to kiss me, and sent me scampering home.

I was always conscious of the respect with which his many men friends treated him; the irascible and rather frightening George Hall, with a very low boiling point and a great deal of money (owner of the house of Parish's Fancy, now the Remington Museum), who was calm and almost deferential to my grandfather's simple dignity; white-haired Mr. Dean, connected with the Silver Burdette Publishing Company, who came to discuss business with grandfather and always brought me newly published primers from which I *think* I learned to read (I know I could read before I went to school, but to my extreme annoyance can't remember how); and men he encountered on the street or in his office. I am uncertain just how to define his business. His office was located in one of the city's very old buildings with thick walls of the native gray stone and worn stone steps leading to a door with a round, arched top. He handled local, transcontinental, and transoceanic arrangements both for passenger travel and for freight. At that time, northern New York, like many other parts of the east, was a tangle of short independently owned railroad lines that were gradually becoming merged with the larger, powerful lines like the New York Central. There was a branch of the Rutland coming into Ogdensburg. There was the Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg. There was the Ogdensburg & Champlain. (Mr. Averell, a family friend, was president and chief owner of this last; when E.H. Harriman married Mary Averell he acquired both a bride and a railroad, and Averell Harriman acquired his first name.) Grandfather's office thus had to make out long and complicated tickets for a trip of any length and handled mileage books for specific use on each line. He also handled freight and steamship lines with the Canadian Pacific. I was often dropped off in his office while my mother and grandmother shopped or went to Miss Blount,

their dressmaker, for fittings. I spent my time in what must have been a director's board room in back of the office; in it was a long, mahogany table surrounded by leather upholstered armchairs. It was never boring, for I was supplied with maps and travel circulars illustrated by pictures of the unbelievable elegance of Pullmans and dining cars and ocean liners. I had already learned how mileage books worked from my short travels with mother. All commercial travelers or people using the railroads regularly bought these books, investing five, ten, or fifteen dollars in one and thereby decreasing the per-mile cost of travel. Inside the book was a long strip of paper, marked off by miles, from which the conductor tore the requisite piece for each destination. I even learned to read timetables, though I am stupid about them today. Once in a while I went with grandfather by trolley across the city when he made short inspection visits to the office of the orphanage or the city hospital across the street on both of whose boards he served. It stood me in good stead when I sat in the hospital waiting room, with the verdict of a tonsillectomy hanging over me, to see a large, framed picture of my grandfather hanging on the wall; no place could be too bad if it was in any way connected with him.

He took me with him when he went to vote for Teddy Roosevelt. (This must have been in 1904, when I was six years old.) His polling place was in Kelly's neighborhood grocery, not too many blocks from the house. As we walked along, my hand in his, he talked to me as one adult to another, about the seriousness of what he was about to do. Of course, I understood little of what he said, but the sacred obligation was clear, nevertheless. He took me into the temporary canvas voting booth with him, where a candle stuck in a saucer stood on the high bookkeeper's desk set up for marking ballots. I stood in respectful silence, my eyes on the flickering candle, feeling as if I was in church. The mood passed quickly enough when we emerged and I was treated to a striped bag filled with horehound drops. The memory remains vivid. Perhaps the family interest in political science is no accident!

When I think of my grandfather I paraphrase an Old Testament line to read: "And his ways were ways of pleasantness and all his paths were peace." For it was only this side of his life that he showed to me. In him were blended in remarkable fashion the stern and stubborn morality of his Calvinist Scot ancestors and a gentleness and tenderness all his own. I

believe that when a thoroughly masculine man *is* gentle and *is* tender, he is so to a degree never achieved by a woman. Again, I was a lucky child to have known and remembered him.

I lost him while I was still quite young.

I understood nothing of the illness that was changing my grandfather and causing sadness through the house. But a child remembers all too well much that she cannot understand. I remember sitting on the floor playing with paper dolls, while mother and grandmother hovered over the big chair in the back parlor where grandfather was sitting, struggling with pencil and paper; I remember my startled fear and horror when tears began to stream down his face. It was deeply disturbing to see him led away to his own room, but I said nothing and no one explained anything to me. My mother was astonished when, long afterward, I recalled this incident to her, and it was only then that she explained it to me. My grandfather had been suffering a series of attacks now called "cerebral vascular accidents," which temporarily affected first one part of his nervous and motor system and then another. On the day I so unhappily remembered, he was beset by a form of aphasia that forced him to say everything in reverse, even though he knew quite well that he was doing so. In an effort to combat this, he had been trying to write the stations on the Rutland Railroad line, beginning at Malone, some fifty miles distant, and working toward Ogdensburg. He could not do it. Each time, his twisted brain centers forced him to begin at Ogdensburg and go toward Malone. It was then that the weeping began.

Then came a dark, rainy April morning, just after my eighth birthday when, directly after a hasty breakfast, I was sent across the street to spend the day with mother's friend, "Aunt" Edith. I loved Aunt Edith and had spent many pleasant days with her, but in some way I knew this was different. I sat quietly with my books beside a bay window from which I could see my grandparents' house. I saw a strange dark man come out the front door and hang beside it a swag of black crepe and flowers. I was old enough to know that this meant a death in the house, and though no one had in any way prepared me for it, I knew at once that it was my grandfather who was dead. Aunt Edith watched me covertly, in sympathy and no doubt in perplexity as to what she should say to me. Still quietly sitting by the window, deep in my heart I said good-bye to my grandfather and to Ogdensburg as I had known it. I also said good-bye in part to my childhood. Of neither of

Scenes from Greene Street, site of the Brash home. (Photographs courtesy of the Ogdensburg Public Library)



*The old Clark house, 1898.*



*Part of Greene Street in 1899.*



*More of 1899 Greene Street, with the Universalist Church at the right.*

these was I really conscious. I was conscious only of a cold fury of betrayal at being shut out by my family. Inchoate as my feelings were, they led to a very firm resolve: very well, if that was as they wanted it, I would pretend I saw and knew nothing. It was not hard to keep from crying. I was too hurt and too angry to cry. I went on reading, seeing from the corner of my eye Aunt Edith's relief when she thought, as I meant her to think, that I had seen or understood nothing. It is one of the curious tricks that memory can play that, while I remember this so vividly, I have no memory at all of what happened next. Did I see my grandfather in his coffin; attend his funeral? I have no idea.

One thing my two very different grandparents had in common: they loved me; loved me just as I was, with an undemanding love that gave all and asked nothing. With them, I was always at ease. As I was growing up, I often made short visits to my grandmother, especially during the holidays. I accumulated a modest circle of Ogdensburg beaux and automobiles made the distance between there and my home shorter and shorter. It was fun to get ready for a dance with grandmother chattering in the background. She loved to see young people having a good time, and she told me happily of her conquests (obviously much greater than mine!) and what kind of dresses *she* had worn at the Century Club in *her* day. She waved me off with the same gay flutter that had sent us off on the old river excursions of my childhood.

Grandmother lived out a long widowhood and the death of her adored older son with gallantry. I was married and the mother of three great-grandchildren for her when she died at my mother's home at eighty-three. An easy death, after a long life, brought no poignant sorrow. After the burial, I went into the little old house with one of my aunts; it was an orderly little house but cold because it had been shut up for the winter. Suddenly, without warning, I, not a habitual weeper, burst into a torrent of tears. It was only then that full comprehension, welling up from my subconscious, taught me what the early years of warmth and unquestioning affection can mean to a little child: the true meaning of a home always welcoming me just because I was *me*.

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#### **About the Author:**

A Potsdam native and Wellesley graduate, Mary Barnett Burke lived in Vermont for many years; she now lives in New Jersey.



*Franklin Bishop conducted a performance of "The Mikado" in 1924. (Photograph courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum)*

## A History of the Crane School of Music

*by Ralph Wakefield*

*To help commemorate the centennial of the Crane School of Music, The Quarterly presents the second in a four-part series on the history of Crane.*

### PART II

Marie Schuette had been engaged to assume Julia Crane's teaching duties for the 1923-24 academic year while the latter was on leave of absence. Julia Crane had planned to continue her administrative duties and to rest and travel. Upon Miss Crane's unexpected death, Marie Schuette was appointed Head of the Normal School's music department as well as Principal of the Crane Normal Institute.

The new principal, born in 1885 in Green Bay, Wisconsin, was graduated from Oshkosh State Normal School in 1906 with a two-year diploma in German. Six years later she entered the Crane Normal Institute of Music and graduated in 1914. Teaching positions in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Oregon followed. During the academic

year 1922-23, she studied at Teachers College, Columbia University, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree.

The most critical problem facing the Crane Institute after the death of its founder and owner was its continuation as a corporate enterprise. Julia Crane had struggled with financial problems for many years. During the decade preceding her death, she maintained a balance between income and expenditures by drawing no salary and by charging no rent for the Institute's building and equipment.

As early as 1909, overtures had been made by Miss Crane to Syracuse University for sale of the Institute. Later, she attempted to interest the Juilliard Foundation. That foundation's response was apparently negative although no correspondence concerning this matter

has been located.

Miss Crane appeared before the local board of the Normal School in the winter preceding her death; she proposed to the members of the board that they should convince the legislature of the State of New York to purchase the Crane Institute. The board assented and drafted a resolution for presentation to the legislature "asking for an appropriation of \$20,000 for the purchase of the Crane Normal Institute of Music for the purpose of incorporating it with the Normal School under State control, and also an annual item of \$17,500 for the carrying on of the work."<sup>1</sup> The bill was defeated.

In her will Julia Crane dealt with the fate of her Institute. She stipulated that the school be offered first to the State of New York, and then to any

private purchaser who might wish to carry on the work as a private school. The will provided that the money paid for the plant and equipment was to go into a trust fund for the benefit of her sisters.<sup>2</sup> After their deaths the residue of the estate was to be used to establish scholarships for students in the school.<sup>3</sup> The executrix of the will was empowered to continue the Crane Normal Institute of Music for two years, pending negotiations for its sale, in order to give all students enrolled an opportunity to complete the course.

After the failure of legislation in 1923, a campaign was launched to convince the legislature to act favorably. Again in 1924, the bill was introduced; but, again, it failed to pass.

Crane alumni had organized to assist in the battle.

On January 18, 1924, a meeting of Crane graduates living in or near Potsdam was held for the purpose of forming an association. The business of the group centered upon a tribute to Miss Crane, the sale of the Institute and scheduling a Crane Alumni Meeting during commencement week. The first annual meeting of the Alumni Association of the

Crane Normal Institute of Music was held June 14, 1924, in the Normal School.

Through the next few years the association was strengthened by united efforts in establishing a library as a memorial to Miss Crane, providing funds for the purchase of stock in the Crane Normal Institute of Music, Inc. (3 shares), and sharing in efforts to bring about the sale of the Institute to the State of New York and in expanding their active membership. In 1929 the name of the organization was changed to the Crane Alumni Association with sectional groups as chapters.<sup>4</sup>

The continuation of the Crane Institute was also a matter of great concern to local citizens, and several leaders of the community stepped in to save the school. A letter of 9 May 1924 was sent out, which

proposed to incorporate the Crane Normal Institute of Music with a capital stock of \$20,000, subscriptions to which are now being solicited. It is desired that there be prompt and generous response to the request for subscriptions. . . .

In connection with this move-

ment, there will be held at the Potsdam Club on Tuesday evening, May 20th, 1924, a public dinner, under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce and the Twentieth Century Club, to which all friends of the school are invited. There will be good speakers and good music and at that time we hope to be able to announce the successful completion of plans for the perpetuation of the Crane Normal Institute of Music.<sup>5</sup>

On 23 June 1924, Attorney Frank L. Cubley requested approval for certification for incorporation from the Commissioner of Education. Mr. Cubley informed the Commissioner that "a company of businessmen of Potsdam are ready to subscribe the necessary amount to form a corporation and maintain the school." The requested certificate was returned to Mr. Cubley on 3 July 1924, approved by the Board of Regents.

The corporation was formed with Charles H. Sisson as President.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Sisson signed the contract to purchase the property and equipment of the Crane Normal Institute of Music on 1 August 1924. The deed and bill of sale were presented to the officers of the corporation on 1 January 1925. Exactly one year later the mortgage was paid in full. The sum of eleven thousand dollars was paid for the property; four thousand for furnishings, supplies and equipment. The continuation of the Institute was assured for the immediate future.

The corporation continued the struggle for sale of the school to the State of New York. Some delay was caused by a disagreement between the corporation and Dr. R.T. Congdon, the principal of the Normal School. Congdon wanted all details concerning faculty and clerical personnel resolved prior to submission of another bill to the legislature. The corporation wished to sell the school first and then work out details.

The next effort failed: the legislature, once again, refused to pass the bill. The campaign was intensified. Mr. Cubley went to Albany for meetings with the Commissioner of Education and the Board of Regents. The Crane Alumni Association staged a campaign for letters to legislators.

Finally, in 1926, the bill to purchase the Crane Institute was passed by the legislature. Governor Fenton signed the legislation on 13 May 1926. Joint action by the local Board of Visitors of the Potsdam Normal School and the New York State Department of Education was required to carry out the terms of the law.<sup>7</sup> On 26 July the Crane Normal Institute of Music became the



*The Grant house on Elm Street was purchased in 1930 and converted to teaching studios and practice rooms. (Photograph courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum)*

Crane Department of Music of the State Normal School at Potsdam, New York. Tuition was set at \$100 per year. The faculty positions allotted included one Head of Department and six assistants. Enrolled students numbered one hundred and ten.

During these three years of legal uncertainty, important developments in the history of Crane took place. For the academic year 1924-25 the roster of the music faculty included Marie Schuette, Harriet Crane Bryant, Edith Austin, Franklin Bishop, Ellen Snyder Morgan, Frank Merrill Cram, Helen Hosmer, Ora Spencer (Fuller), Mary A. LaSon and Clara Beaudry. Another member was James Garfield, a Potsdam resident and Normal School graduate of 1905 who had been a teacher of science and history and a principal of schools in Michigan, and also a well-traveled performing musician. Mr. Garfield's service began as a part-time teacher who helped organize bands in 1923 and became conductor in 1925. He also taught instrumental lessons. Remuneration for the latter came from lesson fees paid by students. He stayed till 1939.<sup>8</sup>

A very significant development in curriculum occurred in 1924 and 1925. The State Department of Education approved for the first time a teacher training curriculum for special subjects, including music, in June 1924. It was to be put into effect in September of that year.

The Crane course for music supervisors had been a two-year program, and certification of graduates was based solely upon the diploma. The new state mandate required an increase of nineteen hours of instruction which meant that the course of study had to be increased from two to three years. Unfortunately, Dr. Congdon did not receive official notice of the required change for certification of music teachers until January of 1925.

The class that entered the Crane Institute in 1925 was the first to enter the new three-year course and the last to enter the Crane Normal Institute of Music. Graduates of 1927 were the first to receive diplomas from the Crane Department of Music of the Potsdam State Normal School.

Nineteen twenty-five was a special year for another reason. The Crane Alumni Association, using interest on a thousand dollar memorial fund along with Miss Crane's personal library, founded the Julia E. Crane Memorial Library. For many years the Crane collection was housed on the third floor of the Normal School building. Faculty served as advisors; some students volunteered as caretakers, others were paid by government funds. It was not until 1947 that Phyllis Corbin was hired as



*Helen M. Hosmer, Marie A. Schuette, and Charles N. Lanphere. (Photograph courtesy of Ralph Wakefield)*

the first librarian for the music collection, and the Crane Memorial Library became a division of the libraries of Potsdam College.

Significant also to the future of the school was the development of Helen Hosmer's career. She continued her education by attending the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau during the summer of 1925. Her enduring friendship with Mlle. Nadia Boulanger which began then was to have important benefits for Crane. Another significant professional association began in 1926-27 when Miss Hosmer enrolled at Teachers College, Columbia University, to earn her baccalaureate degree. Her experiences during the following seven years at "TC," particularly those connected with the integration of the arts, were to affect the philosophy and curriculum of Crane for the next half century.<sup>9</sup>

By 1928 Dr. Congdon was able to report to the Board that

The music supervisor's course has been making definite advancement during the last two or three years. Last year, 1927, and again this year we have required all candidates for admission to the course to submit to an examination usually coming to Potsdam for this purpose to show conclusively that they have real musical ability. A considerable number were refused admission last year. Apparently it will be necessary to refuse admission to a large number this year. The registrations in the Crane course are just about twice what they were when the State took over the work.

The special requirements for music students included the following:

Applicants for Admission to the CRANE MUSIC SUPERVISORS COURSE must have natural musical ability. They must be able to play the piano sufficiently well to accompany at sight a song of moderate difficulty. Although no previous training in voice or upon a musical instrument is required for entrance, a test is given each applicant to determine the degree of proficiency along both of these lines.<sup>10</sup>

Two other new departures of the 1920's were performances of Crane groups off campus and off-campus student teaching. Helen Hosmer, conductor of the Phoenix Club, took that group in October 1925 to Lake Placid to demonstrate and stimulate better choral singing in the northern part of the state. Four years later this same women's group entered a competition in New York City sponsored by the New York State Federation of Music Clubs. They brought home the first prize.

The Lake Placid Club Educational Foundation, which had sponsored the 1925 concert, tried to convince principals of North Country schools to schedule music once a week for ten weeks. Miss Schuette pledged the support of the Crane Institute by supplying student teachers for this venture. Assignments for a day or part of a day become possible in nearby public schools for students enrolled in both the music supervisors and special music teachers curricula.



*The Special Music Teachers' Chorus in 1924. Erva Skinner is the conductor, Helen Hewitt the organist. (Photograph courtesy of Ralph Wakefield. Special thanks to Stephen Douglass of The Snap Shop)*

For the academic year 1929-30, Marie Schuette was granted a sabbatical leave for study at the University of Southern California. Helen Hosmer took her place as administrator. That year the admissions goal for Crane was forty students. Eighty applications were received; fifty students were accepted.

Shortage of space in the Normal School had been a problem for many years. Elementary grades as well as the high school were housed there. Some space for Normal School purposes became available when the high

school moved to its own building on Leroy Street. But space was lost when the old south or Stowell Annex and the Crane Institute's original frame building were razed to make way for a new campus school.

The Crane Department was allotted space on the North end of the third floor of the main Normal building, and, by 1930, Dr. Congdon reported that space in the old Cook Annex was rearranged. "This has made more room for the Crane Department of Music although two of the principal recitation rooms were still so ill-lighted because

of the proximity of the heating plant that they should not be used for school purposes. We are still obliged to use corridors for study rooms and we have recently moved our vocal teachers into the dismal basement of the Universalist Church."<sup>11</sup>

Marie Schuette had found administrative work burdensome. She had originally come to Potsdam to take over Julia Crane's teaching assignments temporarily. Upon her return to Potsdam from California in 1930, she, together with Dr. Congdon and Helen Hosmer, agreed that the latter should



*Franklin Bishop conducted the 1925-26 Senior chorus. (Photograph courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum)*

be appointed Director. Marie Schuette then chaired the areas of music methods and materials, practicum and supervision.

The budget of New York State in 1930 included an appropriation of \$375,000 for construction of a school of practice and for the purchase of the Crane lot on Main Street and the Grant property on Elm Street. The Grant house was converted to teaching studios and practice rooms and continued in use for over thirty years.

Staff changes occurred. Harriet Crane Bryant retired, ending a tenure of thirty-five years. She had been a close professional associate of her sister Julia since the first decade of the Crane Institute. Among new appointees was Charles N. Lanphere, the Crane Department's first piano teacher and head of piano instruction for a decade. Lanphere, a native of the Harrisville, New York, area, was a pupil of Hawthorne in the Normal Conservatory. He had studied abroad with piano teachers in Oxford, England, and Dresden, Germany, and had graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music as well as the Virgil Piano School in New York City. He also studied abroad with Leschetizky, the piano teacher with whom Hawthorne and Paderewski had studied.

Lanphere, who was known to students as "Professor," was widely traveled; he had taught in Boston, New York City, Chicago, Concord, Portland (Maine) and Minneapolis. In addition he had toured with his lecture on musical instruments of the Bible, "The First Ten Thousand Years of Music." For use in the lecture he had acquired or had constructed a collection of instruments. Those fabricated were patterned after descriptions in the Bible, and the collection contained authentic instruments of ethnic origin. Although Professor Lanphere was listed officially as a faculty member, his salary was derived from lesson fees paid by piano students. His name does not appear on the salary roster of the Normal School until late in the decade.

In the Spring of 1930, Franklin Bishop inaugurated the All-Northern New York Music Festival which brought public school instrumentalists comprising orchestras from the communities of Canton, Gouverneur, Malone, Norfolk, Norwood, Ogdensburg and Potsdam to the campus of Potsdam Normal for rehearsals and performances. In 1911 Richard Tunnicliffe had organized a May festival of music, the predecessor of the Spring Festival of later years, and Lake Placid sponsored the Adirondack Music Festival beginning in 1925. These events influenced Mr. Bishop to undertake organization of the festival for area



*The 1933 All Northern New York Festival. (Photograph courtesy of Ralph Wakefield. Special thanks to Stephen Douglass of The Snap Shop)*

youth. It was through such ventures that the present day festivals of the New York State School Music Association were developed. Potsdam's All Northern New York Festival was absorbed by NYSSMA's programs by 1948.

In the Fall of 1930, Dr. Congdon recommended to the Board of Visitors that the Crane course should be lengthened to four years. According to him, Potsdam was experiencing competition with other schools for students and jobs. He cited as competitors Teachers College, Columbia University, New York University, Syracuse University, Ithaca College, the Eastman School of Music, Skidmore College, and the Fredonia State Normal School. He asserted that teachers of music in high school must be college graduates and that the public schools preferred graduates of four-year to graduates of three-year programs.

At its meeting of 1 December 1930 the Board passed a resolution to petition the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education to authorize the lengthening of the music course to four years and the granting of a suitable degree. This was the beginning of a prolonged effort to secure formal authorization for a four-year program and a baccalaureate degree for graduates of the Crane Music Supervisors' course. It is a puzzling situation because the Regents in November 1928 had stipulated that "on and after 1 September 1933, teachers of special subjects such as home economics, physical education, music, drawing or other special fields will be

required to present credentials showing the completion of four years of approved training leading to the bachelor's degree or its equivalent, including the usual eighteen hours of professional courses."<sup>12</sup>

On 1 June 1932 Congdon reported to the Board, "Last summer [1931] our school with two others was directed by Dr. Herman J. Magee, Director of the Bureau of Teacher Training, State Education Department, to inform all students entering special courses in these schools that they were to enter upon four year courses. This announcement was duly made. Last December Dr. Magee died. Although Dr. Magee undoubtedly acted with what he conceived to be authority, there has been no definite Regents approval of this action."

Members of the entering Crane class of 1931 were notified as Congdon had reported. They completed the four-year program in June 1935. Finally, on 29 July 1935 the four-year curriculum was approved by the Regents to be effective 1 September 1935.<sup>13</sup> The ruling was made retroactive to the graduates of 1935.

In the Fall of 1931, Miss Hosmer decided that the enrollment of Crane included enough men to make possible a balanced mixed chorus. The first Crane Chorus began in September 1931. The work studied and performed was "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast" by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Julia Crane had introduced this work through a May Festival performance in 1913. On 6 May 1932 the first Spring Festival to feature the Crane Chorus presented the



Marie A. Schuette, shown here in a 1948 photograph. She succeeded Julia Crane in 1923 as the Principal of the Crane Institute of Music. She was Professor of Music Education till 1948. (Photograph courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum)

"Feast" accompanied by Lillian Davis at the piano. Helen Hosmer conducted the work in the 670 seat auditorium of the Normal School. The student singers were supplemented by talented vocalists from among the townspeople and faculty.

Participation in Crane Chorus was required of all music majors and music faculty were also expected to attend rehearsals. Such a convocation gave the Director an opportunity to communicate with all members of the academic community: a "Crane Meeting" preceded each rehearsal period. Through these regularly scheduled times, Miss Hosmer was able to build a remarkably high level of enthusiasm, pride, and esprit de corps in the student body.

For many years it had been the practice for students and townspeople to join in a "Christmas Sing" before the holiday recess. Beginning in 1932,

Crane Chorus prepared a few appropriate selections for performance before the community singing. The basic idea of these programs has continued each year although the performing group has changed from time to time.

Miss Hosmer returned to New York City in the fall of 1932 to complete her master's degree and to organize the music department of an experimental venture of Columbia University named New College.

In Potsdam Principal Congdon reported on 30 June that the new School of Practice was ready for occupancy. He stated that the removal of 700 children from the Normal School building had made possible improvements in housing and spirit. According to Congdon, the music department, except instrumental, now had abundant room "although the serious disadvantage of working in non-soundproof rooms still

exists."<sup>14</sup>

Another 1932 event of great future significance was the purchase of 9.42 acres of land on outer Pierrepont Avenue. The appropriated funds were to have been used to increase the main campus plot downtown. Congdon bought the Dr. Grant property adjacent to the campus on Elm Street for use as a structure to house studios and practice rooms. The greater share of the funds were used for the Pierrepont avenue property which was developed as a much needed athletic field. Of course, in future years it was the initial parcel of the site for a new campus.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*, 26 January 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Jessie Crane Moore (Mrs. Frank Moore), Harriet Crane Bryant (Mrs. Willis Merton Bryant), and Daisy Crane Sisson (Mrs. Charles H. Sisson).

<sup>3</sup> The Crane Trust Fund, now administered by the Potsdam College Foundation, continues to provide financial aid for music majors.

<sup>4</sup> William Claudson, "The History of the Crane Department of Music," Ph.D., Northwestern University, 1965. Since 1971 this alumni group has been called The Julia E. Crane Alumni Association.

<sup>5</sup> The members of the committee were F.T.E. Sisson, F.L. Cubley, H.N. Clark, Dr. D.F. Burke, and Mrs. R.H. Byrns.

<sup>6</sup> C.H. Sisson was the husband of Julia Crane's youngest sister, Daisy. Other officers were Ruth Scott Frelick, Vice-President; Lewis D. Dewey, Secretary-Treasurer; Horace N. Clark and Frank L. Cubley, Directors.

<sup>7</sup> The act of the legislature authorized payment of \$16,750, of which \$11,500 was for real estate and \$5500 was for equipment and supplies. The sum appropriated for current expenses was \$1850 and that for salaries was \$16,400. The head of the department received \$3000 and each assistant \$2200.

<sup>8</sup> By 1926 the yearbook indicated there were two bands, the Normal Band and the Beginning Band.

<sup>9</sup> In the summers of 1928 and 1929, Helen Hosmer assisted Alice Bivins with an experimental school for children in a program emphasizing an integrated approach to the arts. Alice Bivins was a 1910 graduate of the Crane Normal Institute and a member of the faculty from 1911 to 1913. At Teachers College she was the model teacher for the famed Lincoln School of Practice. When Alice Bivins died in 1930, Helen Hosmer replaced her in the experimental program that summer.

<sup>10</sup> *Potsdam State Normal School, Catalogue*, 1928.

<sup>11</sup> *Minutes of the Board of Visitors*.

<sup>12</sup> *The University of the State of New York, Journal of the Meetings of the Board of Regents*, November 13, 1928.

<sup>13</sup> *The University of the State of New York, Journal of the Minutes of the Board of Regents*.

<sup>14</sup> *Principal's Report*, 30 June 1932.



#### About the Author:

Ralph Wakefield, class of 1942, is Dean Emeritus of the Crane School of Music.



## Eleanor Roosevelt Slept Here

*E.M. Thomas*

*Years of activity in New York state politics brought both Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt friends all over the state, including the Cook family of Massena. In this article, E.M. Thomas looks at some aspects of the association of Mrs. Roosevelt and Nancy Cook.*

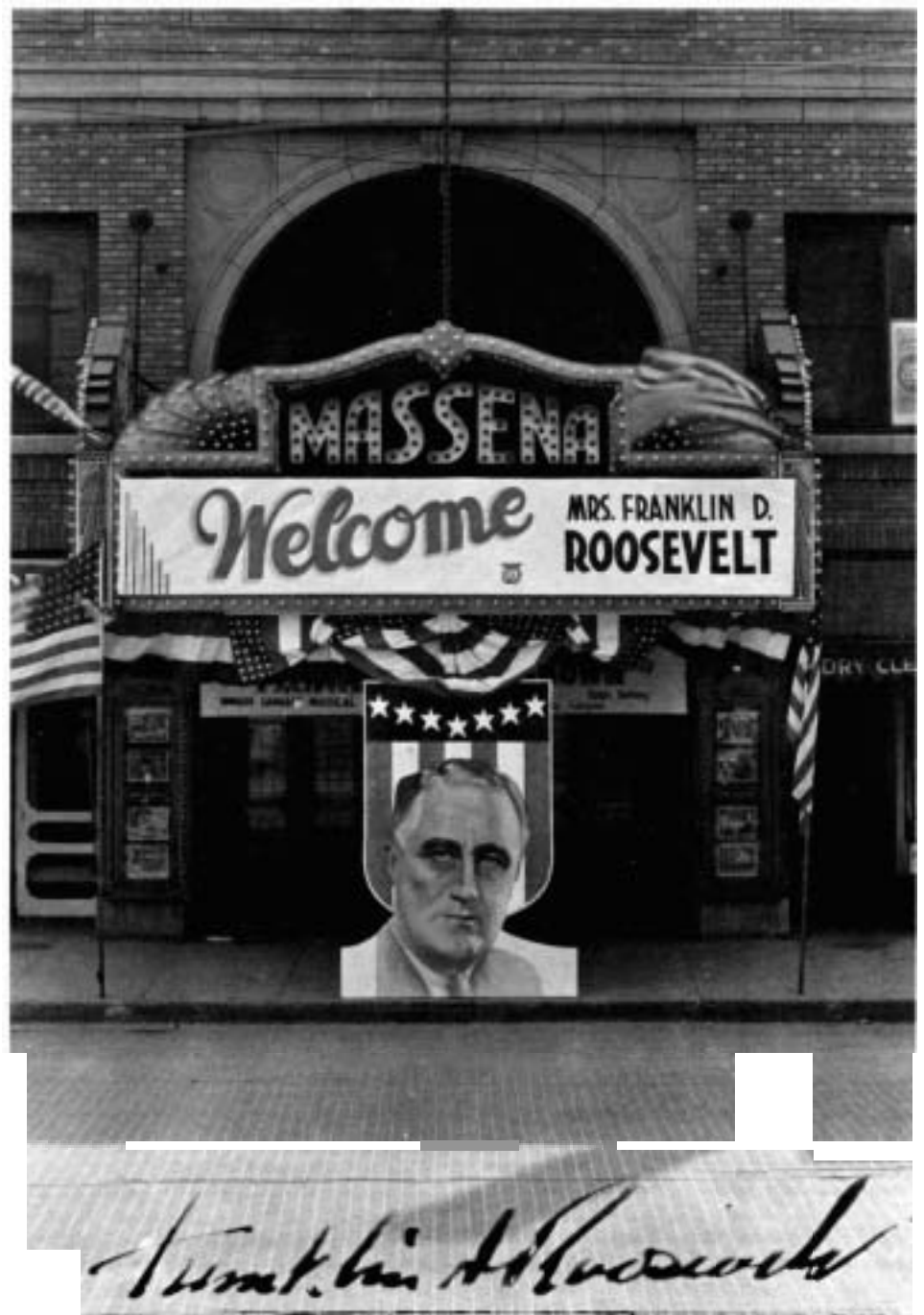
The big car slid to a stop before the large house at 25 Elm Circle. Flags fluttered in the freshening breeze and sunlight glistened on the horns and trumpets of the small band assembled to do honor to the smiling guest. There was still a decided nip in the air, a reminder that it was still only the first week of May in 1933.

The baton descended and the students began to play while the hostess grinned her delight. The great lady descended and accepted the offering from the small boy anxiously waiting to perform his part. She thanked him graciously and, gasping with relief, he stepped back into the crowd that had met to welcome Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady of the United States.

In the early 1900's, events transpired which were to bring together national figures and a girl from a small northern town; the catalysts were talent and politics.

In 1921, Franklin D. Roosevelt suffered a blow which would have crushed the hopes of a lesser man. He was young, he was personable, and he had a brilliant future in politics, . . . and then he fell victim to paralytic polio. It was a staggering shock and his shy but determined young wife used every strategy at her command to counteract the despondency and depressive effects of the illness. She read and studied every thing she could get her hands on to become informed politically and about the world at large. Inevitably, she was drawn into larger spheres of influence and she became active in the Democratic State Committee. She also assumed special responsibilities for the reorganization of women's work, both in the State and National Committees. Here, she met Nancy Cook, a tousle-headed young woman with fierce eyes and a hearty masculine laugh.

Mrs. Roosevelt became very depen-



*Massena prepares to welcome Eleanor Roosevelt in 1933. (Photograph courtesy of Basmajian Realty)*

dent on Nancy Cook, who was a sort of "Girl Friday," opening mail, making decisions, and even trimming the Christmas tree for the Women's Trade Union League. Nancy was a power in the Democratic State Committee, and she worked with Marion Dickerman, who ran the Todhunter School where Mrs. Roosevelt had taught until she went to Washington. The three became the closest of friends. They did everything together, and Mrs. Roosevelt often came North with Nancy to visit the Cook family. Mrs. Roosevelt's engagement book mentions leaving Massena

"in the pouring rain" and running out of gas in Ithaca. They shared a busy life, and their political efforts were rewarded when Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated the thirty-first president in 1933.

At this point, it might well be asked, "Who was Nancy Cook?" Nancy Cook was born August 26, 1884 in Massena, New York, a village then of a thousand souls, more or less, which was poised on the Saint Lawrence River in Saint Lawrence County. Nancy's father, Allen B. Cook, bought and sold real estate, cattle, and horses. He was a member of



*Eleanor Roosevelt at the home of Harley Cook, Nancy Cook's brother, 25 Elm Circle, in 1933. Nancy Cook stands beside her. The mayor of Massena, Thomas Bushnell, is next to Miss Cook. (Photograph from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library)*

the Massena Board of Trustees for three terms and an assessor for six years. In his obituary, the local paper stated that he was a personal friend of President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, who were often guests at his home.

Nancy Cook studied at Syracuse University and became an instructor in manual arts in the Fulton public school system and an art instructor at Syracuse University in 1916. She then went on to make splints and artificial legs for the British Army Hospital in England. She became executive of the Women's Division of the Democratic State Committee, where she met Eleanor Roosevelt and Marion Dickerman. Nancy was an organizer, a designer, and a craftsman, experienced in working with jewelry, pottery, copper and brass work, and cabinet making. Thus began a life of mutual interests, and before long, they opened the Val-Kill furniture factory where they specialized in the reproduction of Early American furniture.

It soon became evident that the three women needed their own retreat where they might share allied interests, for Eleanor's mother-in-law allowed her very little privacy and kept harping on the unsuitability of her friends. This culminated in Franklin's donating a piece of land on which the three built a small cottage, each putting up a third of the cost. Here, they spent many happy hours. For the next five years, there was a great toing and froing

between the Roosevelt ménage and the Stone Cottage where Nancy and Marion had taken up residence. The "girls" were very close and the linen they used was monogrammed with their first three initials, EMN, all of which may have seemed good fun but would cause much jealousy.

Mrs. Roosevelt had emerged from a shy, retiring girl-figure into an indomitable woman who was determined to have a life of her own choosing. Wishing to spend as much time with her children as possible, she learned to skate and drive a car. She began camping with them through the Adirondacks, asking farmers for permission to set up in their meadows, until one irascible old fellow told her that a woman's place was home with her husband!

It was about this time that Mrs. Roosevelt became interested in the Arthurdale project, a scheme to better conditions for the working classes of Appalachia. In an effort to raise money toward this end, Eleanor began radio broadcasts. Nancy received \$6,000 of this money for the establishment of a handicraft center. In days to come, these expenditures would be used against the Roosevelts politically.

In any event, the days of wine and roses were just about over. The furniture factory had not been a success, Arthurdale bore bitter fruit, and Marion and Nancy were felt to be too possessive. Eleanor began to draw away, and, in 1938, she and Nancy had words

which led to a final break-up. It was the end. The amenities were observed at holidays, and the "girls" were still included in glittering White House and Hyde Park affairs, but the old camaraderie was gone. Times were more serious, anyway, with mankind involved in a global war in which the United States would soon join.

The rest is history. Out of the years of war, a new Eleanor emerged. A gallant widow, she became a lecturer, a newspaper columnist, and a world traveler. She was the United States' delegate to the United Nation's General Assembly from 1945 to 1953. Eleanor belonged to the world at large. She died a world figure, while her "good right hand," and exact contemporary, Nancy Cook, died in August of 1962, her name a footnote in history.

Editor's note: Another close associate of the Roosevelts was Marguerite "Missy" LeHand, born in Potsdam. A few days before the 1932 presidential election, Eleanor Roosevelt accompanied Miss LeHand to Potsdam to attend her mother's funeral. On that occasion, Mrs. Roosevelt stayed at the home of Nellie Graffin, Miss LeHand's aunt, on the Madrid Road.

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#### **About the Author:**

E.M. Thomas lives in Massena. Writing is her avocation; she also enjoys painting and gardening.

## SLCHA Annual Report 1985

by John Baule

In the history of any organization, there comes a time when bold initiatives must be undertaken for the long-term health of the group. In 1985 the St. Lawrence County Historical Association took just such a step by planning and implementing the capital/endowment campaign "Endowing Yesterday's Future." A major challenge, the campaign was considered vital to the growth of the Association. I am now pleased to report that, under the overall leadership of Harold Wilder, assisted by divisional chairs Harry Wheaton, Allan Newell, and Bob Burns, this campaign is now certain of success. At the close of 1985 over \$279,000, or 93% of the ambitious \$300,000 goal, has been given or pledged.

In addition, a \$100,000 National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant to the Association was made public in December 1985. A substantial portion of the \$279,000 already raised from private and corporate sources is earmarked to match this NEH award; and the Association has until 1988 to secure the remainder. As a result, over \$400,000 will soon be available both to increase financial stability and to expand the county museum facilities.

Certainly all this excitement has been possible only with the generosity of members and friends. It has been a real evidence of commitment to see so many people respond so willingly to this initiative. Thus, the future of the Association now looks brighter than ever before, and 1985 was definitely a watershed year.

It would be unfair, however, even to hint that the campaign was the sole endeavor of the Association over the past 12 months. The tasks that contribute to the preservation of St. Lawrence County History have continued unabated.

The publication of *The Quarterly* under the capable editorial hand of Dr. Judith Ranlett has remained one of the cornerstones of the Association. Articles, which included topics as varied as the career of a county veterinarian, the Island Community of Chippewa Bay and a Judd Family Photograph Album, were both entertaining and informative.

Exhibitions and programs, organized under the direction of programs coordinator Richard Rummel, included



*Madeline Gray of Helena examined French-Canadian Christmas customs at the Silas Wright House in December. (Photograph courtesy of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association archives)*

a symposium on evolving agricultural practices, an exhibition focusing on the tools and techniques of the skilled craftsman, a re-enactment of a Victorian parlor drama, an interpretive look at the changing role of women in St. Lawrence County society, programs related to the ethnicity of the county, and most recently, an exhibition and programs on the Christmas celebrations of baby boomers in the 1950's and early 1960's.

The formal inauguration of *The County Chronicler*, a quarterly local history news and activity paper for fourth grade students in St. Lawrence County, took place in September 1985. Field tested last year, the paper is now produced in cooperation with the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES and used by 16 of the 19 county school districts. Andrea Shortreed Bellinger, a professional museum educator, is to be commended for her tireless efforts in



*Mouth-watering French-Canadian fare — pâté, moka, crouhnoles — served as accompaniments to Madeline Gray's talk. (Photograph courtesy of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association archives)*

researching and writing the articles and activities.

The buses of the summer tour program logged a considerable number of miles, as members traveled to Boston, Saratoga Springs, Quebec City, Lake Placid, and the Ottawa-Wakefield steam train. Even the director's singing on the bus failed to discourage many, as the tours often filled within hours after the opening of reservations.

A Derby Day Dinner, a Northern Italian feast, and selections from Nouvelle American Cuisine also found a ready audience as the gourmet dinner series completed its fourth year. The Special Events Committee, and Betty Coots especially, are responsible for the superb organization and success of these dinners. However, not content with elegant repasts alone, the special events committee also put together an attic treasures sale, sold chili and croissants on the sidewalk, held an ice cream social in Massena, and sponsored a diet-breaking dessert buffet. Another group of noble souls ended the year by organizing a very successful Roaring Twenties party, complete with "casino," a floor show, "tea," and a raffle. All together, dedicated volunteers raised nearly \$7,000 through these activities to support the work of the Association.

Financial support continues to be derived from a variety of sources. The St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators maintained a stable level of revenue; the Village of Canton made a modest gift from its revenue-sharing fund; membership dues, gifts, and publication sales continued to be important; the Federal Institute of Museum

Services granted \$8,797 for general operations; and of course the earned income from the bus tours and special events remains substantial. In addition, the New York State Council on the Arts awarded \$5,000 for general operating support (GOS) for the first time in 1985. Such GOS awards from NYSCA indicate a high level of professional management in comparison to similar institutions across the state. Special project support from NYSCA

underwrote some program and exhibition costs as well as research into the history of the county's fairs and expositions. Finally, a \$50,000 bequest from Earl T. Meldrim, a native of Edwards, was cleared for investment in California early in 1985. This fund, added to a \$13,000 bequest from Marion Gibson of West Stockholm and other gifts, allowed for the creation of an Association endowment to partially support future operations. It was this fund, along with the NEH challenge grant, that provided the impetus for the current capital/endowment campaign.

Nineteen eighty-five also saw an improvement in the quality and care of the Association's collections. New acquisitions in textiles, glassware, furniture, and archival material continue to make the collections more representative of county history. A substantial grant from the Institute of Museum Services secured in cooperation with the Brainerd Art Gallery (State University of New York at Potsdam), Brush Art Gallery (St. Lawrence University), and the Remington Art Museum, provided funds for the purchase of new acid-free textile storage boxes, map storage cases, and other conservation equipment. This grant was particularly significant because the long-term professional care of the collection must be a top priority for any reputable museum.

Once again the successes of the past year would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of many people. Varick Chittenden, Association



*Participants in the SLCHA trip to Quebec City in September. (Photograph courtesy of John Ranlett)*

president, and the Board of Trustees not only provided the leadership for the on-going activities but also stretched their commitment to plan and implement the capital/endowment campaign. The core Association staff of Richard Rummel, Jane Wilken, and Janet McFarland continued to give far more time than their salaries warrant. Regular assistance from such people as Jane Clough, Mary Ruth and Herb Judd, and Thelma O'Neill in the archives, as well as Dot Mackey and Mickey Williams in maintaining collection records provide needed skills and time for much behind the scenes work. Beverly Markkula and Jim Martin worked diligently in the capital campaign to ensure its success. Finally, of course, the more than 1200 members and the loyal friends of the Association remain the primary source of strength, financial health and moral support.

As 1986 begins there are new challenges, not the least of which is to respond quickly and effectively to the new opportunities given the Association by "Endowing Yesterday's Future," the capital/endowment campaign. Increased financial stability is not total financial stability, and the planned expansion of facilities and services must be accomplished carefully. I am confident, nevertheless, that within twelve months new Association facilities and programs will clearly justify the belief that events of 1985 have made possible a stronger and more stable St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

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## Board of Trustees

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 Vice-Pres. .... Robert Burns, Potsdam  
 Secretary ..... Lynn Ekfelt, Canton  
 Treas. ... Mary Jane Watson, S. Colton

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Helen Chapple, Potsdam; Dwight Mayne, Massena; Ruth McKean, Canton; Don Pearson, Canton; Bernard Sperling, Ogdensburg.

### Term Expires 1988:

Christopher Acker, Ogdensburg; Betty Coots, Canton; Marsha McCarthy, Norwood; Harry Wheaton, Ogdensburg.

### Staff:

John Baule, Director; Janet McFarland, Admin. Asst.; Richard Rummel, Programs Coordinator; Jane Wilken, Admin. Asst.; Stephanie Michaelson, Admin. Asst.; Andrea Bellinger, Education Curator.

## BALANCE SHEET—December 31, 1985

ASSETS		
<b>Current Assets:</b>		
Cash in Bank - Checking (Operating) .....	\$	725.41
Cash in Bank - Special .....		41.53
Cash in Bank - Capital .....		646.11
Cash in Bank - Endowment .....		72,258.60
Cash in Bank - Money Market .....		1,551.57
Cash in Bank - Certificate of Deposit (Greenblatt) .....		2,750.49
Investments .....		6,665.88
Total Current Assets .....		\$ 84,639.59
<b>Fixed Assets (Note A):</b>		
Silas Wright House and Museum .....		200,200.05
TOTAL .....		<u>\$284,839.64</u>
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE		
<b>Liabilities:</b>		
Withheld Payroll Taxes .....	\$	735.18
Mortgage Payable .....		12,152.65
Total Liabilities .....		\$ 12,887.83
<b>Fund Balance:</b>		
Restricted .....	\$	82,619.05
Unrestricted .....		189,332.76
Total Fund Balance .....		271,951.81
TOTAL .....		<u>\$284,839.64</u>

See Accountants' Compilation Report.

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

## STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENSE AND FUND BALANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1985

	1986 Budget	1985 Budget	1985 Actual
<b>Income:</b>			
<i>St. Lawrence County:</i>			
Historian .....	\$ 11,000	\$11,000	\$ 11,000.00
Operating .....	11,000	11,000	11,000.00
New York State Council on the Arts .....	7,000	12,000	12,000.00
Dues .....	17,000	17,000	16,024.25
Gifts .....	6,000	5,000	9,790.73
Interest .....	12,000	6,000	7,136.13
Village of Canton .....	2,000	5,000	2,500.00
Book/Sales .....	3,000	4,000	2,847.36
Miscellaneous and Grant Reimbursements .....	16,590	1,500	4,890.93
Fund Raising .....	9,000	6,500	6,501.34
IMS Grant .....	6,400	4,400	8,951.50
Advertising (Quarterly) .....	4,500	4,500	2,937.50
Total Income .....	<u>\$105,490</u>	<u>\$87,900</u>	<u>\$ 95,579.74</u>
<b>Expense:</b>			
Salary - Director .....	\$ 19,000	\$18,000	\$ 18,000.06
Salary - Historian/Admin. Asst. ....	11,000	10,000	10,000.12
Salary - Program Coordinator .....	15,000	14,000	13,999.96
NYSCA Funded Projects .....	15,390	-0-	-0-
Fringe Benefits .....	600	600	526.65
Payroll Taxes .....	4,500	4,200	3,526.37
Supplies and Postage .....	4,500	4,500	4,790.13
Utilities .....	9,000	8,500	8,607.32
Insurance .....	3,000	2,200	2,305.69
Interest .....	1,200	1,500	1,540.80
Repairs .....	2,500	3,500	5,864.60
Publications .....	6,000	7,000	5,236.68
Printing .....	1,500	1,500	1,980.04
Exhibits and Programs .....	4,500	4,500	5,028.13
Subscriptions .....	800	700	874.06
Conservation .....	2,000	2,000	1,249.70
Travel .....	1,000	600	690.00
Miscellaneous .....	500	500	734.94
Contingency .....	-0-	300	-0-
Total Expenses .....			<u>\$ 84,955.25</u>
NET INCOME FROM OPERATIONS .....			<u>\$ 10,624.49</u>
<b>Other Receipts:</b>			
Campaign Pledges Received .....			\$101,192.29
Campaign Expense .....			38,674.67
Net Campaign Receipts .....			<u>\$ 62,517.62</u>
EXCESS OF RECEIPTS OVER DISBURSEMENTS FOR YEAR INDICATED .....			\$ 73,142.11
FUND BALANCE-Beginning .....			198,809.70
Debt Reduction .....	3,500	3,800	-0-
FUND BALANCE - ENDING .....	<u>\$105,490</u>	<u>\$87,900</u>	<u>\$271,951.81</u>

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