

# THE QUARTERLY

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

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## CONTENTS

|  |    |   |
|--|----|---|
| <i>Robert A. Wyant and<br/>Victoria Levitt</i> | 3  | The Thatcher Story  |
| <i>Dorothy Jones Gordanier</i>                 | 10 | Potsdam Feed and Coal   |
| <i>Steven J. Marqusee</i>                      | 12 | Nineteenth-Century North Country Farm Life:<br>The Brown's Farm Excavations |
| <i>Richard Rummel</i>                          | 19 | SLCHA Annual Report 1986  |

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**Cover:** Thatcher's Sugar of Milk Baking Powder as pictured in a 1903 recipe collection of the Trinity Altar Society. (*Picture courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum*)

# The Thatcher Story

by Robert A. Wyant and Victoria Levitt

*The final decades in the life and career of Dr. Hervey Dexter Thatcher are recounted here. For the initial segment of this two-part article, see the January 1987 Quarterly.*

## Dr. Thatcher And Baking Powder

We do not know just when Dr. Thatcher first began thinking about producing an improved baking powder. His drug store provided a natural setting; it was there that he had developed his orange butter color and condition powder for cattle. We do know that some time prior to April 4, 1888, he had converted his butter color factory behind 19 Market Street to a baking powder factory. This is documented by an entry in Josiah Brown's diary for that date stating that "many buildings burned but Thatcher's Baking Powder Factory was saved." Thatcher applied for a patent in 1889 and it was issued in 1890. The same edition of the *Potsdam Courier and Freeman* which reported the event also carried large advertisements for both Royal and Cleveland baking powders.

The unique feature of Thatcher's baking powder was the ingredient "sugar-of-milk." His formula and reasons for using "sugar-of-milk" are revealed in the patent itself:

In making my baking-powder I have found the following formula to give excellent results, viz: cream of tartar, sixty-seven parts; bicarbonate of sodium, twenty-nine to thirty-one parts, sufficient to neutralize; sugar of milk, four parts. I prefer these proportions; but by experiment I have found that so small an amount of sugar of milk as two per cent., or even less, when thoroughly mixed with the cream of tartar and bicarbonate of soda, will prevent the mixture from becoming hard and lumpy, acting as a perfect keeper, comminuter, and preservative of the other ingredients of the powder. Moreover, the sugar of milk which I use, being made from cow's milk, is perfectly wholesome as a food product, being without any deleterious effect upon the health of the user. It is manifest, therefore, that more or less of the sugar of milk could be used without departing from the spirit of my invention.

Sugar of milk was a local product, an unrefined form of lactose made from whey, a by-product of the cheese industry. In 1892 the Potsdam Milk Sugar Company was incorporated; the directors were T.S. Clarkson, Presi-

dent; D. Frank Ellis, Secretary; and Carlton E. Sanford, Henry S. Wilson and James S. Sayles. One might surmise that the company was created in anticipation of providing milk sugar to meet the needs of Dr. Thatcher's new baking powder business.

Dr. Thatcher lost no time in getting out his Baking Powder Cookbook. It is not clear how his recipes were developed for such delicacies as wheat bread, doughnuts, fine cookies, buckwheat griddle cakes (best), hot corn cakes, hot cross buns, puffets, pot pie, nice graham bread, oatmeal cakes,

sponge cake, jelly cake, delicious banana cake among others. Testimonials printed in the first cookbook reveal that samples had been rather widely distributed to grocers and hotels as early as 1888. The initial price schedule was: "two-ounce sample cans, 8 cts; Half pound can, 25 cts; One pound can, 50 cts; Three pound can \$1.35."

Thatcher took the advice of Mr. Park of Park & Tilford, the fancy grocers, and put his baking powder in glass jars rather than in tin cans. His glass jars were embossed with the words "Thatcher's Sugar of Milk Baking Powder." On



*H.D. Thatcher and Company's baking powder exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. (Picture courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum)*

a business trip to New York City Thatcher took samples of his baking powder into the kitchen at the Waldorf Hotel. The kitchen staff was so pleased with the results of a trial that they refused to let him depart without leaving his entire supply of samples with them.

By this time the 1893 opening of the Columbian Exposition at Chicago was approaching. Legend has it that Thatcher decided to invest \$10,000 in promoting his baking powder at the exposition. He had a wooden booth built in the Greek Revival Style at the Batchelder Furniture Factory on Fall Island in Potsdam. One might surmise that the design might have been provided by the Exposition management in order to maintain uniformity in architecture. It required a number of wood turnings and carvings and was finished in gleaming white with gold trim. The over-all dimension at the cornice was 13½ feet by 8½ feet. It was designed so that it could be easily disassembled for transport by rail. At this point it should be noted that the Barnharts exhibited their butter color and common-sense-style glass milk bottles under the Thatcher Manufacturing Co. name at the Columbian Exposition. The two exhibits were quite separate.

Dr. Thatcher hired a number of Potsdam women to go to Chicago to staff his booth. Using his "Sugar-of-Milk" baking powder and a recipe from his cookbook, they baked and served baking powder biscuits at the rate of eight thousand a day for the benefit of the visitors at his booth. The baking powder received an award for "Excellence of quality of a cream of tartar baking powder with a milk sugar filling."

Following the Exposition the booth was returned to Potsdam. Eventually it was given to the women of the Methodist Church, who used the serving counter portion for church dinners served at the Potsdam Fair to earn money to build what is now the United Methodist Church on Main Street in Potsdam. After being stored in numerous attics and barns over the years, two pieces of the long cornice survive. One piece in its original condition is on permanent display at the Potsdam Public Museum.

One of the women who baked biscuits at the Chicago Exposition in 1893 was Bertha Clark Miles, mother of Mrs. William A. Dart. Mrs. Dart recalls that she was only two years old when her mother went to Chicago, leaving her in the care of eight older brothers and sisters and her father, Benjamin D. Miles. Benjamin Miles also worked for Dr. Thatcher in promoting the sale of his baking powder. Mrs. Dart recalls that her parents were often engaged in

baking and passing out sample biscuits at stores in the area and at regional fairs. She remembers sleeping as a child beneath the counter over which biscuits were served. Sometimes her parents experimented with recipes in their kitchen at home. In 1889 Benjamin Miles wrote the following testimonial for the Thatcher Baking Powder:

Potsdam, N.Y., Oct. 2d, 1889

In traveling for H.D. Thatcher & Co. in the interest of their Baking Powder from house to house over Northern New York, I have sold hundreds of boxes, guaranteeing the goods to give entire satisfaction, and promising that if it did not I would refund the money. On going over the territory the second time I have to say at this date that not one party has ever entered a complaint or expressed themselves dissatisfied. Almost without exception they have bought more goods and recommended them to their neighbors, too.

In 1898 Dr. Thatcher moved his baking powder factory from its original building behind 19 Market Street to the knitting mill building at 1 Maple Street where White's Hardware is located today. Thatcher rented the building from Trinity Church for \$400 per year. This building and its contents were destroyed in a fire which swept over most of Fall Island on June 2, 1900. Thatcher's loss was estimated at \$30,000 and, as usual, he had no fire insurance. His principal loss was in equipment and raw materials for manufacturing baking powder and paper containers. He also lost a new printing press used for printing cookbooks and labels.

Soon after the fire, Dr. Thatcher restored his manufacturing operations in a large new building constructed between Raymond Street and the original butter color factory behind 19 Market Street. He continued the manufacture of baking powder and paper containers in this building until the bankruptcy of H.D. Thatcher & Company in 1913.

In 1901 Messrs. Pettingill of Boston and Barlow of New York City made Dr. Thatcher an offer for purchase of the baking powder business, an offer which was never accepted. It should be noted that the original baking powder patent was due to expire in 1907. There is a tale to the effect that there was another offer of \$150,000 for the patent rights plus a royalty on every can of baking powder sold and a forty-nine percent interest in the business. It is likely that if Thatcher could only have sold the business to a reputable purchaser, he would not have died a

pauper in 1925. His baking powder was unprotected by patent between 1907 and 1918. There is evidence that sugar of milk was also used in Rumford baking powder, but it is not known when that company used it.

The principal source of cream of tartar, another ingredient in the baking powder, had been the sludge which settled to the bottom of wine casks. It was imported from France, but during World War I this source was unreliable. In 1915, therefore, at the age of eighty, Dr. Thatcher developed a new liquid form of baking compound equivalent to baking powder. It was marketed under the name "Thatcher's Fermented Milk Sugar Baking Liquid" with Thatcher Products Company as the manufacturer. The baking liquid was added to the liquid ingredients in the recipe. Baking soda then had to be added to the dry ingredients before the dry and liquid ingredients were combined. Naturally, "Thatcher's Best Baking Soda" was recommended for use with the liquid baking compound. A fine drink could also be made by putting two teaspoonfuls of the liquid compound into a very large tumbler three-quarters full of good drinking water, adding a very heaping tablespoonful or more of granulated sugar, stirring well and adding one level teaspoonful of cooking soda, stirring quickly.

In 1918, at the age of 83, Dr. Thatcher obtained his last patent for an "Improved Baking Powder." The ingredients for this baking powder were cream of tartar, 67 parts; baking soda, 31 parts; sugar of milk, 4 parts; and casein, 7 parts. Thatcher's reason for adding the casein was that "it stiffens the walls surrounding the cells created by the leavening gas, so that foods in which the baking powder is used are less likely to fall or give way while in the oven or soon after being withdrawn." The improved baking powder was put up in smooth glass jars bearing a paper wrapper carrying the corporate name "Thatcher Products Co. Successor to Firm of H.D. Thatcher & Co."

### The Disposable Paper Milk Bottle And Other Ventures

Following the sale of his drug store in 1895 Dr. Thatcher directed his inventive talents toward paper containers. He was still concerned with the problem of delivering germ-free milk from producer to consumer. He was not satisfied that the available methods of cleaning glass milk bottles between trips would leave them in a sterile condition. As early as 1895 he was thinking of a disposable paper container for delivering milk. His choice of paper as a material may have

been influenced by the fact that paper was a product of Potsdam industry. His first invention in this field was a paraffined paper pail for which he was granted a patent on January 28, 1896 (#553,794). Information in the patent indicates that he was proposing to deliver milk in these pails.

The transportation of milk from the producer to the consumer in a manner which shall avoid contamination has heretofore been very imperfectly accomplished. The glass jar is an improvement over the old delivery systems; but its aggregate weight makes transportation between the producer and consumer expensive. There is also a constant loss arising from frequent breakages and failure to return the jars when emptied. The most serious objection, however, is that the glass jar is not sanitary. The glass vessel in which milk is to-day delivered to an untidy family or to one in which sickness prevails, may to-morrow carry infected food to a healthy child in a home where every sanitary law is carefully observed. It matters not that in the meantime the jar has been subjected to such washing and cleansing as may be thought necessary. The disease germs are not removed, and thus they are added to the very food which it is sought to have pure and beyond suspicion. This is the danger which the physician and sanitarian are at the present day most concerned in eliminating from our daily lives.

To this end my invention consists of a paper vessel which when employed once to convey milk from producer to consumer is then promptly destroyed, not only thus lightening the labor of delivery, but delivering milk absolutely pure and without a shadow of risk of spreading disease. A new container is thus provided each day, which when emptied is committed to the flames.

Dr. Thatcher proceeded to acquire the necessary machinery for the manufacture of paraffined paper pails. Several problems were encountered and as a consequence he made improvements in the design and was granted a second patent on February 7, 1899 (#619,099). In this patent he listed butter, milk, lard, and oysters among the substances for which he thought the pails would be suitable. In 1907 he filed applications for three patents (#891,877 through #891,879) pertaining specifically to the cylindrical disposable paper milk bottle.

In 1907 the National Paper Milk Bottle Company was incorporated in

anticipation of the new business. Directors of the new corporation were Bertrand H. Snell, Aldis L. Lockwood and Hervey D. Thatcher. There is no evidence that paper milk bottles were ever manufactured in any significant quantity.

During the same year, at the age of 72, Thatcher embarked upon a campaign to promote the use of the disposable paper milk bottle. He visited the Boards of Health and the major dairymen at several large cities in the northeastern United States. However, his efforts were largely in vain. Apparently the world was not ready for such a milk bottle. Probably economics were against him. The glass milk bottle cost about five cents to produce and had an average life of thirty round trips. It probably cost more to manufacture a paper container that was good for only one trip. It is likely that general acceptance of the disposable paper milk bottle was delayed as well by improvements in technology for handling, cleaning and sterilizing the glass bottles.

One should remember that in Dr. Thatcher's time tobacco chewing was very common among men. In the male workplace cuspidors, often in highly polished brass, had to be placed at strategic points. Dr. Thatcher recognized a need in the home, a need which he could easily meet using the tools and machinery employed in the manufacture of paper containers. His product was described in one of his catalogs thus:

The sanitary cuspidor is an attractive article and should find a place in every household. It is made by a special process from Pulp Board, handsomely ornamented and filled with colored excelsior, all of which is rendered non-inflamable [*sic*]. It presents a tidy appearance and instead of the occasional ablutions incident to those of metal composition, it is cremated in the stove, furnace or range and a new one put in its place. It is so inexpensive that its use is not the least extravagant in families who institute the most rigid economy.

A note had to be added, saying "They are fireproof and will not burn but will consume in a strong fire." The Sanitary Cuspidors were 7 inches in diameter and 2½ inches high and they sold for fifty cents a dozen or \$17.50 for five hundred.

In 1909 Dr. Thatcher became involved with the Single Service Package Corporation of America of New York City. This corporation took initial steps to acquire property in Potsdam suitable for a factory and Thatcher spent

considerable time in New York City serving as a consultant to the corporation. He continued to manufacture paper containers in Potsdam under the corporate name of H.D. Thatcher & Company from 1896 until it declared bankruptcy in 1913.

#### H.D. Thatcher & Co. 1895-1924

Dr. Thatcher's principal corporation was H.D. Thatcher & Company. It was under this corporate name that he pursued his business interests in the drug store, butter color, early glass milk bottles, baking powder and paper containers, including the disposable paper milk container. The corporate name came into use some time prior to 1873 when it was listed in *The Northern New York Directory* for that year. However, there seems to have been no legal record of incorporation until 1894. The name "H.D. Thatcher & Co." must not be confused with the name "Thatcher Manufacturing Co." which was primarily associated with the glass milk bottle and dairy supply business starting with the Barnhart management shortly before 1890. It is doubtful that Dr. Thatcher had anything to do with the latter corporation after 1890.

Following the sale of the milk bottle business to the Barnharts in 1890 and the sale of the drug store to Brown & Perrin in 1895, H.D. Thatcher & Co. dealt largely with dairy supplies while continuing to manufacture baking powder and paper containers. The company was producing and distributing baking powder and paper containers from 1 Maple Street in 1900 when the great fire destroyed the building and most of its contents. At the time of the fire, Dr. Thatcher was 65 years old.

The Sanborn Insurance map of 1904 indicates that H.D. Thatcher & Co. operations had been moved to a greatly expanded building between Raymond Street and the original baking powder factory in the building between 19 Market Street and the river. Thatcher's financial problems increased and the company was on the verge of bankruptcy. On June 8, 1904 news broke that arrangements had been substantially completed for the appointment of a receiver for H.D. Thatcher & Co. because of "disagreement among common and preferred stockholders, Directors and management." This action was taken in spite of the fact that unfilled orders took up twenty long ledger pages and new orders were arriving daily. Liabilities amounted to \$17,000. At this point the company's directors and officers were Hervey D. Thatcher, president; E.M. Perkins, secretary; Dr. Jesse Reynolds,





An advertising symbol for Thatcher's Sugar of Milk Baking Powder. (Picture courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum)

treasurer.

By now Dr. Thatcher was 69 years old, and it is possible that he had let the business get out of hand. However, Edward A. Everett apparently had great faith in the potential of H.D. Thatcher & Co., for he raised \$25,000 to meet the liabilities and furnish working capital. Consequently the bankruptcy proceedings were annulled, thereby restoring the company to its original condition. Mr. Everett was made president and manager of the company in 1904.

Mr. Everett's faith may not have been justified, however. By 1913 the company was in trouble again, with liabilities amounting to \$59,708. Mr. Everett and his wife, Susan T. Everett, were the principal creditors, claiming \$45,000 which they had personally advanced for the benefit of the company. Total assets amounted to \$18,000. Of this amount, \$2500 was estimated for rights to the "patent on butter packers" and \$2500 for the "trade mark on the Sugar of Milk Baking Powder." Little is known about the role Dr. Thatcher may have played in the company between 1904 and 1913.

In 1914 H.D. Thatcher & Co. was sold to Robert H. Byrns who filed a certificate of incorporation naming Robert H. Byrns, Fred L. Dewey and Ira Kendall as directors. The new business manufactured and sold baking powder, condition powder and paper containers. This is a confusing point, for in 1914 a newspaper reported that Kimball J. Snell, brother of Congressman Bertrand Snell, had bought the rights to the baking powder business. Snell had blotters printed carrying advertisements of the baking powder—and colorful pictures of pretty girls. There is essentially no evidence that baking powder was ever produced by the new H.D. Thatcher & Co. It was primarily engaged in the dairy supply business.

In 1918 Ira Kendall terminated his connection with the company in order to establish his own creamery supply business which would eventually become the Kendall-Lamarr Corporation. It appears that the company's use of the Thatcher name starting in 1914 was without the doctor's permission. He requested in his will that his attorneys take appropriate legal action requiring Byrns and Kendall to discontinue use of the H.D. Thatcher & Co. corporate name. This is another point of confusion because the State of New York Department of State records show that H.D. Thatcher & Co. was officially dissolved in 1924. It may be that the dispute was settled before Thatcher's death but he did not revise his will accordingly.

### The Later Years 1915-1925

Olive Thatcher died in 1912 and in the following year H.D. Thatcher & Co. was bankrupt. Thatcher had sold his entire interest in the glass milk bottle business prior to 1890. In 1900 he sold the building which had housed his drug store. Never a particularly astute businessman, Thatcher was said to be set in his ways and disinclined to listen to good business advice. He was generally said to be better at starting than at finishing a project. Many of his products had not been protected by patents and little was done to redress patent infringements. His famous butter color had never been protected by patent and was now being produced and marketed by both the Thatcher Manufacturing Co. of Elmira and the new H.D. Thatcher & Co. which had emerged from bankruptcy under the ownership of Ira H. Kendall, Robert H. Byrns and Fred L. Dewey. The paper container business had also been taken over by the successor company. Thatcher's baking powder patent had expired in 1907 and the business had been acquired following the bankruptcy by Kimball J. Snell, brother of Congressman Bertrand H. Snell. There wasn't much left for Dr. Thatcher, who by now was deeply in debt to many people in Potsdam.

In 1913, Hervey Thatcher was seventy-eight years old, but he was not ready to quit. He was back in business publishing another booklet describing his latest wares. *The Courier and Freeman* for May 28, 1913 carried the following announcement: "Dr. Thatcher of the Carrier Spring Water Company has recently issued an attractive booklet telling of the merits of this spring water. This spring has long been noted and now that the water is placed on the market and well advertised it should meet with ready sale."

*The Potsdam Directory* for 1913 continued to list Dr. Thatcher as the president of the National Paper Milk Bottle Corporation, with a business address at 1 Maple Street. Because he had lost the paper container business he now adopted a new corporate name—Thatcher Products Company—to be used in his new business, and he again set his inventive mind to work.

In 1914 he invented and received a patent for his "King-Bridge Checker Game." The deluxe edition of the game was packaged in a very attractive and colorful cardboard box, demonstrating that he still had a flair for packaging. A short time later he brought out his edition of "U.S. Checkers or U.S. Railroad Map Game." The game itself was not Thatcher's invention. It had been invented and patented by J.E. Yost of Arkansas City, Kansas, in 1911.

Thatcher's contribution, again, was in packaging. The playing field was a map of the United States printed on heavy paper 26" x 42" and showing the principal railroad routes. The map was bordered on two sides by advertisements of firms who we might assume had been familiar and sympathetic with Thatcher's financial condition. These firms included Thatcher Manufacturing Co. of Elmira; Perrin Drugs, successor to Thatcher Drugs; *The Courier and Freeman*; and People's Bank, among others. One might surmise that in his financial desperation he sold this advertising space in an attempt to gain a little more income.

In 1915 Dr. Thatcher sold his fine home at 100 Market Street to Frederick Ritchie. *The Potsdam Directory* for 1919 listed him as having rooms at 95 Market Street, the home of Oscar A. Wilkinson. The business address for Thatcher Products was given as 1 Maple Street, and baking powder and jams were listed as the company products. At this time, Frederick P. Barnhart, one of the nephews Thatcher had taken in, was listed as secretary of Thatcher Products Co. He had the reputation for being somewhat eccentric. He sometimes acted strangely and on one occasion he was found loitering on a porch at the home of a doctor in Norwood. The doctor shot him in the arm.

Because baking powder could be packaged with a minimum of equipment, Dr. Thatcher was able to continue marketing his baking powder up to the time of his death in 1925. There was a brief break during the years of World War I when he brought out his baking liquid as a substitute for dry baking powder and in 1918 he was granted a patent for an improved baking powder.

As the years went by there is little indication that Thatcher was able to improve his financial condition. In 1921 stock certificate #7 for the Thatcher Products Co. was issued for one share to Hervey D. Thatcher. The certificate, signed by Frederick T. Swan, Treasurer, indicated that the capital stock was \$60,000 and a value of \$100 was given for each share. From today's vantage point, it seems very doubtful that any such sum of money could possibly have been invested in Thatcher Products Co. in 1921. However, the stock certificates were beautifully printed.

*The Potsdam Directory* for 1924 listed Dr. Thatcher's residence at a point on Maple Street between the old sandstone grist mill building and the west bank of the Racquette River. Today this would be between the Mr. Donut Shop and the river. The same location was listed for the Thatcher Products Co. and was also the site

where the Sanborn Insurance Map for 1910 showed the D.A. Moore Sash Factory. The fact that the 1924 *Directory* did not mention the sash factory suggests that the building might have been unheated and unoccupied in winter time. It was in this building that Dr. Thatcher was found ill and in bed by his friend, Charles J.B. DeLongey, who took him to his home at 12 Spring Street where he died on May 24, 1925.

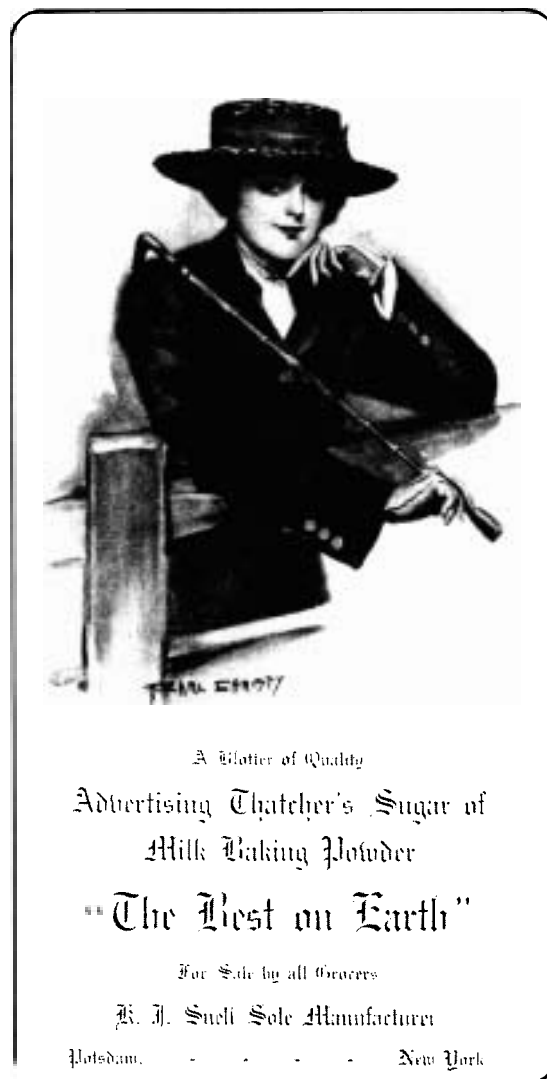
### Dr. Thatcher, the Public Citizen

Hervey Thatcher the pharmacist, the inventor, the entrepreneur, was also a community-spirited man in other areas. If Josiah Brown's evaluation is any indication, Thatcher's efforts were recognized and appreciated. In his diary for 1891, Brown wrote, "Dr. T. is sick with perityphlitis, if anybody in the world knows what that is. I hope the Doctor gets well for he is too useful a man to spare now."

While Dr. Thatcher never practiced medicine in Potsdam, he seemed to value his MD degree. When the doctors of the community signed a petition relating to the public health, Thatcher's signature was in evidence. An item in *The St. Lawrence Herald* for May 16, 1890 indicates that he joined other medical doctors in expressing faith in the abilities of J.F. Butler, a specialist in fitting lenses. He also gave public presentations on medical matters of interest to the community. One such presentation was reported in the December 20, 1905 issue of *The Courier and Freeman*: "Dr. H. D. Thatcher will deliver a free lecture at Town Hall in Potsdam to men and boys Friday evening Dec. 22, commencing at 8 o'clock; subject, 'Care of the Human Body,' with some reference to the prevention of hernia or rupture." Hernia was probably very prevalent in those years when so many men were engaged in heavy work in the woods and stone quarries.

For many years Dr. Thatcher was also an ardent member of the Potsdam Sportsmen's Club and he frequently participated in the annual hunt. In the 1886 hunt, he scored 700 points, one of the highest scores. No squirrel, woodchuck, raccoon, crow or pheasant could have been safe anywhere near Potsdam during the hunt, and while Dr. Thatcher had the reputation of being a sensitive and gentle man, wild creatures who ventured within the range of his gun apparently risked nearly certain death.

Concerns of church and school were also concerns of Dr. Thatcher during this period. In 1890 he was elected Vestryman of Trinity Church, along with Thomas S. Clarkson, Luke Usher, William A. Dart and others. With his fel-



*Blotters which Kimball J. Snell had printed about 1914 to advertise Thatcher's Sugar of Milk Baking Powder. (Pictures courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum)*

low churchman Thomas Clarkson, Thatcher was a firm believer in the value of education. Upon the founding of the Thomas S. Clarkson Memorial College of Technology in 1896, he became a Trustee. For a number of years he served as Secretary of the Board of Trustees and at his funeral on May 26, 1925, six members of the senior class served as pallbearers.

Howard M. Smith, Potsdam resident and member of the CCT Class of 1916, recalls hearing Thatcher speak at the 1903 commencement of his sister, Hattie M. Smith. The commencement was held in the chapel, the large single room on the third floor of Old Main. Mr. Smith, then a boy of nine, recalls that parents and other guests arrived early, and waited impatiently in the heat of the June day, feeling uncomfortable and sticking to the seats, "when in walked 'Old Bill Davis,' the janitor, with the neatly tied diplomas in a waste paper basket which he deposited on the rostrum and then made a hasty retreat."

Mr. Smith describes the rest of the proceedings:

In the due course of time five or six members of the Board of Trustees accompanied by President or as he was then called Director Aldrich and the speaker Dr. H.D. Thatcher [arrived]. After they were duly seated the trampling of feet heralded the approach of the seven men of the graduating class (which turned out to be just the male members) who marched (without music) bravely to the front seats and then sat down. Then after a short pause, the three ladies who were to graduate came up the stairs and into the hall. Apparently there had been no rehearsal as to the procedure for as the ladies approached the Director looked pretty sharp at the gentlemen who with one accord arose and then everyone sat down.

The address was given by H.D. Thatcher, who had his speech writ-

ten in long hand on a stenographer's pad and all that I remember of the speech was the fact that he lost his place and read three pages twice (much to my disgust as it prolonged the exercises.)

Finally they all received their diplomas and everyone went home happy, especially myself.

If Dr. Thatcher lacked the speaker's skill to impress a nine-year-old boy, he nevertheless was steadfast in his commitment to the school. Even during the very difficult years up to the time of his death, he continued to serve faithfully as a trustee of the college. Others also have recognized his interest in education and community service. Thatcher Hall on the campus of the State University of New York College at Potsdam is named for him, and in 1960 that school established the Hervey Dexter Thatcher Memorial Scholarship with a grant from Thatcher Manufacturing Company.



It is ironic that this man who contributed so much to his community should have come to the end of his life with so little of the material comforts that his efforts might have earned for him. Local history writer William Sawyer suggests that friends and relatives would have been glad to offer him a home, but he preferred his solitary living arrangements on Fall Island. He apparently ate well enough when he had money, but was often broke. It was his contention that the American people ate too much generally and "dig their own graves with their teeth." Perhaps he had something; certainly some current research in nutrition poses a similar theory. People who knew him have said that he looked much younger than he was, even as a man well past eighty. But his underfed figure drew the sympathy of many and it has been said that friends would invite him into a restaurant on some pretense and while engaging him in conversation would manage to engage him in a meal as well.

Even though Hervey Thatcher came to the end of his life a financial failure, it is clear that his contributions to his community were important in his time and for the future. We should remember that Dr. Thatcher in his various enterprises had provided employment and opportunity for a good number of his fellow citizens. One hundred years after the invention of his glass milk bottle, he remains a significant figure in the history of Potsdam and St. Lawrence County.

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The authors wish to thank all those people and organizations who generously contributed to the success of this project. Some provided information, others donated or loaned artifacts to the Potsdam Public Museum on the occasion of the Thatcher Centennial Exhibit in 1984, and a few participated in research leading to this paper. It is impossible to mention all contributors but the authors particularly want to recognize the following:

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#### About the Authors:

Robert A. Wyant is a member of the staff of the Potsdam Public Museum and Associate Professor Emeritus, Clarkson University, Potsdam, New York. Victoria Levitt, a writer living in Potsdam, holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Utah.



*The office of Potsdam Feed and Coal Company at 10 Main Street in Potsdam about 1922. Left to right, Tennyson A. Jones and Frank Riggs, Sr., clerk. (Photograph courtesy of Dorothy Jones Gordanier)*

## Potsdam Feed and Coal

*by Dorothy Jones Gordanier*

In the spring of 1986, drivers on the Potsdam Relief Route could watch the destruction of a commercial landmark, the Potsdam Feed and Coal Co., Inc., on Willow Street. Potsdam Feed and Coal had furnished fuel oil, building supplies, seeds, fertilizers, farm supplies and, of course, feed and coal, to the area for sixty-six years and had employed an average of twenty-two people. In 1915, Tennyson A. Jones, owner of a feed mill in the hamlet of Deer River in Lewis County, joined with six others to buy out H.J. Sanford's Feed and Coal business in Potsdam. They took it over on January 1, 1916.

In 1934, Tennyson A. Jones' daughter, Dorothy, and her husband, Elmer Gordanier, entered the company, and ultimately became sole stockholders. A disastrous fire in 1962 destroyed the grain elevators and feed mill. A new mill was built, one vastly more modern and efficient; it was this new mill which was torn down in 1986, after the property was divided by the Relief Route and the mill was separated from the railroad siding it depended on for bulk deliveries.

This photo essay is a tribute to a St. Lawrence County business.



*Cosette and Tennyson A. Jones in 1905. He was a founder of the Potsdam Feed and Coal Company, Inc., serving at various times as Treasurer, Secretary and President until he retired in 1957. (Photograph courtesy of Dorothy Jones Gordanier)*



*A 1954 Henry DeWolf aerial photograph of Potsdam Feed and Coal Company. (Photograph courtesy of Dorothy Jones Gordanier)*

*The office entrance in 1963, after the mill was rebuilt and modernized. (Photograph courtesy of Dorothy Jones Gordanier)*



*Signs of modernity in the new mill: Left, grain from a mixer fills a tote bin; center, tote bin is "toted" to rack; right, truck loads from tote bin. (Photographs courtesy of Dorothy Jones Gordanier)*

# Nineteenth-Century North Country Farm Life: The Brown's Farm Excavations

by Steven J. Marqusee

## Introduction

Archaeology is the study of past people and cultures through analysis of the artifacts they left behind. Encoded into each individual artifact is a message that describes an aspect of human behavior. It is the task of archaeologists to decode these messages and to combine them into meaningful statements about the past. Historical archaeologists are those who study cultures that lived since the invention of writing and who either wrote their own histories or were written about in other's historical documents. Historical archaeologists' analysis, then, may be aided by historical documents dealing with that culture and sometimes by first-hand ethnographic accounts of participants in that culture. These three sources of information—archaeological artifacts, historical documents, and first-hand accounts—can combine to give the historical archaeologist a rather complete picture of a past culture. Each provides a somewhat different kind of information. Archaeological artifacts, if interpreted accurately, may provide us with the "real" world. Artifacts are concrete remains of past activities. Historical documents, such as census, birth, death, and military records, may provide a somewhat "official" or "ideal" view of the world from an insider's

perspective. First-hand accounts may provide a personal view of the world. All are useful in obtaining a complete understanding of a past culture.

History books dealing with the North Country, such as Hough (1853), portray North Country life in terms of key figures (usually white, male, and wealthy) and major events. In other words, we learn who settled particular areas, when railroads were first introduced, and where North Country regiments trained during the Civil War. None of the sources, however, describe what life was like for the majority of the North Country population.

The Brown's Farm Site provided us with an ideal location to begin to discover this important information. It was ideal because the site had remained virtually untouched since its abandonment in the early part of this century. It has been protected in recent years by Niagara-Mohawk, on whose land the site is located. There are also great quantities of historical information dealing with the family that occupied the site from its initial occupation in the 1830s to its abandonment. Much of this information is readily available at the St. Lawrence County History Center in Canton, New York. Cemetery, census, birth, death, and military records, maps and atlases, abound with information on this area. Finally, there

are the "old-timers" who remember when the site was occupied and provided us with first-hand accounts of the area.

The Brown's Farm Site was first brought to our attention in 1980 by Evelyn Riehl. She had done much preliminary and valuable research on the area. I thank her for her invaluable help. Niagara-Mohawk has been gracious enough to give us permission to excavate on its land. I thank the company and my contact, Dave Armstrong, for making it easy for us to do our work there. I thank former Dean Richard Hutchesen and current Dean Richard DelGuidice and Potsdam College for their regular support of our summer archaeological field program. Finally, I thank all 40 students and assistants who provided the muscle and moved the dirt during our three field seasons at Brown's Farm.

## Historical Background

Brown's Farm was located in the former township of Wick. Wick, comprised mostly of the estate of Dr. Samuel Moore of New York, along with Sherwood, Harewood, Granshue, Matildavale, Cookham, and part of Catherineville, comprised the town of Parishville as it was formed from Hopkinton on March 18, 1814. About 1850, Wick was divided into Upper Wick and Lower Wick. Upper Wick eventually became known as Blake. Many of the families living in Wick had moved there from Vermont where land shortages had apparently forced them out.

The community of Blake had, by the mid-1850s, several hundred inhabitants. It consisted of a schoolhouse that also served as a church, a store that housed the first post office, a community hall that later became the Baptist Church, a saw mill, the Blake Cemetery, and several dozen households.

Census records indicate that lumbering was the most important economic activity in the area throughout the nineteenth century. In fact, saw mills were frequently the first structures constructed in early settlements. Logs were driven down the Racquette River to mills located from Blake to the St. Lawrence River. It is also clear that a variety of crops were grown in the area. These included spring wheat, oats, buckwheat, corn, peas, potatoes, beans, and flax. Cattle were raised for beef as well as the milk, butter and



*The Brown farm house about 1900. (Photograph courtesy of Everett Brown)*

cheese they produced; pigs were raised to be slaughtered; and chickens were kept for their eggs and their meat. Maple syrup was also produced, though usually in small quantities and probably for family consumption. The documents indicate that, though small in size, Blake was a thriving community throughout the mid- to late 1800s.

The community of Blake, however, virtually disappeared by the end of the second decade of this century. The declining fertility of the land, decreased lumbering activity, and the lure of the "big village" life in Potsdam, Canton, and elsewhere, all contributed to its demise. Much of what was Blake has now been flooded or otherwise destroyed as a result of the massive hydroelectric projects constructed by Niagara-Mohawk in the 1950s. A few cellar holes and foundations from abandoned houses, the Blake Cemetery, notations on early maps, archaeological artifacts and the remembrances of "old-timers" are all that remain.

### The Brown's Farm Site

One of the earliest residents of the community of Blake was Horace Woodward Brown, born near Burlington, Vermont, in 1810. In 1828 he married Emily Folsom, but moved without her to Blake in 1833. There, along the Racquette River, he built a log cabin on 26 acres of land he had purchased for \$120.93 from the Avery family. Eventually the land holdings of the Brown family totalled 420 acres. For the next thirteen years, Brown made frequent trips back and forth to Vermont. Finally, in 1846 he moved his wife and, by then, four children, to Blake permanently. Eventually Horace and Emily had ten children. About the same time Horace's family moved to Blake, his brothers Sylvanus ("Sair") and Charles and their mother, Phoebe, also moved nearby. Horace and Emily raised their family on this land. Eventually a larger house was constructed there by Horace's son, David, who lived there with his family. Cemetery and census records have allowed us to reconstruct the family tree of Horace Brown and his descendants.

Photographs provided by C. Everett Brown (recently deceased), a grandson of Horace and son of David, reveal that the Brown farmstead consisted of a large frame house with attached outbuilding, an old barn of traditional North Country style called an "English Three Bay Barn," and a larger barn constructed in 1900. Everett, in an interview with Evelyn Riehl, remembered that the carpenter for the newer barn was Dave Riggs, the stone mason was a Mr. O'Hara from White Hill, and that the stone used in constructing the

barn came by sleds during the winter from the south side of Joe Indian Pond. The barn is unique, apparently constructed over a natural spring that provided a permanent water supply for the animals housed there.

Census records from 1865 give us a great deal of insight into the economic activities of the Horace Brown family. The records are restated below:

|                                      |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| improved acres .....                 | 80      |
| unimproved acres .....               | 340     |
| value of land .....                  | \$2500  |
| value of stock .....                 | \$700   |
| value of tools .....                 | \$250   |
| plowed acres .....                   | 8       |
| pasture in acres .....               | 48      |
| meadow in acres .....                | 22      |
| tons of hay .....                    | 4       |
| acres of spring wheat .....          | 3       |
| bushels of spring wheat .....        | 12      |
| acres of oats (1864) .....           | 3       |
| acres of oats (1865) .....           | 6       |
| bushels of oats .....                | 75      |
| acres of buckwheat .....             | 3       |
| acres of Indian corn .....           | 1/2     |
| acres of potatoes (1864) .....       | 1 1/2   |
| acres of potatoes (1865) .....       | 4 1/2   |
| bushels of potatoes .....            | 300     |
| acres of peas (1864) .....           | 1 1/2   |
| acres of peas (1865) .....           | 2 1/2   |
| bushels of peas .....                | 40      |
| pounds of maple sugar produced ..... | 100     |
| gallons of syrup .....               | 6       |
| calves .....                         | 2       |
| milk cows (1864) .....               | 2       |
| milk cows (1865) .....               | 4       |
| cattle killed for beef .....         | 1       |
| butter cows (1864) .....             | 2       |
| butter cows (1865) .....             | 4       |
| horses 2 years or older .....        | 2       |
| pigs .....                           | 2       |
| pigs slaughtered ... 1 (250 pounds)  |         |
| value of poultry .....               | \$4.50  |
| value of eggs .....                  | \$12.00 |

Though David Brown died in 1899, his family occupied the farmstead until 1911 when Everett graduated from the Agricultural School in Canton and moved his family there. The land, almost completely worn out by this time, was sold to P.X. Blake in 1912; he used the house as headquarters and bunkhouse for his lumbering activities in the area. Eventually, in the 1950s, the land was purchased by Niagara-Mohawk when it built extensive hydroelectric projects along the Racquette River. Today, all that is left of the Brown Farmstead is the cellar hole for the house and the foundations for both barns.

### The Problem

We undertake excavations of particular sites not to learn specifics about the family that lived there or the activities that took place during a

period of occupation. Rather, historical archaeological research attempts to answer questions of general cultural significance. We are less concerned about the behavior of particular individuals than we are about how individual behavior reflects wider cultural ideals and values.

When Evelyn Riehl first brought the Brown's Farm Site to my attention, it seemed like the perfect place to excavate. Since the excavators were going to be students participating in Potsdam College's Anthropology Department archaeology field school, I was looking for a small nearby site where the essentials of archaeological investigations could be taught quickly. Brown's Farm was ideal. The site was well-preserved. The site had discernible surface features such as cellar holes and foundations. There were ample historical data dealing with the Brown family, much of it already located by Mrs. Riehl. There were people alive who remembered the site when it was occupied, particularly Everett Brown, grandson of Horace, who could be questioned. Brown's Farm was the ideal place to teach archaeological methodology.

Brown's Farm has turned out to be even more valuable, for at Brown's Farm we were able to get a glimpse of what life was like for a segment of nineteenth century North Country culture — the farmer — the backbone of North Country life. The purpose, then, of our study has been to learn what we could about what life was like for rural farming families one hundred and more years ago.

### Methodology and Goals

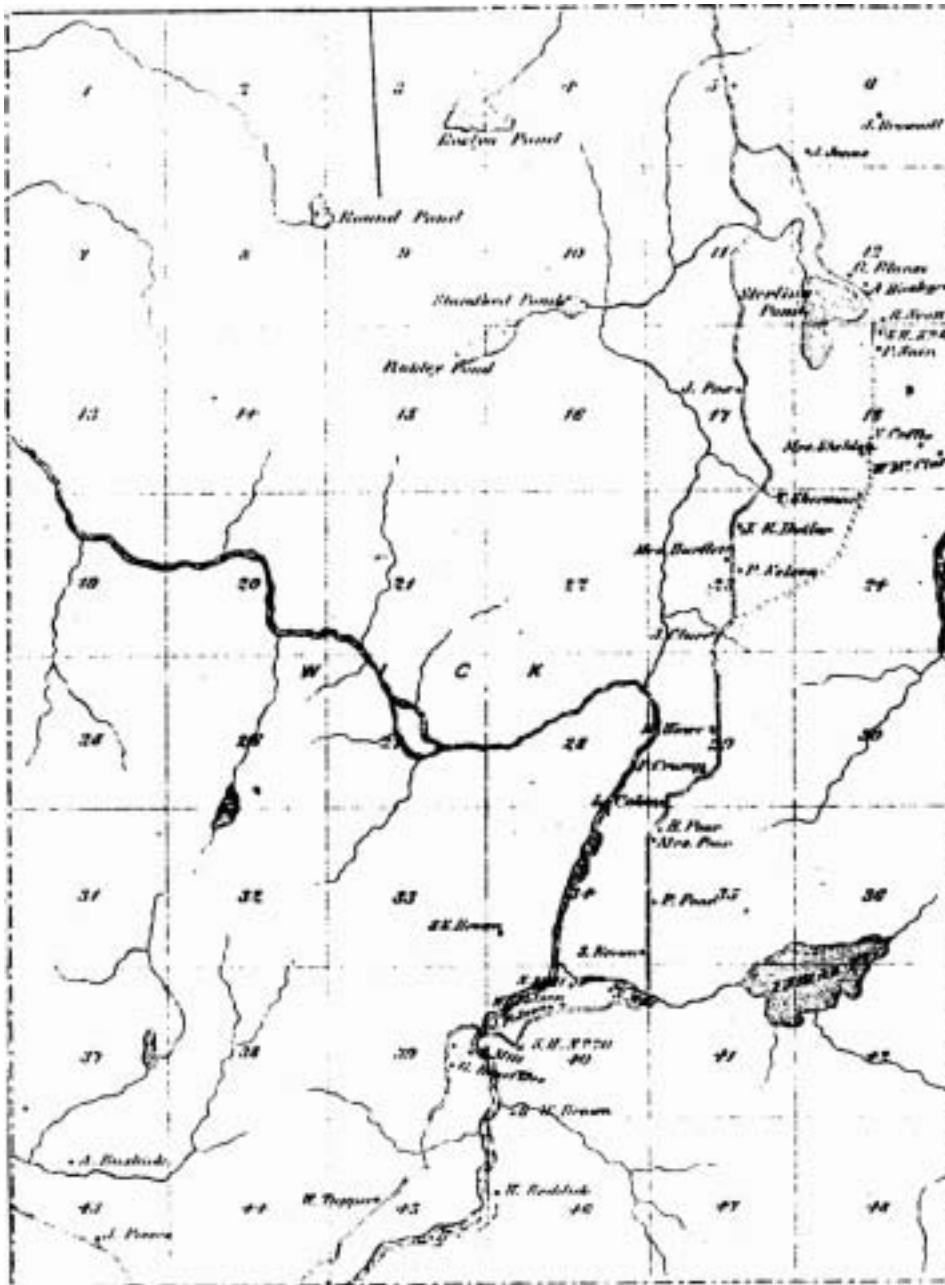
We decided at the outset that this would be a three-year project. The first year would consist of excavations of the house; the second, the old barn; and the third, the more recent barn. The general strategy in excavating each structure was to delimit the boundaries of the structure so that the context of discovered artifacts could be maintained and reconstruction therefore would be possible. We used five foot by five foot grids, with two students working together in each test unit. Because of the shallow deposition, we were able to trowel to sterile soil. Our excavations at Brown's Farm took place in 1980, 1982, and 1984.

Although our general goal was to learn what we could about nineteenth-century North Country farm life, we had more specific goals in mind for each summer's work.

### 1980 - The House

Our specific goals for our first year of excavation were to delimit the





Wick in 1865. (Map courtesy of Steven J. Marqusee)

boundaries of the house and related outbuildings, to locate, if possible, the refuse dump associated with the house, and to test thoroughly the cellar hole and perimeter of the house and outbuildings.

1982 - The Old Barn

During the 1982 field season, we attempted to determine the dimensions, layout and activity areas in the old barn by revealing the stone foundations and thoroughly testing the interior and exterior of the structure. With the guidance of Richard Lunt, folklorist at Potsdam College, we posulated that this barn would conform to architectural standards of English Three Bay Barns typically utilized during the middle to late 1800s in the North Country.

1984 - The Recent Barn

Our goals for the third and final field season were to determine the kinds of activities that took place in this larger structure by testing the interior of the cellar hole and the exterior perimeter of the structure.

Discoveries

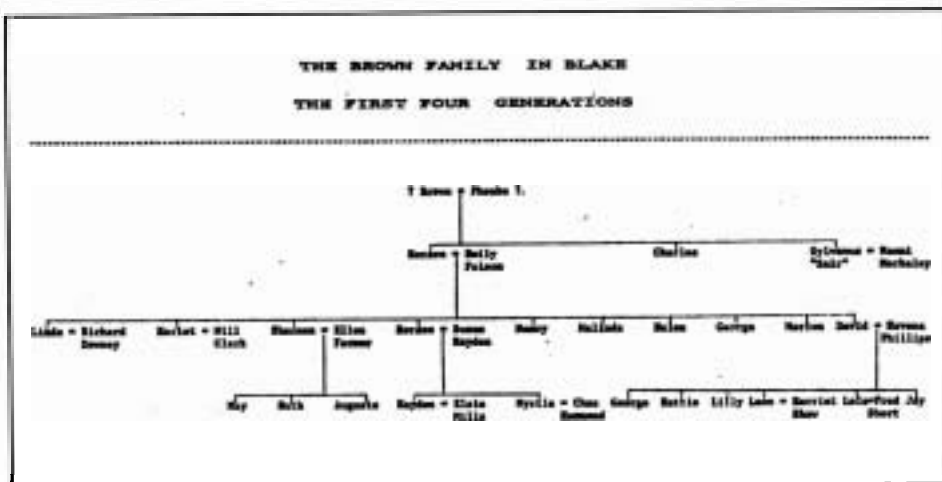
In our three years of excavating Brown's Farm, we discovered well over 120,000 artifacts. While most were square cut nails, fragments of broken window glass, and bottle and ceramic sherds, objects those who own old houses regularly find, they were still of value. The context within which these objects were discovered helped us interpret the site. For example, a concentration of window glass fragments found in a particular area of the perimeter of a foundation may well indicate the location of windows. Besides these common kinds of artifacts, a number of unique and important objects were also discovered. Below are brief discussions of the results of each year of our excavations and the most important artifacts found in each part of the site.

1980

During this first year of excavating we were able to determine the layout of the house and outbuildings. Our excavations revealed concentrations of particular kinds of artifacts so that it was possible to determine locations of windows and other architectural features as well as functions of outbuildings. We were also successful in locating the refuse dump. A partial list of artifacts discovered follows:

The House

- square cut nails
- window glass
- rain gutter and drainpipe segments



The Brown Family in Blake: The First Four Generations. (Chart courtesy of Steven J. Marqusee)

windowshade hangers  
ceramic china fragments  
tin roofing and roofing nails

### The Outbuilding

stove legs  
square cut nails  
wood screws  
china fragments  
door jam  
tobacco can  
china doll  
fork  
1886 penny

### The Cellar Hole

water pipes  
hinges  
mason jars

### The Refuse Dump

bottle of mercury  
thin metal heart "Souvenir of  
Ogdensburg"  
flower pot  
lantern parts  
pitchfork  
leather shoes and boots  
leather fragment dated 1897  
harness buckle  
double axe heads  
clock parts

ink bottle  
shovel  
deer and cow bones  
sewing machine parts  
elixir, whiskey, and various other  
bottles  
clam shells  
perfum bottle marked "France."

### 1982

During the second year of our excavations, we were able to delimit the dimensions of the old barn as well as activity areas within the barn. According to Richard Lunt, the dimensions, 20 feet x 60 feet, conform to the 1:3 ratio of English Three Bay barns common during the latter part of the 1800s. A partial list of the most important artifacts associated with this structure follows:

tin roofing  
square cut and horseshoe nails  
latch and hinge  
tracking for barn door  
lantern parts  
window glass  
horseshoes  
bit  
stirrup from MacCullen saddle  
(post Civil War)

carriage bolt  
harness buckles  
plow blades  
paintbrush with red paint  
hammer  
knife handle  
cultivator blades  
mowing machine parts  
comb  
1863 penny  
ash grate for woodstove  
bottle "Hires Carbonated Beverage"  
axe heads, one reading "(EK) Rool  
Canton Cast Steel Patented"  
several bottles, one reading "Lini-  
ment, Earl S. Sloan."

### 1984

We met with limited success during our final year at Brown's Farm. Much of the lower portions of the barn cellar hole were under water making excavations difficult and messy. We were able, however, to make some general conclusions concerning activities that took place in this structure. A partial list of the most important artifacts discovered in this structure follows:

bone fragments  
round and square cut nails  
harness buckle



*The David Brown family about 1900. (Photograph courtesy of Everett Brown)*

hand water pump  
wooden pegs  
leather boots and gloves  
two perfume bottles  
elixir and tonic bottles.

### Interpretations

The artifacts we discovered allowed us to make some specific interpretations of life at Brown's Farm. A majority of our artifacts were square cut nails. They were found in rather high concentrations near the house and old barn. The recent barn (dated 1900 in a photograph) yielded some square cut nails, but mostly round nails. This is significant. Huey (1969) has determined that square cut nails were commonly used in construction between the 1830s and 1890s when technology made mass-produced round wire nails possible. This confirms the general dates we had proposed for the construction of the three structures: the mid-1800s for the house, the mid-1800s for the old barn, and the early 1900s for the recent barn.

The presence of high concentrations of window glass fragments at various places along the perimeters of the house and both barns indicated the locations of windows. In the case of the house and the recent barn, our predictions were confirmed by photographs. The locations of other architectural features, such as rain gutters and drain pipes, doors, and tin roofing, were also predicted from the locations of artifact concentrations and confirmed by photographs.

The discovery of cast iron stove legs in the outbuilding attached to the

house led us to predict that this may have been a summer kitchen. High concentrations of square cut nails and wood screws in another part of the outbuilding may have indicated that it was also used as a workroom-storage area. Both suppositions were confirmed in an interview with Everett Brown. The outbuilding must have had a wooden slat floor, for many objects were discovered in the dirt below: fragments of china and glassware, a fork, several crushed chewing tobacco cans, a china doll and an 1886 penny.

The cellar hole for the house yielded few significant artifacts. They did, however, provide some important information. We found evidence of water pipes in the cellar suggesting that water may have been pumped to the house from a nearby spring. Relatively high concentrations of mason jars and jar fragments suggest, not surprisingly, that the cellar may have been used to store canned goods. We were also able to locate the foundations for chimneys, their locations verified by photographs of the house.

The distributions of artifacts throughout the old barn enabled us to determine the various activities that took place in the structure. Concentrations of artifacts such as horseshoe nails and horseshoes, a bit, stirrups, harness buckles, and a carriage bolt probably indicated a tack room. Concentrations of other artifacts such as a paintbrush, hammer, knife handle, and axe heads, no doubt indicated a tool room. The remains of farm implements such as the cultivator blades and mowing machine parts suggest that the struc-

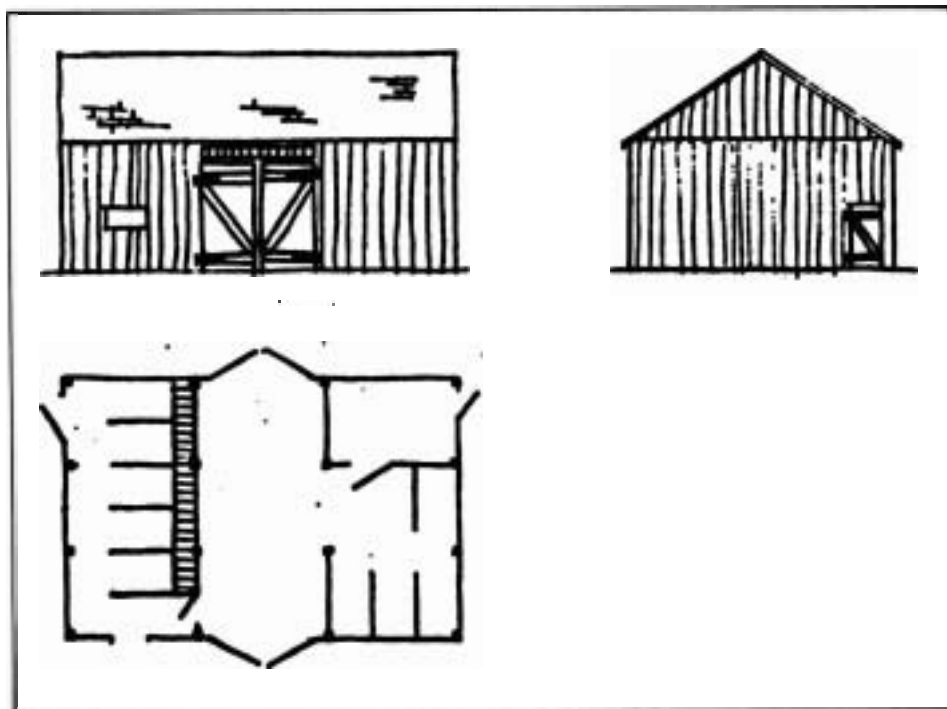
ture also housed these objects. The ash grate suggests the structure was probably heated. Finally, the 1863 penny gives us a rough timeframe for the use of the structure.

The artifacts discovered in the more recent barn were not nearly as conclusive. Discovery of the harness buckle and leather boots and gloves there makes sense; the perfume, elixir and tonic bottles, however, do not.

The exact context for those artifacts recovered from the refuse dump has been lost, making specific interpretations difficult. The artifacts, nevertheless, provide much valuable information. This information forms the basis of the final section.

### Conclusions

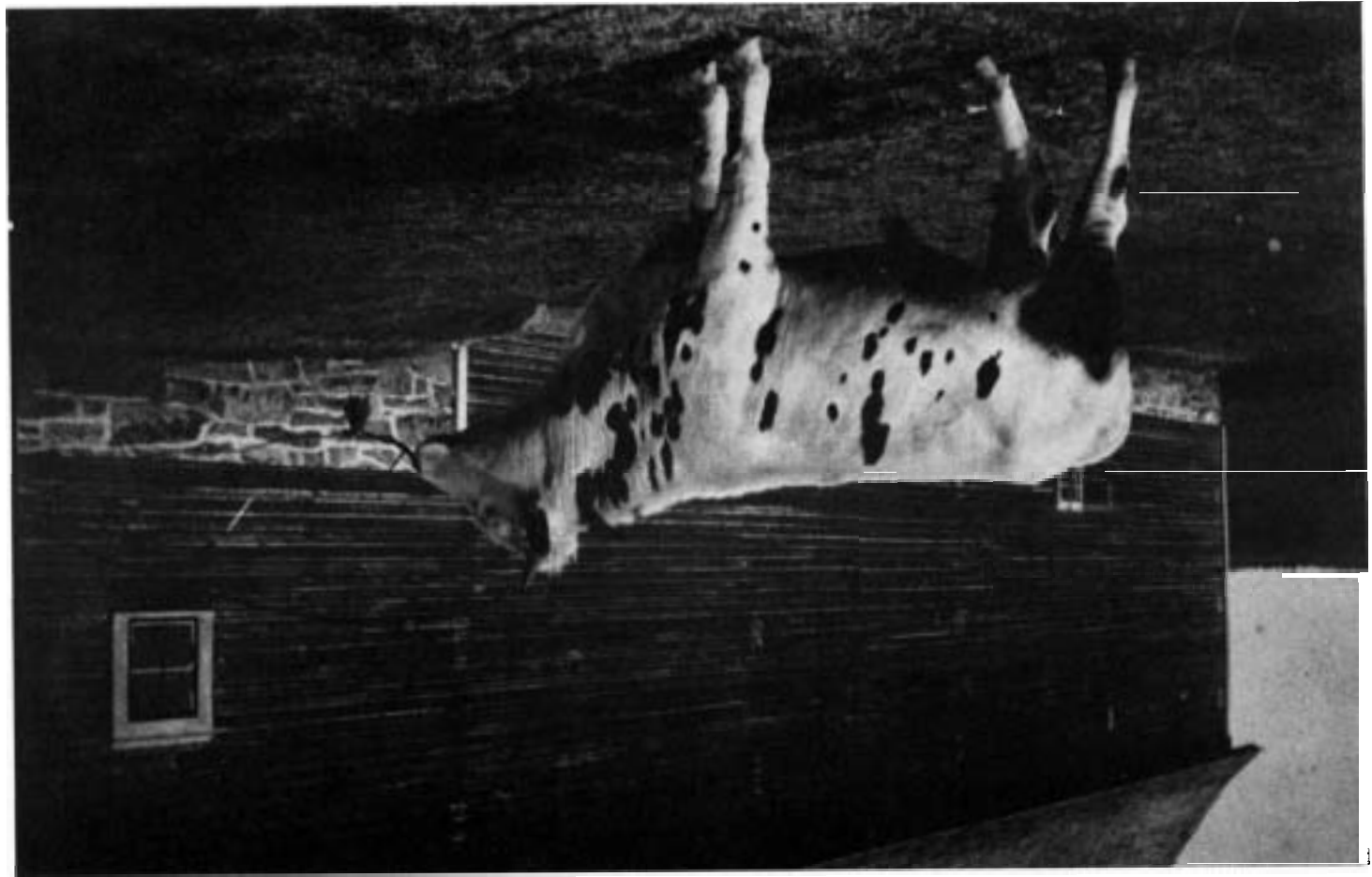
Based on the evidence from Brown's Farm, it is possible to make several generalizations about nineteenth-century North Country farm life. The Browns, like, no doubt, many others, were clearly what anthropologists term "subsistence agriculturalists." They grew most of the food necessary for their own consumption. They sold any surplus goods for cash which they used to purchase goods and services they could not produce. The 1865 census records indicate that most of what was grown — hay, wheat, oats, buckwheat, corn, peas, maple syrup, milk, beef cattle, pigs, poultry, and eggs — was produced in large enough quantities to have provided for only the Brown family. Archaeological evidence suggests that deer and perhaps freshwater clams may have supplemented their diets. The sewing machine parts discovered in the refuse dump suggest that they made their own clothing. The bottle of mercury may be evidence that the Browns were tanning hides, as mercury is a key ingredient in the process. What made this kind of subsistence necessary was the relatively short growing season in the North Country and the poor soil. Our excavations revealed a soil deposition of no more than 12 inches throughout the site. Everett Brown, in fact, attended the Agricultural College in Canton specifically to learn techniques to improve crop yields at the family farm. When he learned that this could not be accomplished, he sold the farm and moved his family to Canton (E. Brown, personal communication). We find a parallel situation in the North Country today. Many farmers are, once again, subsistence based. Rather than from poor soil, today's problems may stem from poor prices for dairy and farm products. Like 75 years ago, many farmers today are forced to give up farming and seek employment in larger communities.



English three-bay barns. (Drawing by Richard Lunt)



*The Brown family dog, Shep, about 1900. (Photograph courtesy of Everett Brown)*



*The new barn about 1900. (Photograph courtesy of Everett Brown)*





*The Racquette River near Brown's farm prior to the Niagara-Mohawk hydroelectric project. (Photograph courtesy of Niagara-Mohawk)*

It is difficult to determine what kinds of surplus goods the Browns were producing. Butter and potatoes, however, may be likely candidates. The census records for 1865 indicate the Browns were producing 250 pounds of butter and 300 bushels of potatoes. The potatoes may have been sold to the local starch factory. Archaeological evidence suggests that their profits were spent on goods usually produced locally. The excavation of an axe produced in Canton, elixirs bottled in the area, souvenirs from Ogdensburg, and so forth, suggest that local farmers then, as now, pumped a great deal of money back into the local economy.

Farm families also purchased luxury items. Fragments of imported china, the souvenir from Ogdensburg, and the many French perfume bottles discovered at Brown's Farm suggest this.

Finally, our excavations suggest that

nineteenth century farm families were hard-working and industrious but traditional folk, much as they are today. There may be useful lessons for us today in learning how farm families of the last century coped with their problems and survived under very difficult conditions. This is the kind of information historical archaeology in the North Country can provide. James Deetz, probably the most experienced of all historical archaeologists, has said (1977),

It is terribly important that the 'small things forgotten' be remembered. For in the seemingly little and insignificant things that accumulate to create a lifetime, the essence of our existence is captured. We must remember these bits and pieces, and we must use them in new and imaginative ways so that

a different appreciation for what life is today, and was in the past, can be achieved.

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#### About the Author:

Steven J. Marqusee is a member of the Department of Anthropology of Potsdam College.



# SLCHA Annual Report 1986

by *Richard Rummel*

Not since 1973 when the St. Lawrence County Historical Association began a fund drive to purchase the Silas Wright House and secure a permanent location for the county museum has there been a more important and eventful year than 1986.

As you know, at the close of 1985 the Historical Association's capital/endowment campaign, "Endowing Yesterday's Future," had raised \$279,000 of the \$300,000 goal. A year later I am pleased to report that over \$301,000 has been pledged and almost \$211,000 received, with much of that amount already at work in stocks and securities with the investment firm of Smith-Barney and in money market accounts with local banks. Most are aware of the ever increasing uncertainty of government support of cultural institutions around the country, a real and unfortunate fact of our time. The Board of Trustees has always felt that dependence upon public funding is stopgap at best, and that solid, continued growth has to be tied to a broader, more stable and secure endowment. While work remains to be done to secure not only the remainder of the outstanding pledges but to recoup the nearly \$40,000 in campaign expenses, the success of "Endowing Yesterday's Future" in 1986 was no small feat, thanks to the hundreds of St. Lawrence County people who responded generously from a sense of commitment to and an appreciation of what we are about. Reaching our goal was, of course, crucial, but equally important was the message received: the people of this county value this Historical Association and its museum. There is a great deal to be proud of in that, for all of us.

More obvious fruits of the campaign are readily seen by anyone visiting the museum these days, as the new wing, begun in May, and housing a new lobby, fully modern kitchen, full basement for workspace and storage, bathrooms, and new gallery and office space, nears completion. For those of us who have lived with the day to day chaos of construction, seeing the



*Work underway on addition to museum, June 1986. (Photograph courtesy of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association archives)*

finishing touches being applied is, to say the least, a huge relief. The inconveniences, however, seem a small price to pay as the museum is now considerably more functional. I cannot adequately nor realistically acknowledge all the people who have had a direct hand in making the museum addition a reality, but certainly special recognition must go to Mr. and Mrs. Richard Venier of Massena and Massena Building Supply for the donation of the new kitchen. Such generous giving is and always has been the lifeblood of the Association. Others who have made equally generous contributions are: Vernon Green and Green's Furniture of Canton for the donation and installation of kitchen and bathroom floor coverings; James Hutchinson of Canton for the purchase of a sink disposal; Bernard Sperling and Sperling's Furniture for very generous considerations on carpet and a double wall oven; and Clickner's Furniture of Ogdensburg for very generous considerations on a dishwasher. Moreover, I would be remiss if I didn't mention board members Betty Coots, Ruth McKean and Harry Wheaton for their energetic and dogged pursuit of these contributions. Work has begun on the second phase of the building improvement plan—to restore the original kitchen to its 1830-50 period. This long overdue and greatly needed restoration will add significantly to the lifestyle interpretation of the period.

Nineteen eighty-six also saw the departure of Historical Association director John Baule, who left in July to accept the position of executive director

of the Hennepin County Historical Society, Minneapolis. As you know, John guided the Association through some extraordinarily difficult years, and his absence is felt very keenly. As acting director I have tried to carry on to the best of my ability in the finest SLCHA tradition, and while the good moments have far exceeded the bad, I wish to continue work developing programs. My job as acting director over the second half of the year was made considerably easier, and certainly a lot more fun, by the many people who had a great eye for smoke signals and came to my rescue. For their assistance and moral support I am grateful. Replacing John has not been easy, but I am happy to report that the position has been offered to a young man very highly regarded by all who have met and worked with him, and we look forward to his arrival as we begin the new year.

The schedule of exhibits and programs throughout the year proved both informative and provocative and was indicative of the organization's commitment to quality and professionalism in interpreting local history. We began the year with a very popular traveling exhibit from the Gallery Association of New York, "New York State Barns—Form and Function." Education in rural schools, prior to decentralization, was the subject of perhaps the most popular and well-attended exhibits in a very long time. Hundreds of school children and many adults as well who recalled their own experiences in the little school houses dotting the county's landscape visited the museum's gallery. A joint effort with the Brainerd Art



Road rallyers at Gouverneur Museum, August 1986. (Photograph courtesy of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association archives)

Gallery of Potsdam College gave an exciting glimpse of a hundred and fifty years of landscape art. Some of this country's greatest landscape artists were exhibited. And, as always, the Christmas exhibit delighted the young and the young at heart, as literally hundreds of toys produced from the late nineteenth century to the nineteen-fifties were featured.

Museum programs included a lecture/discussion on the formation of the dairy union in New York and its effect upon St. Lawrence County, where some of the more heated and violent confrontations occurred; two separate Speakers in the Humanities programs: a film series about Mohawk basketmaking and legends, and a slide/lecture program on photo-documenting small town America. A slide presentation showing folk art created by older northern New Yorkers was given in Hammond. The Association's Summer Road Rally held its fourth annual event in July, and once again had many fun-filled surprises. Rallyers toured the Gouverneur Museum on route.

We are very excited with the success of *The County Chronicler*, now in its second year of publication. Education

curator Andrea Bellinger has developed the eight-page reader into a very valuable in-class resource, linking local, state, and national history, as well as profiling prominent people, in an imaginative and concise way. In the fall of the year Andrea began a teachers' workshop series on the use of *The Chronicler* in the classroom and to coordinate student projects involving the paper's lead subject. A successful and popular example of such projects was an investigation and discovery of historical Main Street.

Many members took advantage of the tour schedule arranged by the staff in 1986 by signing up for trips to Washington, D.C., to see the Treasure Houses of Great Britain show; Wilmington, Delaware, to visit Winterthur, the Hagley Museum and Longwood Garden; Toronto (the first train trip), and a one-day theater outing to Ottawa. Over \$6000 was raised for the Association from this popular fundraising program.

The sights and smells of gourmet dining were sinfully in evidence at the museum as guests enjoyed a variety of American and French cuisine. An old-fashioned Valentine's Day party brought a

host of love-sick patrons smarting from Cupid's arrows. A 1905 *Ladies' Home Journal* provided decoration and food ideas, while a cast of local school children performed a Valentine's Day skit that had once charmed families and guests in Victorian parlors.

Once again the success and hard work achieved during the past year would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of our volunteers, Board of Trustees, and staff. The Association's Board provided the necessary leadership in the management of the capital/endowment campaign. The budget/finance committee of Harold Wilder, Donald Pearson, and Mary Jane Watson pursued a diligent, long term investment policy. Betty Coots and Ruth McKean coordinated volunteer work performed on the new addition and designed and oversaw the installation of the new kitchen. Association president, Varick Chittenden, and Search Committee chairperson, Marilyn Mintiner, spent a grueling five months screening and interviewing candidates. *The Quarterly* was stronger than ever in 1986, thanks to the continued fine editorship of Judith Ranlett. Regular assistance from such people as Mary

Ruth and Herb Judd, Jane Clough, Lois Bell in the archives, as well as Dot Mackey and Mickey Williams in maintaining collection records, provided very valuable behind-the-scenes work. The Association is very fortunate in having on its museum staff Janet McFarland and Stephanie Michaelson, and regular volunteer and endowment/records coordinator Jane Wilken. Museum work requires a variety of skills, sometimes under very trying and difficult circumstances, and these women have been remarkably resourceful in rising to any occasion.

New challenges await us in 1987. This is certainly nothing out of the ordinary; but I strongly feel that the achievements of the past year have been extraordinary, and although ideas and plans are only as good as the effort exerted to realize them, more potential exists for doing great things over the next five years than at any other time in our life. With progress and growth, of course, comes greater responsibilities. A strong, final push to complete satisfactorily the capital/endowment campaign is needed. I am confident we can do this. And I am equally confident that the dedication and hard work responsible for the accomplishments of the past, which overcame adversity during a difficult period, will mean an even stronger St. Lawrence County Historical Association in 1987.

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## BALANCE SHEET—December 31, 1986

### ASSETS

|                                 |                  |                     |
|---------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Current Assets .....            | \$ 43,111.53     |                     |
| Fixed Assets .....              | 293,871.23       |                     |
| (Silas Wright House and Museum) |                  |                     |
| Investments (at market) .....   | <u>93,291.68</u> |                     |
| Total .....                     | \$430,274.44     | <u>\$430,274.44</u> |

### LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE

|  |                   |                     |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Liabilities:</b>                      |                   |                     |
| Withheld Payroll Taxes .....             | \$ 750.96         |                     |
| Mortgage Payable .....                   | <u>9,422.52</u>   |                     |
| Total Liabilities .....                  | \$ 10,173.48      | \$ 10,173.48        |
| Deferred Restricted Support .....        | \$ 4,000.00       | \$ 4,000.00         |
| <b>Fund Balance</b>                      |                   |                     |
| Restricted .....                         | \$218,130.04      |                     |
| Unrestricted .....                       | <u>197,970.92</u> |                     |
| Total Fund Balance .....                 | \$416,100.96      | \$416,100.96        |
| Total Liabilities and Fund Balance ..... | \$430,274.44      | <u>\$430,274.44</u> |

## STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENSE AND FUND BALANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1986

|  | 1987<br>Budget | 1986<br>Budget | 1986<br>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                  |
| Village of Canton .....  | 0              | 2,000          | 0                          |
| NYSCA (operating) .....  | 7,000          | 7,000          | 26,280.00                  |
| IMS Grant .....  | 8,500          | 6,400          | 9,326.00                   |
| Fund Raising .....   | 10,000         | 9,000          | 7,858.61                   |
| Advertising (Quarterly) .....                                  | 2,500          | 4,500          | 1,837.50                   |
| Book Sales .....   | 2,500          | 3,000          | 3,641.26                   |
| Investment   |                |                | 7,740.89                   |
| Endowment .....  | 5,650          |                |                            |
| Meldrim .....  | 2,200          | 12,000         |                            |
| Other .....  | 1,000          |                | Dividend Interest 2,912.67 |
| Dues .....   | 18,000         | 17,000         | 15,648.50                  |
| Gifts .....  | 3,000          | 6,000          | 733.78                     |
| Miscellaneous .....  | <u>6,200</u>   | <u>1,200</u>   | <u>8,939.95</u>            |
| Total Income .....   | \$88,550       | 90,100         | \$106,919.16               |
| <b>Expense:</b>  |                |                |                            |
| <b>Staff Expenses</b>  |                |                |                            |
| Salary-Director .....  | \$15,400       | \$19,000       | \$ 16,673.13               |
| Salary-Program Coord. ....                                     | 16,100         | 15,000         | 10,384.56                  |
| Salary-Historian/Admin. Asst. ....                             | 12,000         | 11,000         | 11,423.16                  |
| Benefits .....   | 2,000          | 600            | 334.90                     |
| Payroll Taxes .....  | 4,350          | 4,500          | 3,865.79                   |
| Exhibits & Programs .....                                      | 4,500          | 4,500          | 5,716.03                   |
| Conservation .....   | 2,000          | 2,000          | 2,444.62                   |
| Publications/Printing .....                                    | 7,000          | 7,500          | 6,594.72                   |
| Utilities .....  | 5,000          | 9,000          | 5,915.08                   |
| Interest/Amortization .....                                    | 3,600          | 4,700          | 818.87                     |
| Repairs .....  | 3,000          | 2,500          | 4,932.63                   |
| Supplies/Postage .....   | 6,000          | 4,500          | 6,901.68                   |
| Insurance .....  | 5,000          | 3,000          | 4,049.47                   |
| Subscriptions .....  | 600            | 800            | 519.80                     |
| Travel .....   | 1,000          | 1,000          | 570.04                     |
| Miscellaneous .....  | <u>1,000</u>   | <u>500</u>     | <u>4,320.64</u>            |
| Total Expense .....  | \$88,550       | \$90,100       | \$100,745.12               |
| Net Campaign Receipts .....                                    |                |                | \$194,503.28               |
| EXCESS OF RECEIPTS OVER DISBURSEMENTS FOR YEAR INDICATED ..... |                |                | <u>\$145,659.70</u>        |
| FUND BALANCE - Beginning .....                                 |                |                | <u>\$271,951.81</u>        |
| FUND BALANCE - ENDING .....                                    |                |                | <u>\$420,100.96</u>        |

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