

THE  
**QUARTERLY**

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

October 1988



# THE QUARTERLY

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**Cover:** This portrait of Bessie B. Hoard, president of the United Helpers Society of the City of Ogdensburg from 1913 until 1936, can be seen in the Portrait Gallery of the United Helpers Management Company, 732 Ford Street, Ogdensburg, (*Photograph courtesy of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.*)

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*Editor:* Nadine N. Jennings

*Contributing Editors:* Varick A. Chittenden  
Herbert F. Judd  
George F. McFarland  
Elwood M. Simons

*Advertising Editor:* Ruth McKean

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# The Founders of the United Helpers Society of the City of Ogdensburg: 1898 and On

by Katherine Briggs

*In 1986 the St. Lawrence County Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) decided to celebrate National Women's History Month and AAUW Week, which also occurs during the month of March, by preparing a series of profiles of North Country women. Now an annual project, these profiles are tributes to women whose achievements have either never been recognized or have been forgotten. An abbreviated version of this article, "Socially Prominent Women Founded Ogdensburg United Helpers," was prepared for the 1988 series and appeared in a March 1988 issue of the Ogdensburg Journal. The profile of the founders of the United Helpers Society of the City of Ogdensburg is intended as a tribute to all volunteers who give their time and effort for the public good.*

The story of the founding of the Society of United Helpers of the City of Ogdensburg in 1898 is one example of the energy and dedication of volunteers who establish and sustain a project designed to meet some need in the community. The Society's mission was "to help those it judges to be in need of its assistance." Its first goal was to provide care for homeless and destitute children. Now in its 91st year, the Society of United Helpers has undergone several organizational changes as it has adapted to meet changing needs in the community, and today United Helpers continues to fulfill the same mission. The name United Helpers Management Company more accurately describes the various responsibilities now assumed by the original Society of United Helpers. This article describes something of its beginnings.

The names sound like a roll-call of the socially prominent families of Ogdensburg around the turn of the century. A group of socially responsible women, they founded the Society of United Helpers in the City of Ogdensburg and built the Society, with community support, into a well-known and respected organization which continues to provide needed services.

There were twelve women at the first organization meeting held March 28, 1898, at the home of Dr. Silas E. Brown. In addition to the hostess, Mrs. Mary Brown, those present were: Mrs. W.L. Best, Mrs. H.C. Buckman, Miss Mary Deane, Mrs. O.W. Dodge, Mrs. Margaretta Hoard, Miss Mary Averell Knap, Mrs. Addie B. Newell, Miss Myra Smith, Miss Stark, Mrs. E. Vilas, and Mrs. George Wright.

The achievement of these women is documented in their secretary's book for recording the proceedings of the Society. At that first meeting they passed this resolution:

Whereas, recent experiences of several of the ladies here present seem to us proof that a society for the aid and protection of friendless children is an immediate necessity.



*The first Children's Home of the Society of United Helpers as it looked in 1902. (Photograph courtesy of the United Helpers Management Corporation)*

Resolved that we proceed to organize such a society by the election of proper officers.

Miss Mary Knap was the unanimous choice for president. Miss Mary Deane was elected vice-president. Mrs. Mary Brown became treasurer and secretary.

What were the "recent experiences" which prompted these women to establish such a Society? Their secretary's book elaborates no further. One might speculate that they had become aware of some homeless waifs or some children being misused. A retrospective in the *Ogdensburg Journal* printed during the United Helpers' 50th year of service recalls that three children in particular were running wild in Ogdensburg and the good people of the city became troubled.

The "immediate necessity" may have

been occasioned by the 1895 Child Welfare law in New York State which stipulated that if children could not be with their own parents, orphans and destitute children were to be placed in institutions or foster homes of the same religious faith as the parents. There were no such institutions in St. Lawrence County for non-Catholic children.

The Ogdensburg City Orphan Asylum had been founded in 1885 by the Grey Nuns of Ottawa, at the request of Bishop E.P. Wadhams. This provided asylum for the poor aged, sick, and orphans. Its peak year was 1901 when twenty Grey Nuns tended to 157 orphans, 98 aged persons, and 300 ill. In 1902 a separate hospital was built opposite the asylum on King Street. The diocese also had access to another Catholic orphanage: St. Patrick's Chil-



1910 postcard of the United Helpers Orphans' Home with annex. (Postcard courtesy of the United Helpers Management Corporation)

dren's Home in Watertown had been founded in 1896 by the Sisters of St. Joseph.

*Before Us: Studies of Early Jewish Families in St. Lawrence County 1855-1920*, by Jean Dobbie, Louis Greenblatt and Blanche Levine, mentions that there were enough Jewish families in Ogdensburg to formally incorporate as the Anshe Zophen (People of the North) Congregation in 1873. There is no mention of an institution for Jewish children. Another comment suggests that the small Jewish community took care of its own.

The numbers of indigent families varied as seasonal demands for labor fluctuated. The county was primarily agricultural. It was not until 1898 that construction was started on a power canal between the St. Lawrence and the Grasse Rivers, and it was several years later that Alcoa built its first aluminum plant in Massena. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the country, as a whole, experienced periodic economic depressions. During hard times relatives, churches, and kindly neighbors helped destitute families to the extent they could. The safety net provided by unemployment insurance benefits and workman's compensation was not yet in place. It was not until 1935 that the Social Security Act was passed, with some provision for dependent children.

At that first meeting on March 28, 1898, this handful of women drew up a Constitution for the Society stating:

Its object shall be to help those it judges to be in need of its assistance, but especially to care for homeless and destitute children, to supply their physical necessities, and while giving them

a home and shelter, see that they have opportunities for suitable education, endeavoring in all ways to promote their mental and moral improvement, that they may hereafter become useful and self-supporting members of the community.

Article 4 of their Constitution states: "Any regular annual subscription shall entitle the subscriber to membership in the Society of United Helpers and confer also the right to vote at annual elections." This is still the practice. The "subscription" is a pledge to work for the endeavors of the Society. They make no mention of religious denomination, but they record the decision that every church in the city willing to take part in the work of the Society was to have a representative on the Board of Managers. In addition to the elected officers, the following women served on the first Board of Managers: Mrs. Best, Mrs. Fred Burt, Mrs. Child, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. H. Proctor, and Mrs. G.L. Ryan.

It seems they had a clear idea of the immediate task at hand. Miss Stark was appointed to serve as committee to find a lady to be matron of a proposed home. Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Wright, and Mrs. Buckman were the committee to report on locating a suitable house. Mrs. S.E. Brown and Miss Smith were to appoint committees in the different churches. Miss Knap offered to give the proposed home when established certain articles of bedding, etc. remaining in her hands from another enterprise.

Today's planners and organizers would gasp at the purposeful speed and the impressive success of these women. That first meeting started a

flurry of activity. During the month of April they met five times in committee or as an entire group. Starting April 25, they established a pattern of monthly meetings. From the full-speed-ahead decisions recorded at these meetings, one assumes there was considerable unrecorded activity and planning in between. Their meetings opened with a prayer for strength and guidance. This tradition continues, as the Society's annual meeting opens with an invocation.

The work proceeded. They corresponded with the Home for the Friendless at Plattsburgh. They interviewed several prospective candidates for Matron of the Home, and selected Mrs. Alzina Milligan. The committee reported that Mr. Tinsdale had a suitable house to rent at 22 Congress Street. Mrs. Newell offered to be responsible for one month's rent. A committee was set up "to get names of 6 or 8 ladies to be secured as vouchers for six months' rent." They decided to admit children between ages 3 and 14.

Two months from the date of their first meeting, the record for May 28, 1898, describes the Home already providing care for three individuals: "one child fairly well clad; two needing almost everything in the clothing line." One impoverished mother asked to have her baby placed in the Home. She was offered a temporary home for herself and the child, with the understanding that she was to "give her services for her board." There is mention of someone pledging to pay six dollars per month for "her child's board at the Home."

Financial prospects in May 1898 might have daunted a lesser group of women. This budget, or "financial aspect of undertaking," was presented by a committee:

Expenses		Assets	
One month's rent	\$15.	Board	\$20.
Matron's salary	20.	Friend guarantee	5.
Help	10.		
Coal & kindling	8.		
Lighting	2.		
Food	25		
Total	\$80.		\$25.

That left \$55. to be raised by the Society. They decided to solicit through the participating churches. Two ladies from each church were appointed: Episcopal, Mrs. L. Hasbrouck and Mrs. Georgia Mathewson; Congregational, Mrs. Sam Leonard, Mrs. George Wright and Mrs. Curtis Bristol; Presbyterian, Mrs. Forsyth and one to be chosen; Methodist, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Dandy; Baptist, Mrs. Newell; and Universalist, Mrs. Best. Shortly after, the committee decided it would be more efficient to divide the city into districts rather than solicit according to church-

es.

Donations were adequate to pay for the first month of the Home's operation. This included \$25.00 for five weeks salary for the Matron, \$4.00 for four days of Help, and groceries. Mr. Sanford had donated 1½ tons of coal. A load of kindling had come from Mr. C. Dillingham. In July, the treasurer reported a bank balance of \$198.03. To compare 1898 with 1988, Robert Russell, chief executive officer of United Helpers Management Company, says the current expenses of the entire United Helpers organization come to over \$1 million each month.

Apparently the Society decided to solicit beyond the city district. On September 26, 1898, Mrs. Milligan reported the success of her soliciting in the country. She had collected \$2.75 in money, besides 30 pounds of butter, 10 dozen eggs, 5 pecks of beans, 25 bushels of potatoes, 1 gallon of vinegar, and turnips, cabbage, squash, carrots, etc. "making in all a very profitable list."

Perhaps this was the start of a harvest offering tradition which continued until about 1970. Individuals, churches, and various organizations donated food and canned goods. Cheryl Madlin, present executive secretary, has childhood memories of bringing canned foods to school for the United Helpers' collection. Older county residents recall picking up United Helpers' canning jars to be returned filled with preserves.

The first year of the Home's existence was a month-to-month financial worry. The June 6, 1898, minutes include the treasurer's report of: expenses \$120.21 and a balance on hand of \$7.46. Typical of the many details the founders attended to was this entry from the same meeting: "The children being unable to attend church when it rained, the chairman of the clothing committee was authorized to buy 6 umbrellas, hoping by their use to prevent the forming of bad habits."

As with any voluntary organization, fund-raising continued to take up much of their time. They sponsored galas, charity balls, concerts, dramatic presentations, and vaudeville shows. They had bridge parties, rummage sales, lawn socials, donation days, auctions, and teas. The United Helpers' silver tea became an annual social and fund-raising event. It was later combined with a bridge luncheon, and continued in this form until about 1976. The Society sold advertising space in their annual reports. They solicited money, and accepted contributions of goods, cash or services.

They enlisted the support of other individuals and organizations. The January 1900 minutes recommended that: "the thanks of the Society be

# THE PAGEANT

# "HIAWATHA"

JESSIE DELL LEWIS . . . DIRECTOR.

## AT THE FAIR GROUNDS

...THREE EVENINGS...

### JUNE 30--JULY 1-2.

### AT WOODFORD FARM

ONE MATINEE—AFTERNOON OF THURSDAY, JULY 1ST.

The tickets which are now selling are interchangeable. Good for any of the four performances.

The Ogdensburg City Band will assist at the opening performance (Wednesday evening).

Special frequent street car service both to Fair Ground and to Woodford Farm.

**GENERAL ADMISSION 25 CENTS.**

Reserved Seats and Automobile Parking Space (per person) 25 cts.

**A WONDERFUL PERFORMANCE IN AID OF A GREAT CHARITY.**

**SEATS ON SALE AT WILLIAMS DRUG CO.**

*Advertisement promoting the pageant "Hiawatha," one of the productions for the benefit of the United Helpers' Home. (Courtesy of the United Helpers Management Corporation)*



*Photograph of the pageant of "Hiawatha." (Photograph courtesy of the United Helpers Management Corporation.)*

given to Miss Deane, for her kindness in taking charge of the Christmas tree at the Home. To the Ladies of the Eastern Star, and to the 'Royal Arch Masons' for their gifts of money, and to Mr. Moore for his services as auctioneer

at the 'Old Curiosity Shop' sale."

The Golden Glow Club was one organization established in 1906 specifically to provide assistance to the United Helpers. The Golden Glow Girls sponsored social events as fund-raisers. The

JOHN C. HOWARD  
HONORARY CHAIRMAN

FELIX HULSER  
CHAIRMAN

WEBB GRIFFITH  
VICE CHAIRMAN

THOMAS SPRATT  
VICE CHAIRMAN

JULIUS FRANK  
VICE CHAIRMAN

EDWARD DILLINGHAM  
SECRETARY

SAMUEL W. LEONARD  
TREASURER

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

FRANK A. AUGSBURY  
W. G. BALL  
C. D. R. BELL  
W. H. BERO  
L. F. CUTHBERT  
DR. WM. CRAIG  
J. M. DALY  
G. F. DARROW  
S. L. DAWLEY  
R. J. DONAHUE  
J. E. FELL  
DR. W. B. HANBIDGE  
W. A. HAWKSHAW  
HENRY HOLLAND  
W. D. INGRAM  
MAX KATZMAN  
J. E. KELLY  
JOHN M. KELLOGG  
S. W. LEONARD  
G. J. MADDEN  
ATWOOD MARLEY

## Enlargement Campaign for \$75,000 Plus

JUNE 15-23, 1923

### UNITED HELPERS HOME

MRS. CHARLES DE V. HOARD, PRESIDENT

MISS MARTHA M. KEZAR, SUPERINTENDENT

CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS, McNAUGHTON MARKET

PHONE 794

OGDENSBURG, NEW YORK

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

EUGENE A. MULLIGAN  
R. H. MCEWEN  
W. A. NEWELL  
J. L. O'CONNOR  
G. L. RYON  
G. W. BISSONS  
A. E. SANSOUCY  
J. FRANK SHARP  
WM. L. SMITH  
DR. M. J. STEARNS  
CHARLES STEGER  
E. L. STRONG  
P. G. TADDIKEN  
C. M. TAIT  
J. C. TULLOCH  
JOHN B. TYO  
G. E. VAN KENNEN  
ROBERT WATERMAN  
F. D. WALLACE  
H. M. WHEATON

June 6th, 1923.

## THIRTY CAPTAINS ARE ENLISTED FOR BIG UNITED HELPERS CAMPAIGN

### ONE COMPLETE DIVISION WILL BE COMPOSED OF KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS MEMBERS — PROMINENT CITIZEN ENDORSE CAMPAIGN

Felix Hulser, Chairman of the enlargement campaign to raise \$75,000 and more for the United Helpers Home, announced an enthusiastic meeting was held last night at the Campaign Headquarters in the McNaughton Market of the Six Division Leaders and their 30 captains to organize the campaign.

Harry M. Wheaton leader of Division A, reports the following Captains in his Division:

- Team 1. George J. Madden
- Team 2. Wayne Lowe
- Team 3. W. Allen Newell
- Team 4. Wallace Overton
- Team 5. C. J. Porter.

John C. Tulloch, leader of Division B, reports the following Captains of Teams in his division.

- Team 6. Clark M. Bowman
- Team 7. Lawrence F. Cuthbert
- Team 8. Leo Frank
- Team 9. Herbert L. McCarter
- Team 10. W. Allen Bell

C. E. Williams leader of Division C, reports the following Captains of Teams in his Division:

- Team 11. Charles Steger
- Team 12. Charles C. Forrester
- Team 13. Howard B. Wallace
- Team 14. Roy F. Lavier
- Team 15. S. D. P. Williams.

Robert H. McEwen leader of Division D, announces the following teams Captains:

- Team 16. Frank N. Spencer
- Team 17. J. F. Sharp
- Team 18. D. J. Murton
- Team 19. Ralph Morrisette
- Team 20. C. J. Spaulding

Eugene A. Mulligan, Leader of Division E, announces the following captains:

- Team 21. Frank Ewart
- Team 22. John N. Cunningham
- Team 23. Leon B. Shaffrey
- Team 24. Arthur J. Tyo
- Team 25. James M. Daly

F. D. Wallace, leader of Division F, announces the following team captains:

- Team 26. James Walsh
- Team 27. George H. Mandigo
- Team 28. J. C. Howland
- Team 29. Smith L. Dawley
- Team 30. C. M. Robinson

All of the six Division Leaders and captains mentioned above were present at this meeting held last night together with John C. Howard Honorary Chairman of the campaign Julius Frank, Vice Chairman, and other members of the executive committee.

Mr. Hulser announces that he has received the following endorsements to the campaign from the following representative men:

Mr. J. L. O'Connor says, "I assure you that it affords me great pleasure to cooperate with your committee on the United Helpers Campaign and I will be more than pleased to assist in every way possible to further the cause in which we are all interested".

Mr. W. Allan Newell says, "I am greatly interested in your campaign for enlarging the facilities of the United Helpers Home. When the demands on such an institution are made clear to our citizens I know that

solicitations will be met with a ready response and I will be very glad indeed to be at your service."

Dr. William Craig of Potsdam says, "I gladly accept your appointment on the executive committee for the United Helpers Campaign, and will be ready to assist you in anyway I can to make this worthy cause a success. I know the needs out there to overcome the crowded conditions and every citizen should support it so that the desired amount may be procured."

John B. Tyo says, "I am pleased to acknowledge the receipt of your letter advising me of my appointment on the executive committee for the United Helpers Campaign. My connection with the City Orphanage for many years has always appealed to me as a work of splendid philanthropy and am convinced we cannot have too many institutions of this kind to care for homeless children and aged people and the effort to build an addition to the United Helpers Home should appeal to every citizen of this community. I will gladly cooperate with your committee and do all in my power for its complete success."

Eugene A. Mulligan, Grand Knight of the Ogdensburg Council of Knights of Columbus says, "Beg to assure you of my sincere desire to assist in every way possible the very worthy cause in which you are so deeply interested and you may feel confident Ogdensburg Council, Knights of Columbus will prove loyally cooperative in an endeavor to make drive a most successful one."

Mr Mulligan also advises that the members of his Council are enthusiastically by this campaign and he has, therefore, volunteered to produce his complete division of 30 members drawn exclusively from the Knights of Columbus.

Society's records note that by 1920 the Golden Glow Club had given \$6,889.50 plus some supplies and furnishings to the United Helpers Home. The Golden Glow Club continued this activity until the 1950s. A few members of this Guild still live in Ogdensburg.

United Helpers Auxiliaries, established throughout the county, proved to be a great asset. These volunteers were the fund-raisers in their separate communities, often working through their respective churches. Representatives from the auxiliaries served on the United Helpers board of managers. The *Ogdensburg Journal* account of the October 26, 1915, annual meeting of United Helpers states that twenty-six towns of the county were represented. The last of the auxiliaries formally ceased to exist about twenty years ago, when the Massena Auxiliary turned over its small bank account to United Helpers. Initially the auxiliaries also served as foster-home finders for the Home, and auxiliary members visited, i.e. supervised, the children placed in their communities. This particular function of the auxiliaries changed as the Society responded to changing needs in the community. For example, after 1959, when responsibility for indigent and homeless children had been assumed by other agencies, United Helpers focused on Homes for the elderly. Until 1972, United Helpers board members, representing different communities, served as an admissions committee who made home visits to assess requests for admission.

This kind of flexibility is possible within the terms of the Society's charter. In November of 1898, the ladies had consulted Mr. Louis Hasbrouck about designing articles of incorporation "to include all the possible present and future aims of the society." Their Charter of Incorporation was granted on February 23, 1899. It is on display in the Board Room of United Helpers Management Company at 723 Ford Street in Ogdensburg.

Gifts and legacies came from unexpected but much appreciated sources. The December 4, 1901, meeting reports "the very generous gift of Mrs. Mary P. Gill to the Society of United Helpers, said gift consisting of \$500 to be held in trust permanently and invested as should seem best, the proceeds to be used for the running expenses of the Society."

This was the start of an endowment fund. Mrs. Louis de Villers Hoard promptly enriched it by a gift of \$1,000. Memorial gifts were also obtained from 105 donors. By 1930, the endowment fund had grown to \$200,000. The endowment fund has continued to benefit from additional gifts and bequests, and now stands at \$1,298,600. Interest from



*These photographs of babies, children, and elderly ladies who were residents in the United Helpers Home show that the Home was indeed a wholesome "family" environment. Although no dates are given, the elderly were first able to become residents in 1910. (Photographs courtesy of the United Helpers Management Corporation)*

these monies has made it possible for the Society to undertake additional responsibilities and services as needed; the 1974 purchase of the house which is now the Group Home for Boys, operated by the St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services, is one example. Of the various facilities now managed by the organization, only the United Helpers Adult Home continues to be subsidized by the Society. The minutes of the United Helpers' meetings are a matter of public record since the Society continues to be a non-profit organization.

Members of the Society devoted much care and time to the operation of the Home and occasionally held their business meetings there. Children would arrive poorly clad. The Society organized church committees to make clothing. They purchased some items, sought donations, and were always glad to receive second-hand clothing in good condition. Professionals generously donated their services as medical director for the Home and for necessary legal and financial advice to the Society. When the first United Helpers Home to be built was in the planning stage, the architect almost certainly donated his time.

Occasionally the children needed medical attention. Dr. Brown was appointed as the first medical director in December 1898. As there is no mention of a stipend for Dr. Brown, it is likely that this was a volunteer service. He undertook to instruct the Matron "in case of sudden illness for whom she may send in case of his inability to attend." He was also expected to attend to the sanitary conditions of the Home. One child needed corrective surgery. At the November 1, 1898, meeting the Society recorded:

We are agreed to accept the offer of Dr. Brown to operate upon the legs of (name of child), and pay our share of the necessary expense, provided the Poor Master and Board of Supervisors of (name of town) who placed him under the care of United Helpers agree to do the same.

No additional discussion on this matter is recorded, but there is a subsequent note that the surgery had been done.

In June of 1898 the County Superintendent of the Poor, Mr. Barrows, had inspected and approved the Home. He reported it would accommodate fifteen or twenty children, and predicted the Society would have no trouble filling it with children and keeping it full. From May to December of 1898 a total of thirteen children had been cared for in the United Helpers Home. In 1899 more children were admitted—twenty-nine of them.

At the April 4, 1899, meeting the

Society discussed the necessity to provide larger accommodation for the children under its charge. Several houses had been considered, but none would answer the purpose. "It seemed to be the sense of the meeting that a proper house would have to be built, and it was decided to await the return of the President and let her select a committee to confer with an architect, submit plans and get estimates from a builder."

President Mary Knap and her committee acted promptly. In July 1899 the Society purchased a 2½ acre lot on the corner of Gilbert and State Streets. The ladies and gentlemen of the building committee announced that Mr. Williams was to be the architect for the New Home. This was to be a fine three-story brick building, on the site just in front of the present Golden Dome.

Mr. Louis Hasbrouck chaired the Society's first annual meeting, held October 10, 1899, in Library Hall. The treasurer's report showed:

receipts from all sources	\$1927.28
expenditures	<u>1686.73</u>
balance on hand	\$240.55

At the same meeting the Society reported on the progress of a separate Building Fund. This read as follows:

Subscriptions to Building Fund:	\$3609.88
Cash paid by subscribers	\$1224.59
From socials and entertainments	<u>163.79</u>
Cash balance for Building Fund	\$1388.38

The need for a larger Home was urgent. The Society of United Helpers seemed to have considerable faith and confidence in their enterprise. Nonetheless, they were facing the reality of serious financial constraints. A loan was considered. The building committee's recommendation was: "... subscriptions should foot not less than two-thirds of the cost before you proceed to contract for the building."

Special meetings were called for January 3 and January 31, 1900, for more deliberations. The following resolution was passed on April 30, 1900:

Resolved that the Building Committee be authorized to erect a building the cost of which shall not involve the Society in a debt to exceed \$3000.

At another special meeting held September 7, 1900, they took the plunge: "Resolved that the Society of United Helpers borrow from Elspeth Bell the sum of \$3000. upon the following terms . . ." repayment in ten years, 5% annual interest, with their real property as collateral. The Society applied "to the proper court for leave to mortgage its real property."

Again their motto seems to have been full speed ahead. The Society issued invitations to an Open House at

their New Home on New Year's Day, 1901. The children and Matron were already in residence. In 1904 they opened a babies' ward and continued to take in children. President Louise G. Bosworth in her annual report in 1908 stated that during its first decade the Society had sheltered 475 homeless children. The first mention of providing a home for the aged and infirm was in 1910 after the east annex had been built. This became the Old Ladies' Department and accommodated twelve elderly and infirm women.

It soon became evident that the United Helpers Home needed more room. The Society organized another major fund-raising effort in St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties. Their goal was to raise \$100,000 to build another annex. The communities responded to the volunteers' calls, and the money was raised. A much-needed south annex was completed in 1925 during the presidency of Bessie B. Hoard. The Society now estimated that they could accommodate 100 children at one time.

Children were brought to the Home by the Poor Masters or by the agent for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (S.P.C.A.), which included children as well as animals under its care. When the children were committed by a Justice of the Peace or were sent by the Overseers of the Poor a certain sum of money was paid by the towns. The October 1899 meeting records that: "The Poor Master of Macomb had paid for the care of the children sent to the Home by him, \$97.50."

Occasionally parents would request temporary placement of their child or children in the Home. They signed an agreement to pay for room and board, and in effect they relinquished custody of the child to United Helpers. Such was common practice at that time. Affixed to the cover of the Society's second book of records, starting March 5, 1901, is a copy of the State of New York 1901 State Board of Charities Rules governing the reception and retention of inmates and reports of institutions.

The children remained in the Home for varying lengths of time. Some could be returned to their own parents. Others were adopted or placed in homes which were located and then visited by the Society's volunteer members. The Society's fourth annual report states that twenty-seven children were placed by the Children's Aid Society, and eleven were taken to be placed by the New York State Charity Aid Association. By 1959 the Society had phased out its services to children as other agencies had assumed this responsibility.



*I hereby promise to pay to the SOCIETY OF UNITED HELPERS  
for the board and care of my* .....

*the sum of* ..... *per* ..... *If* ..... *weeks*  
*elapse without full payment being made. I agree to remove said*  
*child or to allow the officers of the Society to place* ..... *in a*  
*good, permanent home; and in that case I agree to RELINQUISH*  
**ALL CLAIM** *to said child.*

*Signing this Promissory Note guaranteed that if payment for the child's board and care was not made within the specified time period, either the child would be removed from the Home or all claim to the child would be relinquished and the officers of the Society could place the child in a "good, permanent home."* (Promissory Note courtesy of the United Helpers Management Corporation)

The children were not always eager to leave the Home. In her second annual report, President Mary Knap relates this episode:

There is almost always some pathetic story about each child that comes, but occasionally there is a refreshing bit of humor that lightens up the dark surroundings. For instance, when one of the wretched parents. . . succeeded in getting permission from a Justice of the Peace to take his little girls home with him, and they refused to go, clinging, crying to the matron, and saying to their father, 'you will take us back to just such a bad home as we had before; we can't go to school or church or be decent there.' And when at last he coaxed them by money and promises to go with him, he took them into a saloon and offered them beer and wine. They refused to take it; and while he was indulging himself in something stronger, they quietly engaged a hack with the money he had given them, and drove back to the Home where they still are.

Cheryl Madlin, present executive secretary of United Helpers, says that the children, now grown up, still occasionally return for a visit or write a letter recalling fond memories of their stay in the Home. The United Helpers Society always called it a Home, and indeed tried to make it a home rather than an institution. They now manage a variety of residential facilities, in which they try to maintain a feeling of "home."

The Matron for the Home was selected with great care. The Society was supportive and appreciative of the Matron's efforts to maintain a home-like atmosphere. The term "labor manage-

ment relations" may have been unheard of by the founders of the Society, but during the first year of the operation of the Home they decided to give Matron Alzina Milligan two weeks vacation with pay. They would employ a substitute, and if Mrs. Milligan wished, she could have an additional two weeks without pay. Subsequent reports frequently pay tribute to the Matron in charge.

The Constitution of the Society makes no reference to gender. Their second annual report lists two men on the Advisory Board. Men served as Medical Directors of the Home and provided needed medical care to the residents. Subsequent annual reports list men on various committees: Grounds and Garden, Investments, Building, and Fund-Raising. In 1952 the 55th annual report lists an all-female Board of Managers. The first man to break the tradition of a woman as President of the Board was Christopher B. Acker, who served from 1966 to 1968. At present the Board consists of twenty-four men and twenty-four women—all volunteers.

It would be difficult today to match the steadfastness and continued dedication of the handful of volunteers who started the Society of United Helpers. The first three presidents saw the Society well and truly launched during their 38 years of leadership. Mary Averell Knap was president from 1898 to 1906; Mrs. H.H. Bosworth served from 1907 to 1913; and Mrs. Charles D. Hoard served from 1913 to 1936. Their annual reports describe their aspirations and achievements. They were able to inspire and mobilize others in the community to help. One of the comments made by President Mary Knap in the Society's fourth annual report could well be echoed by any

1988 counterpart who is mustering a troop of volunteers: "Do not be discouraged if you find it hard to keep up the interest of your members." The founders of the Society of United Helpers persevered, and their work continues.

**Note:** The AAUW profiles of North Country women have included, among others, Rhoda Fox Graves, legislator; Eliza Kellas, educator and innovator; Julia Crane, teacher and musician; Marietta Holly, author; Olympia Brown, in 1863 the first woman graduate of St. Lawrence University, the first woman in the United States to be ordained as a minister by an established denomination, and a suffragette who lived long enough to see women attain the right to vote. Suggestions of women to be included in future Profile series are welcomed. Readers having suggestions are requested to either write or call K. Briggs, 11 Bradley Drive, Potsdam, New York 13676.

#### Acknowledgements

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#### About the Author:

Katherine Briggs is a retired social worker after many years with the St. Lawrence County Mental Health Services. She received her B.A. from the University of Saskatchewan, her M.S.W. from the University of Manitoba, and her A.M. from the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago.

# The Battle of the Windmill

by Arthur L. Johnson

*The text of the Canadian explanatory plaque placed on the Prescott Windmill reads as follows: "After the 1837 Rebellions many rebels fled to the United States where a few joined American sympathizers in a new attempt to overthrow British rule in Canada. On 12 November 1838 they landed 190 men here and seized this windmill and nearby buildings. The local people remained loyal, reporting to their militia units; in a few days 2,000 militia and regulars, supported by naval vessels, besieged the mill. Although British guns did little damage to the mill, the insurgents, seeing no escape, surrendered on the 16th. Eleven were later executed and 60 exiled to Australia." An American account of the Battle of the Windmill is detailed below.*

November 1988 is the 150th anniversary of the Battle of the Windmill, Northern New York's version of the Bay of Pigs. Late in the evening of Sunday, November 11, 1838, a strange convoy arrived in the river between Ogdensburg and Prescott, Upper Canada. A foolish, tragic drama began to unfold in which a few men and boys, mostly Northern New Yorkers, attempted to invade neighboring Canada to liberate its people from what they supposed was British tyranny. Politicians like to talk about the "undefended border," and the long friendship of Americans and Canadians. The historian, who knows better, always wants to say "Wait a minute. It was not always so."

A bit of background is in order. In the fall of 1837 rebellions had broken out in the provinces of Lower and Upper Canada, as Quebec and Ontario were then known. These were local rebellions and, although they called for independence, they were rebellions more against entrenched local elites than against the British crown per se. The rebellions failed (which is why we call them rebellions and our own a revolution). They failed partly from lack of organization and military skills but mostly because most Canadians, unhappy as they may have been with the oligarchic provincial governments, were simply not willing to shoot at British soldiers or contemplate separation from the mother country. So the



*H.F. Ainsley's April 1839 sketch of the Prescott Windmill and surrounding buildings. (picture courtesy of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association Archives)*

uprisings were quickly squashed, especially in Upper Canada.

Some of the rebel leaders, including William Lyon Mackenzie, the Scot editor who had fomented the movement in Upper Canada, fled to Northern New York where they found a sympathetic hearing. Mackenzie began recruiting Americans in spite of United States neutrality laws. He gathered an "army" of a few hundred Americans and Canadian exiles on Navy Island in the Niagara River, ostensibly to prepare for the liberation of Upper Canada. The army was never numerous enough to constitute a threat to the Canadian militia on the Chippewa shore. The sinking of their supply boat, the American steamer *Caroline*, on December 29 created an Anglo-American incident which might have gotten out of hand. President Martin Van Buren, an upstate New Yorker himself, took a strictly neutral position and urged Americans to avoid personal involvement in the unhappy affairs of Canada.

The press of upstate New York was mostly anti-British and most journals considered the Canadian rebellions the belated final chapter in the American Revolution (see Johnson, "War of Words," *Quarterly*, April 1985).

In the months after the *Caroline* incident a secret order known as the Hunters established chapters along the border to foment revolution in Canada. Despite warnings by the press and urgings of moderation by local leaders the activity continued. It did have to go underground because local merchants and civic leaders, fearing the loss of Canadian trade, urged respect for the law which forbade Americans to engage in the civil wars of other countries. But this was a time of depression, particularly hard for those on the bottom rungs: wage-earners and small tradesmen. The Hunters drew recruits from their ranks especially. They promised generous pay and 160 acres of land in Upper Canada after the liberation. This must have been attractive in that day when land was still the only source

of security and prestige. The victorious freedom fighters would have money, land and the gratitude of the liberated Canadians. Heady stuff!

One of the wilder manifestations of border adventurism was the band that travelled with Bill Johnston, the "pirate" of the Thousand Islands. Johnston had been made "Admiral of the Eastern Fleet" by Mackenzie at Navy Island. It must have gone to his head. On the night of May 29, 1838, Johnston's gang waylaid the Canadian steamer *Sir Robert Peel* at Wells Island where it had stopped to take on wood. The gang forced the crew and passengers ashore, looted the ship and burned it, shouting revenge for the *Caroline*. Now it was the Canadians' turn for outrage. Some Brockville militiamen took potshots at the American steamer *Telegraph* as it passed in the river. Governor William Marcy of New York offered rewards for the terrorists and the president ordered U.S. troops to Sackets Harbor and Plattsburgh.

Typical of the Hunter recruits was Nelson Truax, an apprentice harness-maker from Antwerp, New York, who wanted to "relieve the downtrodden and distressed people" of Canada. Like other such recruits he had an exaggerated idea of the oppressed condition of Canadians, most of whom were doing all right, thank you, as farmers or tradesmen like their counterparts across the river and lake. Truax joined an expedition projected by the Hunters for some point on the St. Lawrence River in late fall, 1838. Along with the standard 160 acres, the organizers promised recruits a flat payment of \$80 and service pay of eight dollars a month. The leader was "General" John W. Birge, and the marine part of the plan was under "Admiral" Johnston. The recruits were to gather at Salina, Oswego, Sackets Harbor and Watertown. Preparations included "intelligence" work. A spy named Wingate Davis spent late October in Upper Canada where Canadian Hunters assured him Canadians would rise at the

first sign of help from the States. This is like the CIA "intelligence" that led President Kennedy to unleash the ill-fated Cuban adventure in 1961.

Salina recruits included a salt manufacturer, Christopher Buckley, who brought some of his workers along. Eighteen from Salina took a steamer north and assembled at the Amsterdam Hotel in Watertown where they heard speeches from General Birge and Colonel Martin Woodruff. Birge spoke of an expedition of 20,000 and he promised the recruits that Canadians would join them in thousands once they landed. At this point several of the volunteers went home and the fewer than 400 left made up a considerably smaller force than Birge had figured in his illusions. It was a strange assortment, in the words of one account, of "hard-bitten adventurers, idealists and mere youths out for a lark." Most were young but the ages ranged from Laurent Mahliot, 14, to Jeremiah Winnegar, 59.

Captain Cleve, of the steamer *United States*, downbound on its regular run from Lewiston to Ogdensburg on the Sunday evening of November 11, must have wondered at the strange complement of male passengers. The vessel had left Oswego with 150 of them at nine o'clock that morning and had picked up more at Cape Vincent, French Creek and Millen's Bay. The steamer had also picked up for towing two schooners, a standard procedure since sail ships preferred not to have to thread the Thousand Islands under sail. The schooners held the weapons of the force and more men below decks.

As the flotilla neared Ogdensburg, the troops were put aboard the two schooners and their purposes became clear. Admiral Johnston commanded one schooner and a Polish adventurer, Nils Von Schoultz, the other. General Birge, who had donned a splendid uniform and a sword, remained on the steamer. When they arrived between Ogdensburg and Prescott at about 11 p.m. the schooners were cast off to land their troops on the Canadian shore. The steamer put in to Ogdensburg. Johnston's schooner ran aground and stuck fast but Von Schoultz's landed at Windmill Point, two miles below Prescott, and the deluded liberators set up their beachhead in and around the stone mill, still visible there, and its outbuildings. There they prepared to stand off attack or to welcome reinforcements.

General Birge became quite "ill" and decided not to cross over and assume his field command, although the other schooner was finally freed and did make trips across on Monday. Both he and Johnston decided, apparently, that discretion was the better part of valor and that they should direct the attack

from Ogdensburg. This elicited considerable cynical comment from the troops later. The luckless Von Schoultz ended up in command of the expedition and for his troubles would hang at Fort Henry.

The valiant Truax, harnessmaker of Antwerp, was on the schooner that went aground but managed to get himself over to the Windmill to join his mates next day. It would cost him a trip to Van Diemen's Land. As to the two leaders, safe in Ogdensburg, a writer on the *Albany Argus* commented: "I suppose they have their excuses which I hope may be satisfactory to the poor fellows on the point if they should survive to hear them."

His doubts were accurate. As soon as the steamer docked someone sent word over to Brockville, and the Brockville militia were aroused from their beds at 2 a.m. and sent flying down the road to Prescott to repel the Yankee invasion. By the time they arrived the invaders were dug in behind stone cover. The militia decided to wait for reinforcements and cannon. The "Patriots," as the invaders styled themselves, managed to get two small cannon across on a scow to their beachhead on Monday between intermittent appearances of a British gun steamer, the *Experiment*. On Monday night the militia received reinforcements, including 70 British marines and soldiers, Glengarry militia from Prescott, 140 of the 9th Provincial Battalion and two more gunboats. On Tuesday morning 300 Dundas Militia arrived and part of the Grenville militia.

At this point the invaders, perhaps 200 strong, ought to have known the game was up. Instead of rising under the standard of liberty, the Canadians had turned out in militia companies to shoot at their liberators. British troops were coming and British gunboats in the river made reinforcement from New York State difficult to impossible. Also a contingent of two companies of U.S. troops arrived in Ogdensburg late on Monday to seal off the border.

The British and Canadians attacked on Tuesday, the 13th, from land and water. Spectators lined the Ogdensburg shore to watch the sharp two-hour battle. Outnumbered as they were, the Patriots had a strong position in the stone buildings and fought well. The attackers backed off to await the arrival of bigger cannon. Little happened on Wednesday or Thursday. There were 117 left in the Patriot lines.

Some accounts say that the Patriots had a chance to pull out on Thursday evening. For some reason the British gunboats left the scene. The American steamer Paul Pry went across to evacuate the windmillers and they refused the last chance to leave. Edwin C.

Guillet (*Lives and Times of the Patriots*) says the Ogdensburg postmaster, a man named King, hopped ashore first on the point and told the beleaguered troops to hold their ground, that reinforcements were on the way. Suffice it to say they did not leave though the trap may have been opened for a moment.

They were indeed trapped. By noon on Friday the 15th a flotilla of craft had brought in 800 British soldiers and some big cannon on floating batteries, capable of hammering the stone buildings to pieces. The Patriots tried twice to surrender and the troops ignored their white flags. Finally their surrender was demanded and conceded. There were 108 of them left at that point. They were marched to town by the regulars who had to protect them from the militia and sent on ships to the prison at Fort Henry in Kingston.

Some of the prisoners wrote of their feelings of bitterness because they had been deceived in the first place and then betrayed by their leaders. Jeremiah Winnegar of Brownville wrote that even clergymen had assured him of the rightness of the cause. Von Schoultz, under sentence of death, wrote, "Let no further blood be shed. Believe me from what I have seen, that all the stories about the suffering of the Canadian people were untrue." He and ten others, including Martin Woodruff of Watertown, were condemned and hanged. About 60 others were later transported to Van Diemen's Land, today the green isle of Tasmania, Australia, then Britain's version of the gulags. The young and relatively innocent in the eyes of the Canadian court were pardoned and released in the following spring and summer.

New York State newspapers lamented the foolishness and mourned the suffering of the brave if misled Windmillers, but the Canadian press took a different view, as witness the *Prescott Sentinel* in January 1839:

As we have long predicted would be the case, judging from the conduct of the American government and American citizens during the last two or three years, our town has been invaded by a large body of pirates, murderers and robbers, mostly citizens of the United States, who, encouraged by men of property and influence throughout the Union, have dared to land upon British soil for the purpose of putting to death every loyal subject of Her Majesty; plundering and destroying their property and imposing upon the Canadas a licentious republican government . . .

Stephen S. Wright, one of the invaders, reflected upon the patriotism of



The windmill in its current state of restoration by Parks Canada. (Photograph by N.N. Jennings)



The commemorative plaque on the Windmill today. The text reads: Historic Sites Monuments Board Canada: Pro Patria in Memory of Lieut. William S. Johnson, 83rd Regiment; Captain George Drummond, and Lieut. John Dulmage, Grenville Militia; and the Non Commissioned Officers and Men of the 83rd Regiment, Royal Marines, Glengarry Highlanders, 9th Provisional Battalion, Dundas Militia, Grenville Militia, and the Brockville and Prescott Independent Companies Killed in This Action. (Photograph by N.N. Jennings)

the Windmillers who took seriously the mandate to spread the cause of liberty:

When Greece tore the crescent from her standard, a Bozzaris and a Byron were ready to yield up their lives in her defense and had not success sanctified the cause of American independence, Washington, Lafayette, Franklin and the elder Adams would have graced a gibbet within the tower of London and are the Canadian Patriots less the martyrs of liberty because victory perched not upon their banner? (*Narrative and Recollections of Van Dieman's Land*)

They may have been deluded but they were not pirates. His account heaps scorn upon Birge and Johnston, the "general" and the "admiral", "walking bravely and gallantly in the streets of Ogdensburg." He praises Von Schoultz, Woodruff and Dorethus Abbey, who stayed with them, never lied to them and died bravely on the gallows. He was especially resentful of the spectators who encouraged them and left them to their fate:

During the engagement, I looked

often toward the shores of liberty, and saw thousands thronging the beach at Ogdensburg, whose faint cheers reached up across the wave, and it embittered our hearts to know and feel that they whose tongues could beguile so successfully had not the moral courage to aid us in the time of trial.

Nelson Truax, the young harness apprentice, was pardoned and, after some months in jail, returned to his trade in Watertown. He fought with the 4th New York Infantry in the Civil War and lived until 1915. His life had spanned a good deal of American history. Surely as a boy he knew people who remembered the Revolution and the War of 1812. Those memories created this antipathy for Britain, the ancient foe. He nearly survived to see it the new ally.

Sad was the tale of Orrin Blodget, 22, of Pamela. He cared little for the cause. His 17-year-old brother had joined the expedition and their mother persuaded Orrin to go and bring him back. Orrin crossed over to Windmill Point, presumably on Monday the 12th, but found Von Schoultz unwilling to

lose even one soldier. Orrin offered to take his young brother's place and Von Schoultz agreed. So young Ambrose went home to Pamela and Orrin stayed on to serve the cause he cared nothing for. He received a death sentence, later commuted to transportation, which meant Van Diemen's Land.

Linus Miller, who wrote about it later in *Notes of an Exile to Van Diemen's Land*, had gone into Canada as an agent of the Canadian Refugee Relief Association in early 1838. Most of the "respectable citizens" with whom he spoke complained of the system and admired the United States constitution. They complained of Tory oppression of suspected rebels and told him they were ready to revolt but only with massive American help:

When sufficient numbers come to give some hope of success, we are ready to support them with our property and our lives. If there are any LaFayettes, Kosciuskos, and DeKalbs among your countrymen let them come to our aid; and, whether we prosper or not, they will at least be rewarded with our gratitude.

Whether there is truth in this we shall never know. Surely the appearance of less than 200 liberators was insufficient to encourage many Canadians to risk the gallows. Miller is unrepentant:

Let those who prize not our own glorious institutions, who have forgotten that they were purchased in part by the blood of foreigners - who have no compassion for the woes of others . . . - who are TORIES in heart . . . who are COWARDS and dare not fight lift up their hands in righteous horror and holy indignation at the depravity of heart which led a youth of twenty years of age to join his fate with the oppressed Canadians.

Prescott ought to have been the final episode in this story but it was not. There was an abortive attempt on Windsor from Detroit and an attempt to blow up the Canadian steamer *Great Britain* which we can only describe as pointless terrorism of the kind that is rife in our time. The movement gradually petered out by 1840. Canadian authorities had been worried by the inability of American authorities to police their own border. The United States Army at the time numbered fewer than 6000 officers and men, mostly deployed on the western frontier to watch the Indians. Neither president nor governor dared to embody the border militia because of their Patriot sympathies. However, after Prescott, the incursions of the Patriots had little more than nuisance effect and the American press withdrew its sympathy and became downright hostile to their shenanigans.

Guillet's book attributes the failure of the Patriot enterprise to the "complex nature and divided leadership" of the movement. If Prescott is an example it was also a cowardly and inept leadership, but I think this hardly explains the failure. The movement was based upon a false premise: that the Canadian people were ripe for revolt. Events proved that they were not. It was this same false premise that led to the invasion attempt at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. In that case the federal government gave support to the invasion instead of feebly opposing it as in the "Patriot War." In both cases the "liberators" claimed that they failed because American support was inadequate. There is truth in this too. Had the United States really wanted to invade the Canadas in 1838 or Cuba in 1961 it could have done so. In both cases the invasion would have led to a wider war which was not in American interest at either time. In both cases exiles exaggerated the fertility of the ground.

It is true of course that Patriot command was divided and the "troops" had no military training. They never mustered the numbers necessary to over-

whelm militia stiffened by considerable numbers of British regulars. After Prescott the New York State press cooled swiftly toward further filibusters. The *Rochester Republican*, on November 19, hoped that the Windmill tragedy would cool the "tempestuous spirits" on the border. The *St. Lawrence Republican* of Ogdensburg concluded that the Canadians did not want or appreciate liberty and that annexation of Canada by the United States might not be a good thing. It would mean a larger land mass to defend and it would bring in the French minority, a turbulent lot. The *New York Journal of Commerce* wrote on January 9:

The game of pirating upon our neighbors has been carried far enough; and a little too far. Neither Canada nor Britain can stand it much longer. The American people would not have borne it so long. Let it be understood that any individuals who shall commit crimes (in Canada) will be ferreted out if they return and given up to the British authorities for punishment, and we predict the "patriot" operations will henceforth be very much curtailed in the proportions.

The arrest and imprisonment of Mackenzie in June 1839 helped to discourage further activity and the mercy of Canadian authorities in releasing many of the younger prisoners in March and August mitigated some of the bitterness on the New York side.

John A. Haddock's *History of Jefferson County* concludes that Windmill Point was "one of the most foolish and ill-conceived expeditions that was ever undertaken." He was right of course but it was just one of a considerable list of interventions, public and private, into the affairs of our neighbors, beginning with the invasion of Canada in 1775 and continuing in Central America as this article is written. What, if any, is the common thread? S.D. Clarke, in *Movements of Political Protest in Canada*, says that while some may have had economic motives in the Patriot movement, the "general support of the movement developed out of the sentiments and feelings deeply embedded in the thinking of the population." These would be the sentiments that took the nation to war with Mexico eight years later, the sentiments New York editor John L. O'Sullivan summed up in the phrase "manifest destiny." They surely include an assumption of American superiority and the assumption that, deep down, other peoples want to be like us. There is an unwillingness to see ourselves as in any way like other nations, subject to temptations of power. There is the sense of American omnipotence, then in North America, later in

the world at large and unhappily still with us after lessons to the contrary.

The textbooks in American and Canadian history say nothing about the Battle of the Windmill and it will be little remarked on this 150th anniversary. It was a small affair and it failed. Yet there are lessons to be drawn from it if only lessons in folly, delusion and courage. If the point of history is to find meanings in the human past, this little episode may have its uses.

The windmill is still there on a grassy promontory, visible from the Ogdensburg waterfront. It looks like a lighthouse today and may once have served that purpose. There is a road in to it and there is a plaque to the British and Canadian units that fought there, none to the invaders.



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*Remington Avenue, Norfolk. These houses were built by the St. Regis Paper Mill for their workers, circa 1915. (Photograph courtesy of the Norfolk Museum)*

## History of the Hungarian People in St. Lawrence County

*by Marcia Eggleston*

*Since the turn of the century, Hungarian people have continued to settle in St. Lawrence County. Integral to the development of the North Country economy and active supporters of the schools and churches, the Hungarian people have retained their pride in their Hungarian heritage.*

Hungary at the turn of the century was a poor country. The majority of the population were farmers. During the fifteen years prior to the end of World War I, the country was ruled by Count Steven Tisza. The majority of the people of Hungary had very little to say about public affairs. Tisza was adamantly against all attempts to introduce universal manhood suffrage into Hungary. He believed that only the aristocracy knew how to govern the country. Under his system, Hungary appeared to be an extension of the feudal system into the twentieth century.

In 1900, eighty-seven percent of the peasants owned fewer than ten jochs (equal to 1.07 acres). The majority of the peasants owned no land at all. Only four percent of those who owned land had enough to allow them to live decently. The small farmer's plight deteriorated in time instead of improving, due mainly to the competition of overseas grain. This situation set the stage for the mass exodus which soon followed.

Emigration began to rise in 1880,

when 4,364 left the country. By 1900, 54,767 had left Hungary for the United States and other countries. By 1907, this figure rose to 193,460. Between the years 1871-1913, 1,893,649 emigrants left Hungary. Only a small percentage of these people returned to Hungary to buy land and settle there again. Many immigrated to Canada and then to the United States, crossing over at Cornwall and settling in Massena and Norfolk. In this way, they could defeat the quota of immigrants allowed in from Hungary.

The building of the paper mill in Norfolk began in 1899 with gravel and cement drawn by horse and carriage. The mill opened in 1901 making newspaper. At the same time, the canal was dug and ALCOA was built and opened in 1903.

According to the census records for 1900, the first Hungarian in St. Lawrence County was John Jacobs, who came to the United States in 1887. He lived in Massena and was a canal foreman. His wife, Mary, came to the United States in 1890, also from Hun-

gary, and they were married here in 1892. By 1900 there were approximately 40 Hungarian immigrants in Massena and a handful in Norfolk. By 1910, there were approximately 150 Hungarian immigrants in Norfolk and over 300 in Massena. Most of these people were men who worked in the paper mills of Norfolk and at ALCOA in Massena. Many of these men came to the United States by themselves and at first intended to go back to Hungary after they had made some money. But the majority decided to stay here permanently and sent for their wives or girlfriends or eventually married someone here.

George and John Molnar were brothers who came to Norfolk from Hungary in 1905. They were instrumental in getting other Hungarians to come to Norfolk. Steven Gang came to Norfolk around 1910. He landed at Ellis Island and made his way to Norfolk. He was one of the many Hungarians who worked in the paper mill. When he first went to work, wages were ten to fifteen cents an hour; rent was four or



*The new hardware store and picture show, West Main Street, Norfolk, circa 1910. (Photograph courtesy of the Norfolk Museum)*



*Main Street, Norfolk, before the 1915 fire. (Photograph courtesy of the Norfolk Museum)*

five dollars a month. It took about a week's wages to pay for the rent.

Most of the Hungarians in Norfolk lived on West Main Street. There was a foot bridge across the Raquette River

to Remington Avenue which the men used to go to the paper mill. There were several boarding houses in this area, as there were in Massena, where the new immigrants would live until

they learned the language and could get work. These boarding houses were owned by other Hungarian immigrants.

Michael Kormanyos came to Massena in 1912 from Turterebes. He had heard

about jobs available from others in the town who wrote home about Massena. He saved his money and brought his wife over in 1913. They lived in one of the boarding houses in Massena, where his wife worked as a cook for the other boarders until they could save enough to buy their own home. This was typical of many of the Hungarians who came to Massena. They lived in the same section of town, the Woodlawn, Sycamore, Spruce Street area, where there were many boarding houses owned by Hungarians.

A second wave of Hungarian immigrants arrived in the United States around 1920. With the end of World War I in 1919, Hungary was broken up and tracts of land were given to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania and the Soviet Union. The town of Turterebes, where most of the St. Lawrence County immigrants came from, was now part of Romania. Many young men left Romania to avoid mandatory military service for a country they felt no ties to. By this time, stricter quotas were in effect for immigration to the United States, and many Hungarians went to Canada or other countries like Brazil and Portugal first and then to the United States. Some Hungarians came to

the United States illegally by crossing the St. Lawrence River by boat and landing in Massena. Mrs. Katherine Schonberger was one of these people, but avoided deportation because she married soon after she arrived in Norfolk. Mrs. Steven Myers was not as lucky; she married after she arrived in Norfolk but her husband had not received his citizenship yet. At this time, aliens had to live in the United States for five years before they could become citizens. Because her husband had been here only two years, Mrs. Myers was deported first back to Canada and then to Romania. Her son, Frank Myers, was born there. They were not allowed to return for three years; the first time Frank Myers saw his father was when they arrived in Norfolk in the spring of 1926, when he was three years old.

Mr. Myers remembers that it did not take him very long to learn English. He believes it was easy because he was so young. He does not remember any bad feelings between the Hungarians and the other residents of Norfolk. When asked about his trip from Romania, Mr. Myers said that his mother was seasick all the way over. There were kind people on the boat who would take him down to eat and bring food

back to their room for his mother. His father was able to send money for their return, so they had a nice trip.

The Depression began soon after they arrived in Norfolk. Steven Myers worked in the boiler room of the paper mill. Because the mill worked under steam pressure and had to have a boiler worker there constantly, he worked all the time. The Myers family raised a cow, a couple of pigs and chickens, and grew their own vegetables. Mr. Frank Myers remembers keeping all the food in the cellar, all the canned goods, apples that were individually wrapped, sauerkraut and smoked meat. He remembers that they didn't always have many clothes, but there was always enough to eat.

The second wave of immigrants who came in the 1920s also settled in West Norfolk; this part of town came to be known as "Hunk Town." The families all had fences around their yards and owned a cow, some pigs and chickens, and had gardens. Life was hard even here, but it was still better than life in Hungary or Romania.

Mr. Louis Honer, who came to Norfolk from Deferiet in 1924 to become president of the St. Regis Paper Mill, said that between the four mills in



*John Margittay (left) and friends, Romania, 1923. (Photograph courtesy of Margaret Margittay)*



Norfolk, East Norfolk, Raymondville and Chase Mills, there were about 800 men working, the vast majority being Hungarian. He remembers them as being very hard workers trying to make a good living for their families. The workers received only thirty-five cents an hour, or roughly \$14.00 a week, which did not leave much when bills were paid.

Some families left St. Lawrence County to join other Hungarian communities in places like Watertown, Buffalo, Detroit and Cleveland. During the Depression some people had to be laid off at the paper mill and ALCOA. At ALCOA, they tried to keep the married men working and only lay off the single men. The paper mill tried to keep as many people working as they could, even if it was only two or three days a week.

Some Hungarians left and then returned to St. Lawrence County. Steven Gang was one of these men. He went to Detroit and worked in the auto factories until 1924 when he moved back to Norfolk. He met his wife in Detroit; even though they had come from the same town of Turterebes in Hungary, they did not know each other there.

The Hungarian people worked hard to build a life for themselves in St. Lawrence County. They were industrious and resourceful people who were also strongly religious. Most Hungarians are either Greek or Roman Catholic, and the Church was very important to the immigrants. Children were named after the saint's day that they were born closest to. Their Saint's Day was sometimes celebrated more than their birthday was. This tradition was continued when they came to the United States.

During the pastorate of Reverend John J. Kelly at the Church of the Visitation of Norfolk (1930-1935), the original back wall was removed. Three rows of pews were added in the front of the church and two more stained glass windows. One of these windows, depicting St. Stephen, the patron saint of Hungary, was a gift from the Hungarian people. The Hungarians worked hard to raise money for this window by soliciting door-to-door and having suppers. In 1942, when Father Albert Farrell was pastor, one side altar was donated by the Hungarian people, and in 1944, a rug for the sanctuary and the altar railing were donated by Joseph Demeter.

My grandfather, John Margittay, left Hungary in 1926 at the age of 17 and went to Canada where his father was working. He first worked in the rock mines of Gatineau. His father, Paul Margittay, had Canadian citizenship and applied for a visa to come to the United States. Since my grandfather



*John and Margaret Margittay, New York City, 1928. (Photograph courtesy of Margaret Margittay)*

was still a minor, he came to the United States on his father's visa. They went to work in New York City doing different odd jobs. My grandfather visited Norfolk in 1937 and moved to Norfolk permanently in 1945. His father had planned to bring the whole family to live in the United States, but his mother refused to leave her homeland and would not travel in a boat. Paul Margittay returned to Hungary to stay in 1932.

Several more Hungarian families came to Norfolk in the 1960s and 1970s. Margaret and Tony Breg and their daughter, Ilona, came to Norfolk in 1969. Margaret Breg's father, Elek Schwartzkopf, had been here since the 1920s.

Charles Kovacs came to Norfolk to visit in 1971 and stayed for about a year. He came back to the United States in 1974-75 and defected at this

time. His wife, Gizella, and daughters, Gizella and Ilde came over in 1979.

In February 1987 Ilona Breg's sister and brother, Eva Enache and Joe Breg, brought their families to Norfolk to live. They had come to Norfolk to visit about 1983 and decided they wanted to live here. Eva Enache was not allowed to leave with her parents in 1969 because she was engaged to a Romanian citizen. Her husband, Sandu, came to visit in 1984 and decided to stay. It took 2½ years to gain permission for his wife and children to leave the country. They are the most recent immigrants from Romania (the area that was formerly part of Hungary).

The Hungarian people have contributed greatly to the history of St. Lawrence County. From the late 1890s they have manned the paper and pulp mills of Norfolk, built the power canal, and helped ALCOA become one of the major



*Katherine Schonberger, standing at left, Wendell and Steven Schonberger, sitting and other family members, circa 1928. (Photograph courtesy of Katherine Schonberger)*

industries of the North Country. They have become farmers, teachers, restaurateurs, hairdressers, and priests. Hungarians are in virtually every profession in our area. They have supported the schools and churches. The Hungarian people have become American citizens while still keeping and honoring their rich traditions.

#### **Acknowledgments**

The author would like to thank the following people for their generous contributions to this article, for without their help it could never have been written: Margaret Margittay, Margaret and Lawrence Connelly, Katherine Schonberger, Frank Myers, John Gang, Margaret Kish, John Kormanyos, Chris Kormanyos, and Rita Murphy.



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

Marcia Eggleston is currently the librarian at the Norwood-Norfolk Central School. She received her B.A. from Potsdam College of SUNY and her M.L.S. from SUNY Albany. A previous contributor to *The Quarterly*, Mrs. Eggleston lives in Massena with her husband, Mike, and their son, Jon.



*Hungarian wedding of John Pirscuik and Mary Almasz, 1928, at Almasz Farm on Knapps Station Road, Norfolk. (Photograph courtesy of Katherine Schonberger)*

# One Hundred Years of Masonic Service

## Ogdensburg Lodge No. 128, F. & A. M., Ogdensburg, New York

by John M. Nichols

*The following article was written by the late John M. Nichols in 1948 in commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Ogdensburg Lodge 128, F. & A.M. receiving its warrant. In the small towns as well as the cities of upstate New York, the emblems of Masonic Lodges are a reminder of the strength of the Masonic tradition. This article, submitted by James S. Nichols, son of John M. Nichols, presents the beginnings of Ogdensburg Lodge 128, F. & A.M. within the larger context of United States history.*

**John M. Nichols (1884-1963)** was a member of a family long active in charitable work. In 1909 he married Nellie Haley, whose mother, Mrs. Charles Haley, was agent for the Ogdensburg Relief Committee from 1911 until her death in 1927, Mrs. Haley's obituary is recorded in the Society of the United Helpers' Scrap Book along with those of others who had given extensive service to the organization. Mr. Nichols was past master of Ogdensburg Lodge 128, F. & A.M., an elder of the First Presbyterian Church, a Director of the Salvation Army Advisory Board, and helped to found the Charlton School for Wayward Girls, Burnt Hills, New York. As Chief Probation Officer from 1915 until 1938, he set up the first St. Lawrence County Probation System. His obituary published in the October 3, 1963, *Ogdensburg Journal* describes Mr. Nichols as a man known for his friendliness: "Perhaps more than anything he was a guiding light for hundreds of youngsters, boys and girls, too, who needed help with adolescent problems. He took them into his heart and into his own home and helped them chart their future courses."

On March 27, 1848, Ogdensburg Lodge No. 128 received its warrant from Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in New York City, having operated under a dispensation since July of the previous year. The first Master was George Guest, and the other officers were Sylvester Gilbert, Senior Warden; Royal Vilas, Junior Warden; R.D. Searles, Treasurer; Abijah Abbott, Secretary; Joel Mack, Senior Deacon; R. Webster, Junior Deacon; and Sumen Newell, Tiler. W.A. Kingsbury performed the installation.

Thus was begun what is commemorated this year by Ogdensburg Lodge No. 128 - one hundred years of Masonic service. If we are to evaluate those years truly, we must look beyond the record of what was done in the Lodge, which is not too copious. Masons have ever busied themselves in the affairs of



*The Ogdensburg Masonic Temple today. (Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Charles F. Haley)*

the community and their own beloved country, so that the record of their work is to be found not in the Lodge books but in history itself.

It is customary to think back over a span of time with a faint condescension - as if we could take credit to ourselves for developments in which we had no part. But if a review of events in former years is to be truly a guide post to the future, an effort must be made to understand the spirit of the times and the qualities of the men who guided those events, whether for good or for evil.

The year 1848 was also a year for choosing a new president, and the New York State electoral vote was the influential factor in the election of Zachary

Taylor. The war with Mexico in 1846 had created the new state of California and it was the question of whether or not to admit it to the Union as a slaveholding state that kept the first two years of Taylor's presidency - which were the last years of his life - in a turmoil. Certainly he had been about to insist that California be a free state when Millard Fillmore became the president and promptly put through a series of compromises that held off war for another decade.

Even within the state, political feeling ran high. We may look back with pity on communities that did not have the radio or television and where even the mail was apt to be late. But they had the advantage of taking longer to ab-



*James F. Nichols being installed on January 12, 1954, as Master of Massena Lodge No. 513, F. & A.M. by his father, John M. Nichols, Senior Past Master of Ogdensburg Lodge No. 128. It was just forty years lacking one day that the elder Mr. Nichols was made Master of his Lodge. The Massena Lodge had the largest membership of any Masonic Lodge in northern New York, totaling nearly 500 members. (Photograph courtesy of James S. Nichols)*

sorb and discuss the news when they did get it and New York stater were notably well informed. Political lines were not so closely drawn and a new political party often grew up overnight. Such political party names as the Antirenters, the Hunkers and the Barnburners are part of our heritage and influenced men's thinking on many important questions.

So the Masons who held that first Ogdensburg Lodge meeting in 1848 had to be men of decision and courage. The times were no less turbulent than our own, although we have lost perspective looking backward. We must remember that these men, and among them prominent Masons, were building for the future - for today. What they did stood up well under the test of time.

New York was just beginning to take its place as the "Empire" state, the leading state in manufacturing, in the production of textiles and dairy products, such as butter and cheese. The factory movement was a scant ten years old but already the manufacture of leather goods alone in New York State amounted to twenty-two million dollars value each year. More iron was being produced in New York than in Pennsylvania and the steel mills were beginning their rise to power. New York led in the production of musical instruments including organs and had

extensive manufacturing of furniture, paper, glass and candy.

The railroads of 1848 were a saga of themselves. The consolidation of the various New York State railroads was then beginning although the "iron horses" were not yet twenty years old. They had attained a speed of twenty-five miles an hour but it often took nine hours to travel one hundred fifty miles allowing stop-overs for the big meals consumed en route. However, that was fast enough for most traveling men of the time, and compared to travel by water or horse and buggy, it was the jet propulsion of its day.

It was a period of trial and error, a good old American custom that has brought us many innovations and kept us young in heart. Some travellers from the Orient became convinced that the production of silk in America was a wonderful way to find new fortunes and tried it steadily for many years, finally putting it on a commercial basis in 1846. In the ensuing two years the vision died slowly and in 1848 silk was acknowledged to be more readily imported.

There was a movement afoot, too, to send the Negroes back to Africa, to form there new colonies and communities of their own. It was hoped by this means to avoid the clash of the War Between the States, which was clearly

foreseen by many but, although the Colonization Plan was endorsed by great groups and enjoyed varying degrees of public favor, it was not destined to be the solution to the slavery question.

There was also an attempt to start a grand opera company in New York City, but the lusty young America of that day was not ready for culture in a big way and that movement failed too, for the moment.

However, there were many movements afoot which have been successfully carried out or are still burning questions of the day. Masons had always interested themselves in the education of children, and in the early days of the nineteenth century Grand Lodge in New York City and several Lodges throughout the state provided the necessary money for the poorer children to attend the pay schools and usually provided them with proper clothing as well. In 1817, when the public school system was assured to New York State, Masons discontinued this practice but have ever since continued to take an active interest in the public school system and to advance it whenever they were in a position to incorporate Masonic ideals in the field of education.

In July of 1848, the first meeting to discuss votes for women was held at Seneca Falls, New York. The state was already the first to protect the property rights of married women. It is hardly a coincidence alone that New York State, which had the largest number of Masons of any of the states of that time, was also the foremost state in the protection of women's rights.

The factory system which was just beginning also saw the start of the labor movements which have grown to such great proportions through the years. Previous to 1830 the manufacture of textiles, the production of farm products, and the few other necessities which were needed for comfortable living, were all produced in the home or on the farm. In textiles, for example, ten million yards of cloth were produced in the home prior to 1830.

Once the factory system became established however, and with the constant spread of factory methods to one product after another, two groups arose which did not have the easy familiarity which producer and consumer enjoyed in an earlier era. One of these groups was comprised of the factory workers who, working ten hours a day, six days a week, had little time for social contacts. The other group was made up of the men who had invested the money in the factory, the "new rich" capitalists who were a little dazzled by their own good fortune and the ease with which money could be made. The labor disputes that arose over hours, working

conditions, and pay in the year of 1848 are with us still and are essentially the same as when the factory system was first inaugurated.

The American Peace Society has a familiar ring but it started not recently, but after the war with Mexico in 1846. Men of New York State had accounted gallantly for themselves in Mexican campaigns but still, in the minds of the thoughtful, the futility of war and an attempt to find a more peaceable solution to problems was of paramount importance. We know, with assurance, that some members of our Fraternity were also supporters of that movement, as they have ever been ardent supporters of peace with honor.

Yet, fresh from one war, and facing the war so soon to tear the states apart, the question of peace was a stormy one, even as today. As opposed to the recolonization of Negroes to Africa, there was a steady growth of sentiment in New York State that slavery should be abolished entirely. It had been suggested also that the abolition of slavery might be gradual with the slaves buying their rights over a period of years, or being freed gradually. The resolution was crystallizing, especially in powerful New York State, that complete and immediate abolition was the only answer.

The year of 1848 and those immediately following also saw the growth of new religious and semi-religious groups. One of the latter was the Temperance Society, which started counseling moderation in the drinking of alcoholic beverages but soon placed itself on the side of "total" abstinence with the subsequent label of "teetotalers." The Cold Water Armies were discussing the same question but gradually merged with the Temperance group. Among the new religions to be founded in New York State were the Shakers at Watervliet; the Mormons at Fayette; the Millerites at Low Hampton, and Spiritualism at Hydesville. The Millerites unfortunately set the end of the world at 1843, and so, alone of the religions, did not survive their mistaken prophecy.

So this was the background and this was the temper of the times in which Ogdensburg Lodge was opened. These were the questions discussed and the problems posed before the members of that Lodge. As the years followed the questions and problems shifted slightly, but the Masons of Ogdensburg continued to take the same interest in state, national and international affairs that they take today.

Of the record of Lodge work there is not much to say. We know that on April 24, 1889, "Golden Jubilee" services were held in the Ogdensburg Opera House to commemorate fifty years of Masonry. Two years later, at the laying of the cornerstone of the Home at Utica, Og-

densburg was represented, as it was at the Home dedication in October.

We know that Sylvester Gilbert, the first senior warden, was later accorded the honor of Deputy Grand High Priest. On May 21, 1849, "The Lodge accepted the report of the Committee to Amend the Constitution of Grand Lodge and the Secretary notified the Grand Secretary accordingly."

On December 24, 1849, "The Lodge voted to recognize Grand Lodge of which John D. Willard is Grand Master."

On August 15, 1853, "Recommended J.H. Wellinger and others to the Grand Lodge as petitioners for a new Lodge to be called Black Lake Lodge, to be located at Edwardsville, New York."

November 4, 1852, "Being the one hundredth anniversary of George Washington being made a Mason, was celebrated by the Lodge by going to the Episcopal Church. Rev. Brother Eastman was the orator of the day. Remarks were also made by Worshipful Brother Drew, Master of Restoration Lodge No. 97 of Albion, and by Brother Sherman." September 7, 1855, "The Lodge dedicated the New Masonic Hall in Royal Vilas' brick block on Ford Street, Ogdensburg."

In 1875 the Lodge moved into the Gilbert block on Ford Street, Ogdensburg, and in 1919 they moved into their new Temple on the corner of Washington and State Streets, Ogdensburg, New York.

And there the record ends or perhaps it would be better to say, there the record begins in the work of the Masons for the good of the state and the good of the individual down through the rest of the century. We know that their devotion to truth and good citizenship and honor are the real heritage we have from the early pioneers of our Lodge here at Ogdensburg and of all other Lodges throughout the world. May we leave as bright a heritage to those Brothers who will follow us in the coming years!.

**Patriot's Pledge**

I am forever dedicated to freedom, for others as for myself; with my heart and mind I espouse the principles of charity and brotherhood and equality. I pledge myself to march under only one starry banner, to defend the country I love, and its people; to uphold in every way the honor and proud integrity of the government that is mine. I salute the memory of those who have made this nation strong and true and humbly pledge all that I am and all that I have to maintain the peace and beauty that is America.

Respectfully submitted,

John M. Nichols  
August 6, 1948

**Masters of Ogdensburg Lodge No. 128  
1848 to 1948**

1847, '48, '49, '50	George Guest
1851, '52	John Young
1853	Luke Baldwin
1854	Joel Mack
1855	George A. French
1856	Edwin M. Holbrook
1857	James D. Raymond
1858	Herman F. Willard
1859	John D. Ransom
1860	Charles S. Burt
1861	Thomas Hull
1862	John R. Fairchild
1863	Amos S. Partridge
1864	Joseph Thompson
1865	Joseph Studholm
1866, '67	Samuel H. Palmer
1868	David Hanna
1869	George W. Mack
1870, '71	William N. Cross
1872, '79	Ransom Montgomery
1873, '74	Alexander H. Lord
1875, '76	Richard L. Seaman
1877, '78	Robert B. Service
1880, '90	Alexander H. Lord
1881, '82	Andrew Richardson
1883, '84	James P. Johnston
1885, '86	James H. Gracey
1887, '88, '91	Peter S. Byrnes
1889	James S. Martin
1892, '93	Louis B. Leonard
1894, '95	Harry A. Lord
1896, '99	George W. Robinson
1897, '98	W. Edwin Robinson
1900, '01	John E. Briggs
1902, '03	Robert T. Baker
1904, '05	R. Porter Johnston
1906, '07	Clayton D. Briggs
1908, '09	Albert D. Cordwell
1910, '11	S. Henry Hoskins
1912, '13	C. Everett Nelson
1914	John M. Nichols
1915	William C. Mott
1916	Albert M. Cordwell
1917, '18	Albert K. Haynen
1919	Raymond J. Lemmon
1920	Albert P. Newell
1921	James Pitcher
1922	C.M. Robinson
1923	Arthur J. Glatt
1924	Glenn P. Farmer
1925	William H. Cordwell
1926	Wilmont R. Hobbs
1927	Clark F. Nichols
1928	Herman Kull
1929	Fred B. Vallance
1930	Willard H. Potter
1931	B. Harrison Cordwell
1932	Alford C. Wells
1933	F. Lisle McCormick
1934	Donald E. Sanford
1935	Edgar Daniel
1936	Arthur Kinkead
1937	Harry A. Carnal
1938	Ernest W. Hunter
1939	A. Cecil Kring
1940	Elwyn C. Adams
1941	Ernest W. Richardson
1942	Stanley Hobbs
1943	Max J. Miller
1944	Frank F. Hickok
1945	John B. Kennedy
1946	Harold W. Fox
1947	J. Fred Beckstead
1948	John M. Loucks

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