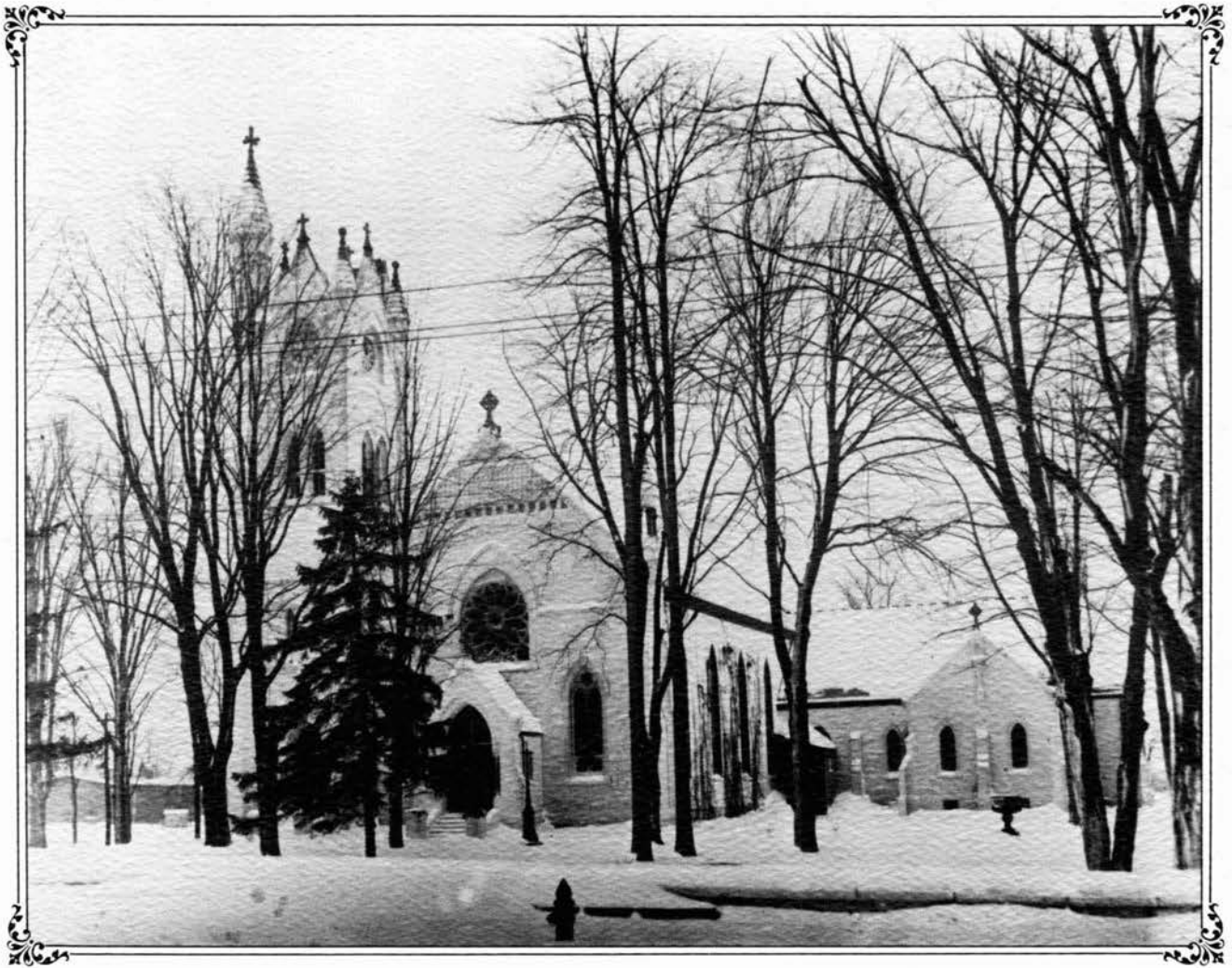


THE  
**QUARTERLY**

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

Winter 1991



# THE QUARTERLY

Official Publication of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association

VOLUME XXXVI

WINTER 1991

NO. 1

## CONTENTS

- |                         |    |   |
|-------------------------|----|---|
| <i>Mark R. Petersen</i> | 3  | A Case Study in Rural Gothic Revival: Trinity Church in Potsdam |
| <i>Douglas Harper</i>   | 12 | Sharing Labor on the Family Farm: Views Across a Generation     |

**Cover:** Trinity Church, Potsdam. View from the East, c. 1905. (*Courtesy of the Potsdam Museum*)

*This publication is made possible in part with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.*

*Co-editors:* Marvin L. Edwards  
George F. McFarland

*Advertising:* Betsey Deuval  
Ernest Deuval

*The Quarterly* is published Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall each year by the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

Extra copies may be obtained from the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, P.O. Box 8, Canton, N.Y. 13617, at \$3.00 each plus 75¢ postage and handling.

ISSN 0558-1931

Copyright St. Lawrence County Historical Association  
1991

**Contributions:** *The Quarterly* welcomes contributions in the form of manuscripts, drawings, and photographs. If documentation is necessary, we request that it conform to *The MLA Style Manual*. A summary of the MLA format is available from the editor; manuscripts which do not conform to the MLA format may be revised. Address all editorial communications to Editor, *The Quarterly*, St. Lawrence County Historical Association, P.O. Box 8, Canton, NY 13617.

# A Case Study in Rural Gothic Revival: Trinity Church in Potsdam

by Mark R. Petersen

The years 1849-58 witnessed the flowering of the gothic revival style in American Anglican church architecture and, of greater importance for the future of American architecture, the first intimations of a distinctively American approach to church design in general. These developments were spearheaded by the New York Ecclesiological Society, an Episcopalian organization whose mission it was to establish guidelines for the design and decoration of Anglican churches in the United States. The Society deplored the imprecise adoption of generic gothic detail in early 19th-century gothic revival churches and maintained that this situation could only be ameliorated through the accurate study and imitation of 13th-century English parish churches of the early gothic, or "First Pointed", style. However, American ecclesiologists were convinced that emulation of such medieval prototypes must represent only the first stage in the gradual development of a new, and *American*, style of Anglican architecture. As John W. Priest observed in *The New York Ecclesiologist*: "[we] must fuse both what we gather and what we invent into harmony with our own thoughts, and thus attain . . . the expression of our own life" (II [1849]: 14). Subsequently applied to the design of churches of other denominations and to the romanescque revival style that supplanted the gothic by the 1860's, this aesthetic of creative emulation contributed directly to the evolution of an American tradition in church building.

Although the churches of Priest, Richard Upjohn, John Notman and other urban-based architects occupied the mainstream of this evolution, many contemporaneous rural sanctuaries likewise held significant positions. Spanning the years 1835-86, and inextricably bound with the patronage of the Clarkson family of Potsdam, the building history of Trinity church on Fall Island provides an exemplary case in point, one that could be repeated throughout St. Lawrence County and the region of Northern New York State. Completed in 1836 in the early gothic revival style, Trinity underwent subsequent structural changes that were effected toward the end of bringing it into conformity with the ecclesiological model of English parish gothic. By 1886, however, the church had been transformed into a thoroughly American monument possessed of a firmly regional character.

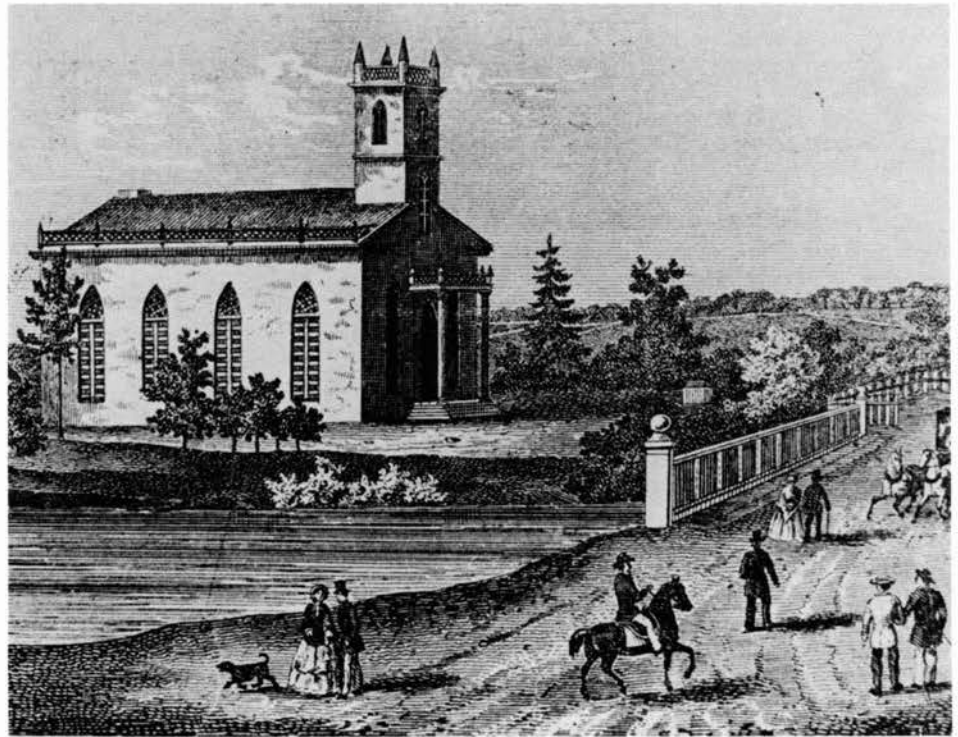


Fig. 1: Trinity Church, Potsdam. Woodcut of Exterior View from Southeast, ca. 1836. (Courtesy of Potsdam Museum)

This transformation received impetus, as we shall see, from the aesthetic of creative emulation promulgated by American ecclesiologists and benefitted as well from the dual influence of the late Victorian gothic idiom of Upstate New York and the romanescque revival style of H.H. Richardson. It was sustained, moreover, by the meticulous local craftsmanship that characterized Trinity's building history as a whole. Under the inspiration of the local architect, J.P. Johnston, from whose designs it assumed its final form in 1886, Trinity emerged in the vanguard of the late 19th-century building in the United States.

## I. The Original Church (1835-36)

Begun on June 3, 1835, and consecrated by Bishop Benjamin T. Onderdonk of New York City on August 7 of the following year, the original church of Trinity (fig. 1) owed its existence to the beneficence of John C. Clarkson and David L. Clarkson. Pious members of the wealthy parish of Trinity church in New York City, the brothers had arrived in Potsdam in 1818 and 1821, respectively, both to oversee the development of land purchased by the Clarkson family

in 1802 and to establish there a vital episcopalian parish centering around a permanent church. The site selected for the construction of the church, a wooded parcel of land on the north side of Fall Island, was donated by the Clarksons, who also contributed substantially to the cost of its construction and whose saw mill and Potsdam sandstone quarry supplied the necessary building materials. Additional funds for construction, the budget for which had exceeded by over \$2,000.00 the original estimate of \$3,800.00, were furnished by the mother parish in New York City, and it was the church in lower Manhattan itself that served as the model for the new sanctuary on Fall Island.<sup>1</sup>

The choice of such a model was not simply an expression of loyalty on the part of the Clarksons toward their original parish. Constructed between 1788-90 and the second church to occupy its site, it was in turn replaced between 1839-46 by a larger edifice designed by Richard Upjohn. Trinity in New York was a paradigmatic example of early gothic revival in the United States, one in which the traditional Federalist church plan of a rectangular hall fronted by a centrally placed tower



with a semicircular porch was modified by such gothic accretions as the ogival (pointed) windows of the nave, facade and tower, the pinnacles on the upper corners of the tower and the balustrade of the porch, the quatrefoil (four-lobed) perforations of the balustrade, and the soaring, slender spiral which surmounted the tower. Halting and primitive by the standards of later gothic revival monuments, nonetheless the church in New York City was widely imitated in the Northeast in the early 19th century as a progressive example of gothic taste. Clearly it was so regarded, and accordingly followed as a model, by the Clarksons in Potsdam. Bishop Onderdonk himself, a learned member of the "High Church" faction of the Episcopal church in New York and a vociferous, early advocate of the gothic as a suitable style for Anglican churches, probably exerted an influence as well on the brothers' choice. For his part, the anonymous architect who oversaw the construction of Trinity, Potsdam, was intimately familiar with the design of its prototype and most likely arrived in Potsdam from New York City, quite possibly at the recommendation of the Diocesan office.

The confluence of these circumstances produced, in Trinity, a church that followed the example of Trinity in New York City with greater fidelity than any other American church of the early 19th century. Although considerably smaller, it was virtually interchangeable with the church in New York in its somewhat squarish proportions (64 feet long by 44 feet wide). The number of windows punctuating the facade and tower likewise matched that of the model, as did the plain moldings of the individual windows, the cleanly carved classicizing moldings of the "hidden" pediment framing the tower, the details of the balustrade of the porch and the quarry dressed random ashlar masonry technique (referred to locally as the slab and binder technique) used in the construction of the church. (**Pediment:** "[A] low pitched GABLE above a PORTICO, formed by running the top member of the ENTABLATURE along the sides of the table. The definitions of architectural terms that are given in quotes here and below are taken from J. Fleming, et al., *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, 1980). (**Ashlar Masonry:** "Hewn blocks of masonry wrought to even faces and square edges and laid in horizontal courses with vertical joints . . ." The random ashlar masonry technique employs blocks of uneven size, which are arranged in vertical courses of irregular height.) On the interior, the gallery on the entrance wall approximated the more extensive deployment of galleries on the nave walls and entrance wall of

Trinity in New York. Only the tall spire of the latter was absent from the Clarksons' church in Potsdam, perhaps because the expense of building such a spire proved to be prohibitive.

Yet the progeny was not a slavish replica of its parent. Whereas the tracery of the windows in New York City was arranged in a rigidly vertical and horizontal pattern, a holdover Federalist motif, that in Potsdam divided the windows into three lights, in emulation of early gothic plate tracery, and attested to a more developed understanding of the gothic decorative vocabulary. (**Plate Tracery:** *Window tracery in which the spandrel (the triangular masonry or wooden panel between the sides of arches or arched windows) above the two lights (or panes) is perforated by a circle, quatrefoil or similar geometric form.*) In contrast to the location of Trinity in New York within the somewhat restrictive urban landscape of lower Manhattan, the church in Potsdam enjoyed a rustic, isolated location that accorded more completely with the predisposition of the early gothic revival toward natural, picturesque settings. The red Potsdam sandstone from which the church was constructed, dressed and carved with expertise by local artisans familiar with its distinctive qualities, imparted to it a regional flavor that complemented handsomely its picturesque location and set it apart further from its model in New York City.

As it appeared in 1836, Trinity was a church of distinguished lineage and substantially up-to-date design. Within the North Country, only the church of Trinity in Plattsburgh, consecrated in 1821, expressed more fully the spirit of the early gothic revival.<sup>2</sup> In terms of the level of its workmanship, however, John and David Clarkson's church had no local rivals, and it proved inspirational for a number of later churches in St. Lawrence County, including the old Methodist church on Elm Street in Potsdam and the neighboring First Universalist church (now the Potsdam Museum) on the corner of Elm Street and Park Street. In short, it was an outstanding and prodigious regional church and stood alongside the finest specimens of early 19th-century Gothic Revival architecture of the Northeast.

## II. Subsequent Changes and Modifications (1858-78)

Between 1858-78, a number of changes were made in the design of Trinity. Embellishments in the form of new liturgical furniture complemented the structural modifications. In 1858, the gallery on the entrance wall was removed, the wall behind the altar was opened, and a deep chancel was appended to the old church (fig. 2). (**Chancel:** "That part of the east end of a church in which the main altar is placed; reserved for clergy and choir.") Nine years later, the shallow Federal-style

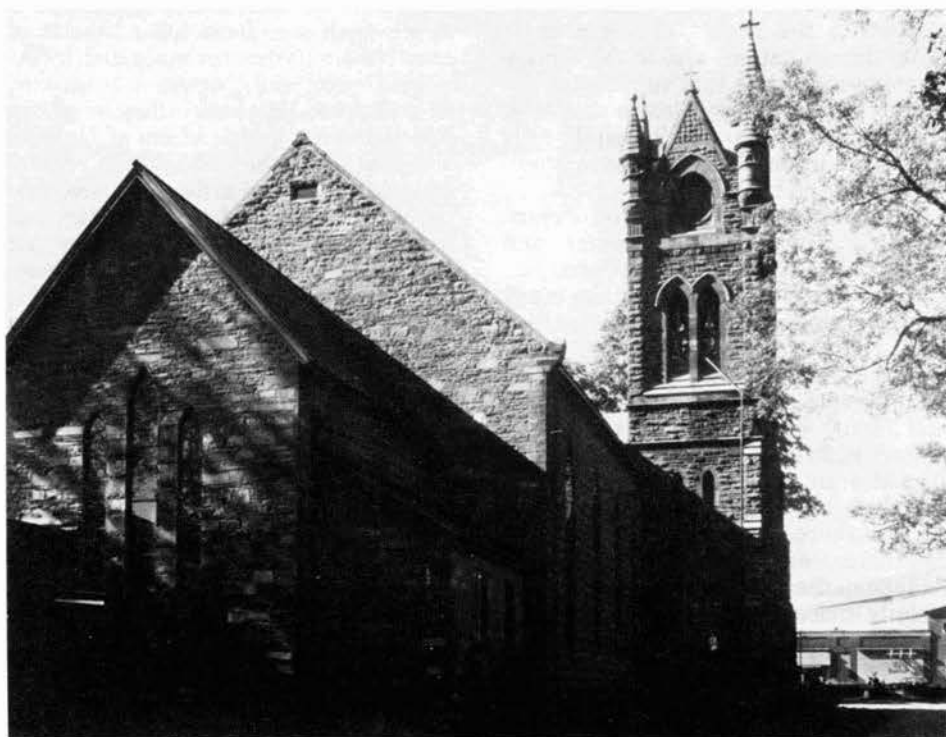


Fig. 2: Trinity Church, Potsdam. Exterior View from Southeast. 1990. (Courtesy of Adam Markowitz)

roof and plain ceiling were replaced with a steeply pitched roof and black ash gothic ceiling (fig. 3). In 1878, finally, the chancel received a handsome oak reredos. (**Reredos:** "A wall or screen, usually of wood or stone, rising behind an altar, and as a rule decorated.") With the exception of the stained glass window set into the wall behind the altar of the chancel, which had been donated by Lavinia Clarkson (1798-1881), the documents are silent as to the precise source of revenues for these renovations and embellishments. However, it is known that prior to his death Lavinia's brother, Augustus L. Clarkson (1802-55), the junior warden, left \$5,000.00 against future alterations, and there can be no doubt that they were underscored in part with funds accruing from his bequest. Throughout this period of change at Trinity, New York City expertise played a prominent role. The chancel window was commissioned from Sharp and Company in New York. To judge from the rigorous catholicity of their workmanship and designs, the new liturgical furnishings and decorative appointments were likewise created by New York firms. Since the structural modifications at Trinity preceded chronologically the establishment of the Diocese of Albany in 1868, it can be concluded that the architect(s) who engineered the construction of the chancel and the renovation of the nave also originated in New York.

Far from being merely aesthetically motivated, these changes were effected in reaction to the developments in American Anglican architecture sketched above. By 1858, the year in which it disbanded, the New York Ecclesiological Society had disseminated widely a series of specifications for Anglican church design that it had inherited in turn from the English Ecclesiological Society. As noted, the Society proffered as a proper model for American Anglican churches the example of medieval English parish churches of the "First Pointed Style," a style characterized by deeply recessed lancet windows. (**Lancet Windows:** *Ogival (pointed arched) windows without tracery.*) The relatively unembellished simplicity of this decorative vocabulary was well suited, they asserted, to the rustic religious life of most American Anglican parishes and placed fewer demands on American craftsmen whose skills, in their practical experience, could not do justice to the intricacies of more elaborate medieval English styles. The modest size of the typical church built in the "First Pointed Style," which was illustrated by a pattern drawing in the October, 1849, issue of *The New York Ecclesiologist*,<sup>3</sup> was also in keeping with the impecunious circumstances of most American parishes (although the pat-



Fig. 3: Trinity Church, Potsdam. Interview View, ca. 1884. (Courtesy of Potsdam Museum)

tern could easily be adopted on a larger scale, should an individual parish have the requisite funds and/or needs). So far as the structure and interior of a proper Anglican church were concerned, the Society stressed that it should feature a long nave with stained glass windows, surmounted by a richly carved timber ceiling under a steeply pitched roof. By contrast, the use of galleries was strongly discouraged since there was no precedent for them in medieval English churches. Along with their English counterparts, the American ecclesiologists placed particular emphasis on the need for an Anglican church to possess a deep chancel whose special liturgical function and importance were signified by its size and by its clear separation from the remainder of the church. The separation of the chancel was to be expressed on the exterior by making its roof lower than that of the nave; on the interior, it should be affirmed by raising the chancel above the level of the nave, by setting up a rood screen between the chancel and nave, and by embellishing with carved, painted moldings the ogival arch framing the entrance to the chancel. The liturgical prominence of the chancel should be stated further through its lavish decoration and appointments: stained glass windows, painted or wall-papered decoration on the chancel walls, a tile pavement on the floor and a reredos on the wall behind the altar were requisite to emphasizing this statement properly.

The influence of the Society's guidelines was wideranging, and within the region of Upstate New York alone, an impressive number of Anglican churches were built in more or less strict accordance with them during the years coinciding with the renovation of Trinity, among them, Zion Church in Hudson Falls (1854), St. James in Lake George (1867), Saint Sacrament in Bolton Landing (1869) and Trinity Chapel in Morley (ca. 1870). Against this backdrop of progressive church building, Trinity must have appeared patently outdated to its patrons by 1858, a fact which doubtless prompted the changes made in its interior over the course of the following two decades. Although the stained glass windows in the nave (which are discussed by Dee Little in *The Quarterly*, XIII, 1 [1968]: 3-5) would not be added until the early 1890's and subsequently, and the unsatisfactorily square nave would not be properly elongated until 1885, a photograph of the interior taken in 1884 shows how closely it conformed by 1878 to ecclesiological standards. Conformity dictated, first of all, the removal of the Federal-style gallery on the entrance wall. Elsewhere, it was attained through positive measures. The stained, arched oak brackets and braces supporting the steeply sloping roof (fig. 3) followed an approved ecclesiological type. (**Bracket:** *A small supporting piece of stone or other materials, designed to carry a projecting weight. The inner face of an arched bracket assumes*



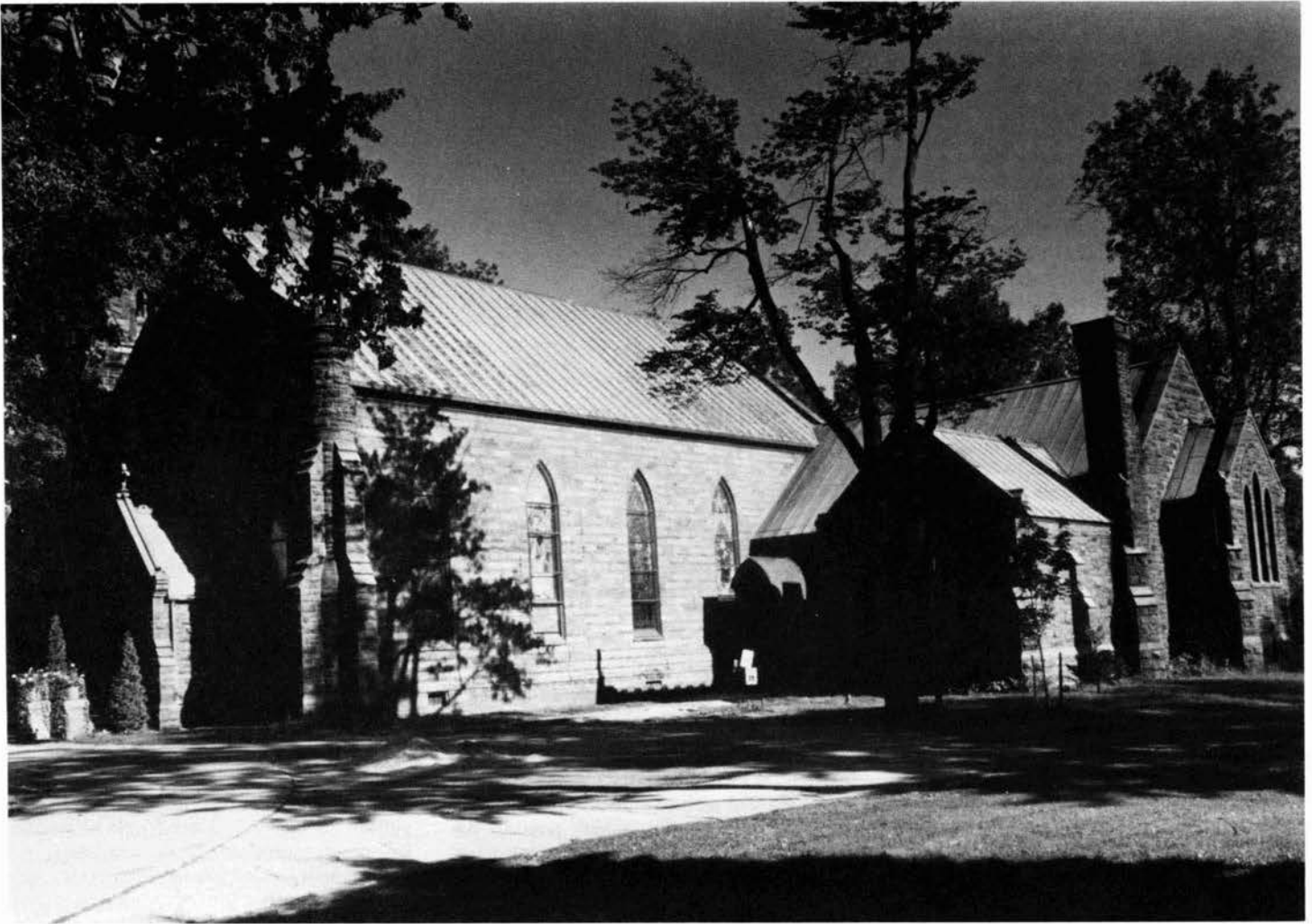


Fig. 4: Trinity Church, Potsdam. Exterior View from Northeast of Trinity Chapel. 1990. (Courtesy of Adam Markowitz)

the form of an arch. **Arched Braces:** "a pair of curved braces forming an arch . . .") Approached through an entrance surmounted by a gilded, early English gothic arch, and raised above the level of the nave in canonical fashion, the chancel boasted a geometric tile floor and a splendid, three-light stained glass window focusing on the figure of the *Agnus Dei* (the "Lamb of God"). Utterly faithful to ecclesiological specifications, the trinitarian form of the window and the early English gothic details of the oak reredos behind the altar contributed to the orthodox appearance of the chancel. Extending from the nave with its roof-line clearly lower than that of the main church, the chancel was correctly expressed on the exterior as well (fig. 2). That effect was sustained by the plain buttresses and rough ashlar facing of the walls, which was executed locally in Potsdam sandstone in the First Pointed Style. (**Buttress:** "A mass of masonry or brickwork projecting from or built against a wall to give additional strength, usually to counteract the lateral thrust of an arch, roof, or vault.") In the absence,

apparently, of the funds necessary for building an entirely new edifice, every attempt was made to bring Trinity abreast with contemporaneous developments in Anglican church design.

By 1878, however, the exterior of Trinity remained substantially retardataire (old-fashioned) in appearance. In 1883, an attempt was made to amend this situation, albeit one which appears in retrospect to have represented a further concession to restricted finances. On April 29 of that year, Augustus Clarkson's daughter Elizabeth died and specified in her will that \$10,000.00 be set aside for the construction of a new chapel dedicated to her husband, Thomas Streatfield (1799-1876), and oldest son, Lavinus (1835-76). An additional \$4,000.00 was bequeathed to underwrite the cost of insuring the church. The construction of the chapel, completed in 1884, was overseen by Elizabeth's surviving son, Thomas S. Clarkson (1837-94). A native of New York City and a learned and devout Anglican, Thomas perpetuated what was by the 1880's a long tradition for active Clarkson participation in the

patronage of Trinity. Previously, he had underwritten the construction of the new parish churches of St. Phillip's in Norwood (consecrated in 1883) and Zion in Colton (dedicated to his mother and consecrated in 1884). The name of the architect is unknown. However, the close similarities in design and conception between Trinity chapel, St. Phillip's and Zion church point irrefutably to the hand of a single architect, one whose name, Mr. J.P. Johnston, of Ogdensburg, is cited in connection with the design of Zion church (A.C. Clarkson, *Trinity Parish*, p. 163). The same figure, identified incorrectly as "Mr. Johnson, architect," is subsequently referred to as the author of the new facade which Trinity was to receive under Thomas Clarkson's auspices between 1885-86 (*Trinity Parish*, p. 169). He thus looms large, both in that phase of Trinity's building history which commences with the construction of the new chapel in 1884, and in the general development of church architecture in Northern St. Lawrence County during the late 19th century.

Although he would soon adopt in the

facade a design that departed significantly from the pattern of English parish gothic, Mr. Johnston perpetuated recent tradition at Trinity in his plan for the new chapel (fig. 4). Occupying the position set aside for the South transept in the approved ecclesiological church type, and communicating with the nave through a connecting hallway, the chapel assumed the form of a small-scale English parish church of the "First Pointed Style." Its model, in fact, was the drawing published in *The New York Ecclesiologist* in 1849. The soaring broached tower spire of the church in the drawing and the facade with its bell-cote do not appear in the chapel, the latter because the chapel was appended to the nave wall of the main church, the former because it would have been inappropriate. (**Broached Spire:** *An octagonal spire that rises from a square tower, with four of the eight sides of its base "broached" (hence the name) by slender, roughly triangular pieces of masonry.* **Bell Cote:** *"A framework on a roof to hang bells from . . ."*) Yet, the side entrance of the church in the Ecclesiological drawing and the transept projecting from the chancel wall are replicated faithfully in the chapel at Trinity. (**Transepts:** *"The transverse arms of a cross-shaped church . . ."*) The hood moldings framing the lancet windows in the drawing and the stepped buttresses supporting the walls that the windows punctuate are repeated with equal fidelity. (**Stepped Buttress:** *A buttress (see above) built in several progressively shorter stages, the edge of each of which recedes from that of the stage beneath it.*) Projecting beyond the walls of the chapel, the altar is conceived in turn as a proper ecclesiological chancel in miniature, complete with a three-light lancet window.

Along with the earlier chapel at Morley, which was likewise executed throughout in the "First Pointed Style," the new chapel at Trinity reflected with consummate orthodoxy the ideal of the English parish gothic. In keeping with Trinity's earlier building history, the success of the chapel was enhanced by the technically superb workmanship of local artisans. Indeed, the accomplishment of the latter belied resoundingly the supposed limitations in American craftsmanship that the "First Pointed Style" was intended by its proponents to accommodate.

### III. The New Facade (1885-86)

Ironically, American taste in ecclesiastical architecture had distanced itself significantly by 1884 from the ideal that, during that same year, the Clarksons and their architect, Mr. Johnston, had taken such pains to give proper

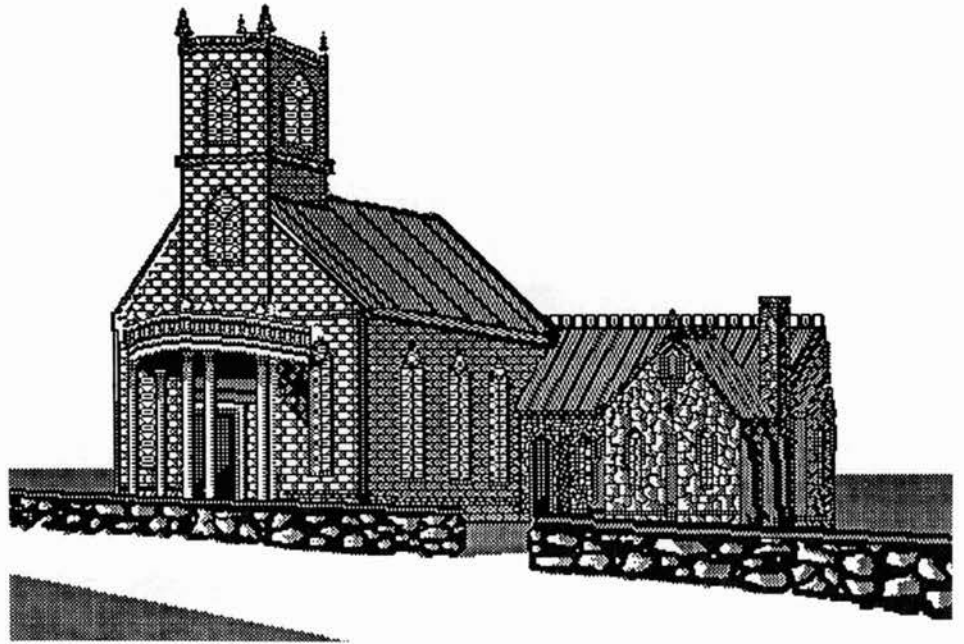


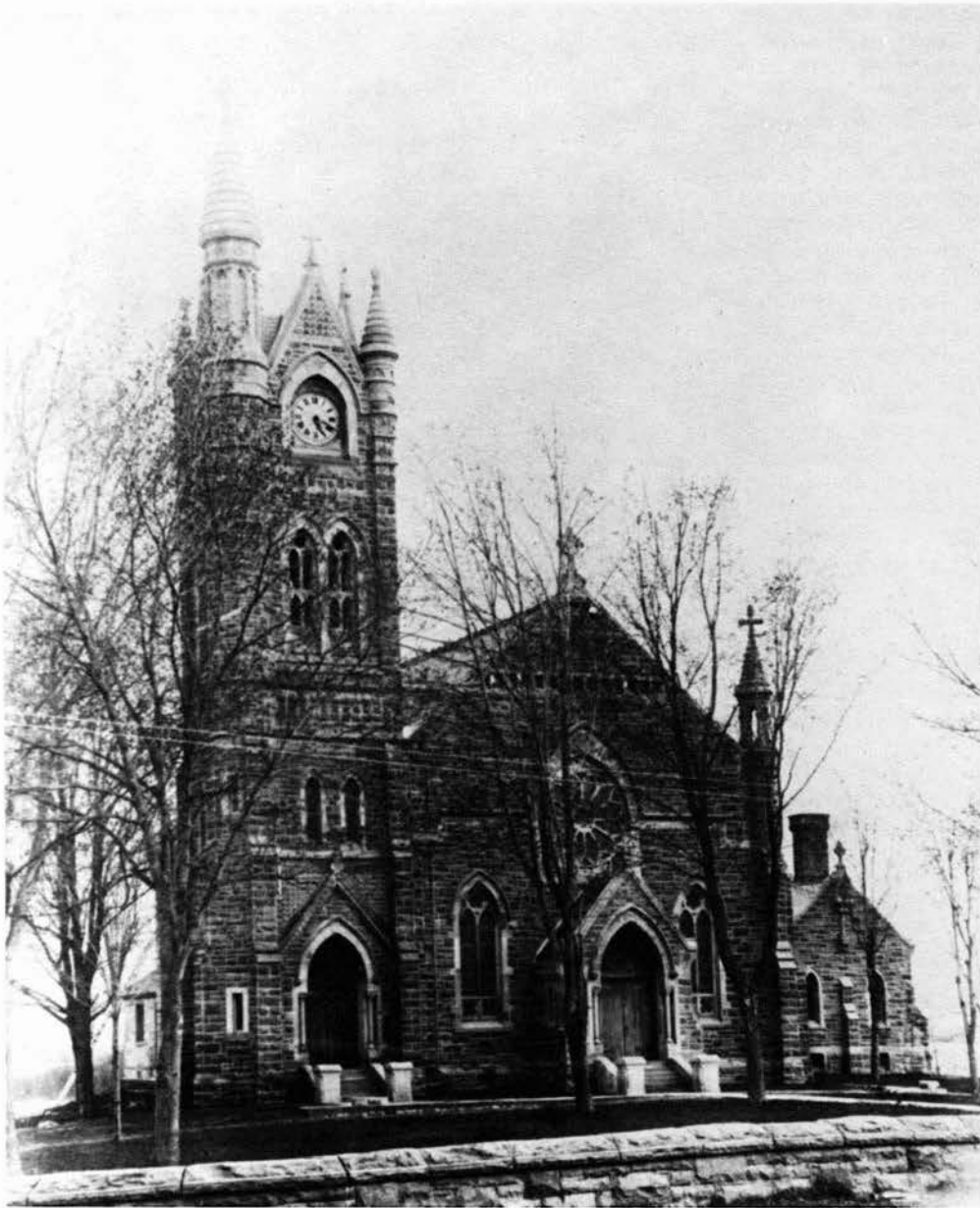
Fig. 5: Trinity Church, Potsdam. Reconstruction View of Exterior from Northeast, as of 1885. (Reconstruction MRP)

expression to in Trinity chapel. The New York Ecclesiological Society had been extinct for over twenty years, and, in that time, the English parish gothic style that it had propounded so successfully had given way to other modes of church building, principally, to the romanesque revival style of H.H. Richardson. However, the enduring legacy of the Society, the aesthetic of creative emulation referred to above, had transcended the Anglican context in which it had been nurtured by American ecclesiologists, and had since become a central ecumenical principle in late Victorian American church design. The guidelines for this aesthetic were extremely flexible and reflective of the sober tenor of American spirituality; as such, they were eminently applicable to the construction of American churches of all denominations. According to them, a church should be asymmetrical in plan and picturesque in its decoration and location, the latter of which should be isolated from the community that the church served and preferably within a wooded, rustic setting. The building material used should reflect the character and craftsmanship of the region in which the church was located. If the region or the circumstances of the parish did not encourage the use of stone, wood could be used in its stead. Most importantly, the aesthetic appeal of a church should not reside in its derivation from a particular historical style, English parish gothic, romanesque, or otherwise—after all, such styles

merely represented the springboard to achieving an American mode of church building; it should depend, rather, on whether or not the church possessed stylistic uniformity.

Given the universal nature of these guidelines, there can be no doubt that they weighed heavily on the aesthetic sensibilities of the Clarksons and their fellow parishioners when they considered the appearance of Trinity following the completion of its new chapel in 1884 (fig. 5). The steeply pitched parish gothic roof of the church rose awkwardly above its early gothic revival facade. The juxtapositioning of the outdated facade and the "First Pointed Style" chancel and chapel was equally incongruous. Undoubtedly, the decision made at a vestry meeting in 1885 to build a new facade for the church according to Mr. Johnston's plans was arrived at in response to this unfortunate situation. In any event, the addition between 1885-86 of the new facade with its paired towers completed the long process by which Trinity was brought up to date with 19th-century taste in church architecture (fig. 6). For all intents and purposes, the transformed Trinity was a new church, and it was reconsecrated by Bishop William C. Doane of Albany on February 26, 1886. It was also an impressive structure: the South tower rose over 110 feet, while, in conjunction with the construction of the facade, the nave was elongated by 14 feet. The distinguished quality of the decorative carving and the





*Fig. 6: Trinity Church, Potsdam. Exterior View of Facade, ca. 1896. (Courtesy of Potsdam Museum)*

technically superb handling of the Potsdam sandstone from Thomas Clarkson's quarry bore favorable witness once again to the skills of the local craftsmen who realized the design of the church's patrons and architect.

The influences which underlay that design, both complex and illuminating in terms of what they tell us of the provenance and distinctive architectural qualities of the new facade, warrant closer investigation. Initial inspection confirms the facade as belonging to a late Victorian type characterized by the asymmetrical disposition of the principal masses, a dominant tower surmounted by spires of unequal height, and an assertively picturesque handling of the masonry and carved decoration. The type was widespread in the North-

eastern United States and had important representatives. An especially prominent earlier example, one which directly inspired the design for the facade of Trinity, is provided by St. Peter's Episcopal church in Albany, built after Richard Upjohn's design in 1859.<sup>4</sup> There, as at Trinity, the projecting early English gothic porch over the main entrance is surmounted by a large rose window with Early French gothic tracery. (**Rose Window:** *A circular window with . . . patterned tracery arranged like the spokes of a wheel.*) **Porch:** *"The covered entrance to a building." In the context of church architecture, a projecting porch is a covered entrance which is surmounted by a gable. An early English Gothic porch is a projecting porch whose entrance is framed*

*by a simple ogival arch.*) The position of the main tower at Trinity to the liturgical north of the main entrance reverses the arrangement of the tower in Upjohn's church, but the oversized, engaged turret on its outer corner, its crowning spires of varying height, and the projecting string courses which establish a sequential rhythm along its vertical axis contribute to a general profile that is otherwise remarkably similar. St. Peter's itself was exemplary of Upjohn's personal evolution away from English parish gothic toward more interpretative gothic modes that responded to the exigencies of religious life in the United States. An eminent statement, as such, of the emerging American approach to church design, it may well have been viewed by Mr.



Johnston as an appropriate model with which he might achieve comparable results in his own design for the facade of Trinity.

The specific combination at Trinity of the projecting porches over the doorways set into the facade and main tower and the prominent recessed rose window with French tracery attests to an additional, more firmly regional influence, that of Archimedes Russell. A highly accomplished practitioner of late Victorian gothic, Russell created several designs for churches in Syracuse, such as that of Park Central Presbyterian church in 1873, which included precisely this eclectic combination of early English porches and recessed French gothic rose.<sup>5</sup> Substantially the same combination, minus the facade porch, appears in Zion Church in Colton (fig. 7) although it does so in the context of a style that is transitional between the Parish gothic of Trinity Chapel with which Zion is contemporaneous and the

late Victorian gothic idiom of the new facade at Trinity. The finely proportioned, rough ashlar facade of Zion preserves palpable echoes of the "First Pointed Style" and the Russellesque tower porch and French rose are as yet incompletely assimilated. In the facade of Trinity, virtually no trace remains of the English parish gothic whereas the forms adopted from Russell's version of the late Victorian gothic conjoin fluidly with those inspired by Upjohn's St. Peter's.

The difference between the two churches is symptomatic of an important shift in taste. The urban-inspired forms of Zion church, which follow the example of the chapel and chancel of Trinity in their dependence on the model of English parish gothic, give way in the facade of Trinity to those that originated in architecture in Northern New York, a change that is concomitant in turn with the establishment of the Diocese of Albany in 1868. It

was from Albany and Upstate New York, rather than from New York City, that influences now flowed. Yet, the sum of such influences in the facade of Trinity is an original design, one which bespeaks eloquently the creative talent of its architect.

A more subtle, but equally important, influence on the facade was furnished by the great exponent of romanesque revival, H.H. Richardson, with whose work Mr. Johnston was well-acquainted. The specific source of inspiration was a series of libraries built by Richardson between the early 1870's and the very years when the facade of Trinity was under construction, a group of monuments whose salient features can be illustrated by the Billings Library in Burlington, Vermont, completed in 1885.<sup>6</sup> In these buildings, as in Trinity, the rough ashlar wall of the facade, capped by a broad, cleanly delineated roofline, is enlivened by regularly spaced horizontal moldings and decora-



Fig. 7: Zion Church, Colton. Exterior View from Northwest. 1990. (Courtesy of Adam Markowitz)

# Cynthia Abram and Cyrus Stafford

by Virginia McLoughlin

## I. From Parishville to the Pacific in the 1860's

Cynthia Abram and Cyrus Stafford, both born in Parishville, St. Lawrence County, were among the thousands of New York Staters who struggled over the trails to the American West in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, carrying to the new land the customs and values of their native homeland. Some went to settle and farm in the wondrous valleys of California and Oregon. Some went to set up the business enterprises linked to every burgeoning American community. Many, like Cyrus Stafford, went to mine for gold and silver.

Some women shared these specific goals, but recent studies have shown, predictably, that the majority of the women who went West between 1840 and 1870, years of heaviest migration, did so because the male head-of-household had made that decision. The women's main purpose was to keep the family together, and they performed their daily tasks on the trail and in the West with this goal in mind, often exerting efforts beyond and outside of their traditional roles. Cynthia Abram Stafford was no exception to this. Although before her marriage she herself had chosen independently to seek a teaching position on the American frontier in Iowa, it was Cyrus's decision to go on farther to the West Coast. In order to get there, Cynthia had to walk hundreds of miles; and when she arrived, she lived in a hastily built log cabin in an Oregon mining town crowded with speculators.

For Cyrus G. Stafford the Oregon Trail and the gold-mining town at the end of it were but a preface to his career. For Cynthia Abram Stafford the Trail and the town were a final chapter. Cyrus would have given up the gold to have had it otherwise.

The couple were married in 1862 in distant Iowa. As far as her St. Lawrence County parents were concerned, Cynthia had "eloped" when she married Cyrus against their wishes. Of course, this parental disapproval prompted younger generations of the family to tingle with forbidden thoughts of romantic love. And Cyrus himself conjectured that Cynthia's love for him had been strengthened by her parents' objections to a proven long-time relationship which might just naturally blossom into romance.

Cynthia Abram, born June 3, 1835, was the youngest of eight children of William and Margaret Haslem Abram,



*The house and barn on the farm near Parishville which Cynthia Abram left to become a teacher and go west. William Abram, her father, worked the farm for David Parish who had the house built as a summer retreat from his many business operations. The house was destroyed by fire many years later. (Photo courtesy of Mary C. Burroughs and Virginia D. McLoughlin, now in SLCHA Archives)*

Episcopalians who had come from Northern Ireland to Parishville by way of Canada in 1825. William Abram had been hired by David Parish to manage his elaborate farm, and the family lived in the house designed for Mr. Parish by the French architect Joseph Ramee.<sup>1</sup> As there was no Episcopal church in Parishville, the family attended the nearby Congregational church.

Why these parents disapproved of Cyrus Stafford is unknown. Perhaps they feared that Cyrus did not hold strong religious belief, but his early life would seem today to be everything a parent-in-law could want. Cyrus was born on May 1, 1836, at Staffords Corners, Parishville (at the town line where Route 72 turns sharply towards Potsdam). When Cyrus was 7 years old, his parents, Erastus and Prudence Perkins Stafford, moved the family to the adjacent town of West Stockholm, and Cyrus later considered himself a native of that town. His parents were members of the Methodist Episcopal church. Because Cyrus was among the youngest of twelve children, he knew that he would not inherit the family homestead, and he had probably foreseen a future quite bleak for himself, working in the West Stockholm wool-carding mill, like his father and brothers. After attending the district school and then the St. Lawrence Academy in Potsdam, he started to study law, read-

ing in his spare moments while he taught school for two terms. After an additional two and a half years of legal study under the supervision of the Dart & Tappan law firm in Potsdam, he was admitted to the bar before the Supreme Court of New York State in 1860. Cyrus went to Freeport, Illinois, intending to establish a law practice there, but then the Civil War broke out. Five days after the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, Cyrus enlisted as a private in Company A, Eleventh Illinois Volunteer Infantry. He was stationed at Bird's Point, Missouri, on the Mississippi River (opposite Cairo, Illinois) and served with his regiment from April 19 to July 30, 1861. After being honorably discharged, he went to Iowa, the attraction to that place being Cynthia Abram, who was teaching in a public school in Cedar Falls.

Cynthia's first teaching position had been at the St. Lawrence Academy in Potsdam, where she had been a student. She was bright and articulate and conscientious about her role as a teacher. She thought of the profession primarily as a service to God and country, but she also saw it as a means to her own independence. In 1859 Cynthia persuaded her parents to let her attend the famed Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Mary Lyon had founded the school of higher learning in 1837 particularly for middle-



French rose and the early English gothic lancet windows of the nave were not completely integrated with each other—the result, from an aesthetic point of view, was a sanctuary that is neither gothic nor romanesque. At Trinity, by distinction, the new facade embraces the progressive forms and principles of the Richardsonian romanesque mode, simultaneously with the older portions of the church to present a uniformly *gothic* appearance. No less so than the isolated location of the church on Fall Island, the asymmetrical arrangement of its masses, the picturesque conception of its individual forms and their sensitively carved details, or the utterly appropriate, and practical, use of local Potsdam sandstone in its construction, the stylistic unity of the architectural ensemble that takes shape behind the new facade, all set it firmly within the tradition of late 19th-century American church building.

Part and parcel with that tradition and noteworthy as well is the strongly regional character of the final church. The unmistakably local qualities of the Potsdam sandstone of which Trinity was constructed throughout, and the ability of several generations of local artisans to express those qualities with technical assurance, contributed directly to this result. Equally consequential was the design for the new facade arrived at by Mr. Johnston. The latter's conversance with architectural developments in Albany and Syracuse illustrates that, in contrast to his predecessors at Trinity, all of whom were nurtured by architectural developments in New York City, he was a product of the cultural milieu of Upstate New York. More importantly, his rural background was complemented by erudition, and he drew with impressive originality upon the regional example of Russell and regional manifestations of Richardson's and Upjohn's styles. His eclectic prowess bore fruit in a splendidly local, but thoroughly progressive monument (fig. 6), in which the burdgeoning American taste in ecclesiastical architecture found an expression as assured and sophisticated as that of the best late Victorian sanctuaries in the United States. In the capable hands of "J.P. Johnston, of Ogdensburg," the long-standing desire of Trinity's patrons to make of it a modern church was finally satisfied.

#### IV. Summary

The addition of a new parish house at the rear of Trinity in 1955 did not detract from the form that the church assumed in 1886, in the wake of its extended period of construction, modification and, ultimately, transforma-

tion. The spirit of the late Victorian ensemble, arising from a formal evolution that mirrored in microcosm the larger development of church architecture in 19th-century America, is captured by the words with which Annie C. Clarkson (1856-1929), described the church and assessed its purpose in 1896: "a beautiful stone church, fitted, furnished and finished with most accurate completeness, 'Thrust out a little from the land,' and founded upon a rock, may it ever point the way to heaven and allure men and attract them, fit them and train them for the temple that is not made with human hands" (*Trinity Parish*, p. 175. Poetic yet pragmatic, and patently remote from the archeological exactitude that had often characterized the English parish gothic, Trinity embodied the mature spirit of American church architecture.

In Trinity, as in many outstanding urban and rural American churches of the late 1800's, multifarious older European forms and traditions were poured into the crucible of a new style that transcended its foreign origins. Superbly acclimated to the demands of American religious life and to the tenor of American spirituality, churches such as Trinity could well inspire in those whom they served a conviction that they had vindicated John W. Priest's vision of an "expression of our own life."

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> W.H. Pierson, *American Buildings and their Architects*, Vol. II. *Technology and the Picturesque, The Corporate and The Early Gothic Styles*, fig. 75, shows a reproduction of the second church of Trinity in New York City.

<sup>2</sup> M.H. Hamilton, *The Diocese of Albany, 1868-1968* (n.p., 1986), the section on *The Deanery of the Adirondak-southern*, shows a reproduction of Trinity in Plattsburgh.

<sup>3</sup> P.B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture. An Episode in Taste* (Baltimore, 1968), fig. V-1.

<sup>4</sup> Hamilton, op cit., the section on *The Deanery of Albany*, shows a reproduction of St. Peter's.

<sup>5</sup> E. Hardin, et al., *Archimedes Russell. Upstate Architect* (Syracuse, 1980), fig. 4.

<sup>6</sup> J.K. Oschner, *H.H. Richardson. Complete Architectural Works* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), figs. 107a-d. Among the related monuments are the Winn Memorial Public Library (1876-79), in Woburn, MA (figs. 66a-d), the Ames Free Library (1877-79), in North Easton, MA (figs. 68a-f), and the Thomas Crane Public Library (1880-82) in Quincy, MA (figs. 83a-d).

<sup>7</sup> For example, the church of Notre-Dame-la-Grande, in Poitiers, built ca. 1130-45 (illustrated in K.J. Connant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture. 800-1200* [Baltimore, 1987], 2nd ed., fig. 212).

<sup>8</sup> M. Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780. A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), p. 64, fig. 2, for a reproduction of Notman's Holy Trinity.

#### Acknowledgments and Bibliographical Notes

The research behind this article was funded in part by the New York State Council for the Arts. Adam Markowitz shot the new photographs and copies of old photographs reproduced here, and brought to life the early building history of Trinity. Permission to reproduce the old photographs was kindly provided by Betsy Travis, Director of the Potsdam Museum. A grateful acknowledgment goes out, finally, to my colleagues, Karen Johnson-Weiner and Jan Wojcik, whose comments and suggestions proved invaluable to me in preparing the manuscript.

The documentary material came from the following sources: Margurite G. Chapman, *The Clarkson Family of Potsdam* (Potsdam, 1958); Annie C. Clarkson, *History of Trinity Parish* (New York, 1896); Milton W. Hamilton, et al., *Diocese of Albany, 1868-1968* (n.p., 1986); Arthur L. Johnson, *Trinity Church, Potsdam, N.Y. A Retrospect, 1835-1935* (unpublished); S.D. McConnell, *History of the American Episcopal Church, 1600-1915*, 11th ed. (Milwaukee, 1916); William W. Manross, *A History of the American Episcopal Church*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1950); *Trinity Church, Potsdam, N.Y. 125th Anniversary*; and the *Convention Journals* published by the Diocese of Albany from 1868 onward (the previous issues were published and are maintained by the Diocese of New York City) and currently housed in the Diocesan archives in Albany.

The following volumes provided the background information on 19th-century American church architecture and architectural theory: Evamaria Hardin, *Archimedes Russell. Upstate Architect* (Syracuse, 1980); Henry Russell Hitchcock, *The Architecture of H.H. Richardson and His Times* (Cambridge, MA, 1936); William H. Pierson, Jr., *Technology and the Picturesque, The Corporate and The Early Gothic Styles, Vol. II in American Buildings and their Architects* (Oxford, 1978); Phoebe B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture* (Baltimore, 1968) and *Pugin* (London, 1972); Mariana G. Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1969); Marcus Whiffen, et al., *American Architecture*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1981) and *American Architecture Since 1780. A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, MA, 1981).





# Sharing Labor on the Family Farm: Views Across a Generation

by Douglas Harper

I moved to the North Country fifteen years ago to a farmhouse on Buck Road between Madrid and Chipman, thirteen miles distant from Potsdam (where I worked) and several cultures away from the Potsdam College, where I was a professor. There were many ghosts in the house and barns, which had been a working farm for a hundred years. With the death of the last farmer, Lester Joyce, the lands had been sold to the neighbors, and the house had been rented and eventually sold to residents who were not farmers. The farmer's wife, Mrs. Joyce, had moved to a nursing home. Some years after I moved into the house Mrs. Joyce was brought for a visit. She was frail and very old, almost porcelain in appearance. I suddenly felt an imposter in a place which carried so much of her personal history. She did not get out of the car but looked around attentively and seemed to drink in memories of her long life there. Soon after the visit she passed away.

I have thought about the personal histories of neighboring farmers since moving to the North Country. I've watched farms change, some making the difficult transition through inheritance across a generation, others taken over by farmers from other parts of New England, many slowly but steadily declining, and a small number growing and gaining in prosperity. The ebb and flow has been a part of a pattern of steady change, which most observers suggest marks the decline and the approaching end of North Country farming.

My own view is more tentative. I've studied the farming in several ways and I've seen vitality, belief in the future, and memory of a meaningful history as well as defeat and a seemingly inevitable decline.

I return in my thoughts of social change to the concept of community. For generations farmers were the numerical majority in the rural North Country. The rural community was based on agriculture. Using an idea from a founding father of sociology, Emile Durkheim, the rural community was socially integrated because farmers interacted in regular and frequent work and social events, and morally integrated because they shared strong beliefs about the world they lived in. In the following comments I will describe an aspect of the farm system in the North Country—the tradition of shared work—just at the point when

this community began a deep process of change.

## A Time Frame—1940 to 1990

I have chose the fifty-year frame for my study for several reasons. First of all, the fifty-year span extends back to the memories of the farmers who have been on the land for most of their lives.

Secondly, the fifty-year span dates to the beginning of the industrialization of dairy farming in New York. In other parts of the country huge tractors, combines, and other machines of industrialized agriculture had already transformed farming to corporate, non-family organization. But the dairy system in New York, given the weather, the land, and the labor requirements of dairy farming, works well on a family scale. For generations families applied a modest technology and their own labor to the slowly changing work of dairy farming. It was not until labor pressures brought on by WW II and new technological development (also certainly encouraged by the war) began to transform the family dairy system. Thus to work with the fifty year frame is to see family farming at the beginning of its modern transformation.

I was able to visually document the fifty-year frame by utilizing photographic images from the Standard Oil of New Jersey project, done in the 1940's. This project, a documentation of the impact of petroleum on American society, included photographic documentation of dairy farming in New York. Two photographers in the Standard Oil Project, Sol Libsolm and Charlotte Brooks, ventured into New York to record the "machine in the garden"—the new technology and work on the family dairy farm. I was fortunate to be able to study these images at the University of Louisville where they are housed, and through a small grant I have included some of the original prints in the "Changing Works" exhibit at the Wright Museum in Canton and in this article.

## Humans and Machines

When the machines of farming change, the human work of farming evolves in tandem. The changes carry an aura of inevitability because they increase profitability and seem part of the inexorable progress of technology. We seldom pause to ask about the human and community costs of the changes—the question of whether there are aspects of life lost that diminish the

gains wrought by technological advances. It is that theme that has formed a great deal of my research.

For example, farming in New York's North Country until the 1950's, given the balance between farm size, available labor, technology and cropping, required formal labor sharing. During this period farms were very nearly the same size, and they were farmed very much the same. Nearly everyone who lived in the country was in farming, yet only about half of the land, due to rockiness, swamps, and woods, was farmable. Thus the farms were small by today's standards—typically a hundred to a hundred fifty acres—to feed herds of about eighteen to thirty-five cows. The fields were irregular in size and shape, and sloped to the many streams that carried water to the smaller rivers and the St. Lawrence.

That neighborhood farm system moved through several technological changes. In a typical season at the end of World War II a farmer would go to his work with draft horses and maybe a twenty to thirty HP tractor. The spring planting of grains and corn was done with the family labor and perhaps a hired man. Usually the hay was cut the same way—family labor and especially the children free from school. But the oats and the corn and other crops were done with a crew of neighborhood farmers which came to be known as "changing works." This would usually be a crew of laborers from six to eight farms. When the grain ripened a crew made up of one or two laborers from each farm worked through the neighborhood. The grain was cut and formed it into "stooks" in the fields. These stooks—the regular, triangular stacks of bundled grain—gave the fields a dotted, fabric-like pattern. When the stooks were dry, a changing-works crew gathered the grain on wagons and brought it to barns where a thresher waited. The thresher, a machine mobile enough to be moved from farm to farm, broke the grain from the chaff. Fabric bags, one after another, were filled with grain and tied with twine. The grain would be ground at the local mill as feed for the cows, daily rations for the entire year. The changing works crew gathered and threshed an entire farm's oats in a few short days, and then worked their way to the next place up the road. The golden oat straw was baled and used throughout the year for bedding in the barn for both horses



and cows.

Corn was harvested as the summer gave way to fall, beginning about September 1. The corn was cut in the field with a machine called a corn binder. Then a "changing-works" crew made up of one or more male workers from each farm circulated through six to eight farms to fill silos with chopped corn. The corn harvesting took a month to six weeks and many of the days were bitterly cold and wet. In some neighborhoods, when the oats and the corn were harvested, changing-works crews also cut each farm family's wood and later its ice, spread a season's accumulated manure, and even helped each other hay.

For a month or two the crew of farmers and their hired men or their sons worked through the neighborhood. It was hard labor, but the farmers also speak of what they gained from working with their neighbors. "Changing works" provided a community of peers and the camaraderie of tackling hard work together.

The work crews were exclusively

male. Farmer's wives and often the wives of neighbors worked together to cook daily meals for the large crews. While the men's and women's spheres were separate, each provided opportunities for farm families to reach out to their neighbors.

"Changing works" came to an end with the introduction of the combine, a machine which brought the oats to the granary with a fraction of the labor required by the thrasher, which it replaced. The other principal changing-works job, silo filling, was automated with the field chopper. Other changes in technology, such as electricity, central heating and refrigeration, made such jobs as ice and wood-harvesting obsolete.

While all farmers I have spoken to retain considerable nostalgia for the social side of changing works, none laments the end of the human labor which it required.

In the remaining space I will illustrate some of the work events with illustrations from the Standard Oil

Project and comments taken from interviews with North Country farmers.

#### The Farmers and the Farms

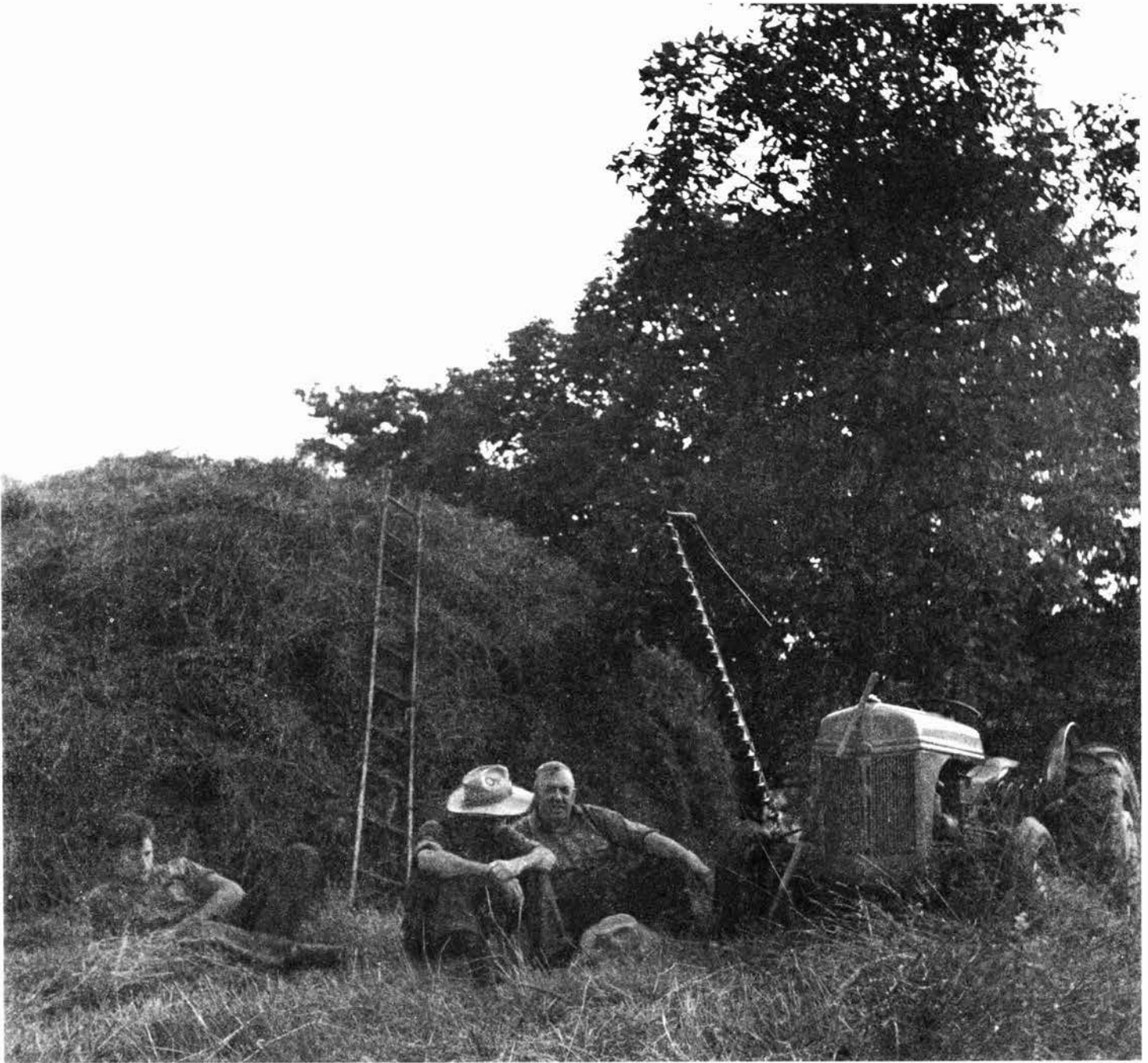
V: "The 'changing works' we had is just like the Amish today. It wasn't arranged—they knew when it was coming up the road—they all pitched in."

M: "They just kept track of when he was coming and everybody who got together knew they had to thrash at that time. There wasn't any complaint about who got done first. He just came right up the road."

LP: "The farms were about the same size, about one hundred acres; 18-35 cows. The crews did one farm per day; eight to ten acres. You took yourself and your hired man, if you had one. One neighbor who had a really small farm—well, you could do his crop in two-thirds of a morning. But he worked along with everybody else—he just loved to be with his neighbors!"

L: "You looked forward to it, even though it was hard work. You caught up with your neighbors."





JF: "It was a rich time! When I drove the back road to Gouverneur with my friend Homer Martin—we went past these Amish places and we both said 'look at those fields, all stooked up with grain! Just the way our whole area was!' I'll have to go up and take a picture of that. But of course it was a lot of hard tedious work . . . but it wasn't any harder than a lot of things you do, because there was a big group to do it!"

#### Thrashing Oats

JF: "When it came time to harvest the grain everyone helped each other. There

would be about four or five wagons and teams. Say we started here. The grain would have been cut and stooked and be standing in the field drying and then when the time came for it to be thrashed, Hargraves had a thrashing machine and the crew cycled around the whole neighborhood. There would be four people pitching the grain onto the wagon by hand and loading the wagons to bring to the barn. Another man would unload into the thrashing machine. There would be probably six farms working together, and then another group of six, organized around another

thrashing machine. The farms were about the same size; Leslie Joyce was a smaller farm. And Bill Day's was a little smaller. But not enough so that it made any difference. Nobody quibbled about an extra half day on somebody's farm.

"The fields looked beautiful, all stooked, but it takes a lot of back work on a hot day and work to stook acres and acres of grain. But when you get it done, it's a picture! But then you run the risk of going into two or three weeks of wet weather, and maybe seeing the oats growing right in the stooks







and losing a lot of the goodness of it.”

#### **Cutting Corn and Silo Filling**

V: “The corn binder would drop them on the ground and then you’d have four or five men out in the field pitching it on two or three wagons. You worked with your neighbors all fall, you know—six weeks—all of that!—and we ate together, too. Oh my, I guess so! That was a big party then!”

JF: “The corn was cut with corn harvesters and put into bundles. It lay on the ground and then a crew came along—a changing works crew—and pitched it on the wagons. And they were drawn by horses and then by young people driving small tractors. You would get a load loaded and take it to the barn and the person driving the tractor would toss it into a blower which chopped and blew it into the silos. So then the mower mechanization came along with the field choppers and ended all that. There was a step in there that was a little different. It wasn’t quite as sophisticated. When we got our first silo we had self-unloading wagons with false fronts that ratcheted back slowly. You raised up the rear of the wagon and steered the chopped grass or corn into the auger that was running and blowing it into the silo. Now the blower is at the barn, not the chopper. That required bigger silos, and bigger tractors, and bigger wagons. All to feed bigger herds.”



### Cutting Wood

V: "Same way in the winter time—we'd go around buzzing up wood piles. Everybody had a wood pile and we'd take the buzz saw around—it was on the back of the tractor. It was the same as the thrasher—it had its own gasoline engine—ran off a belt. The farmer would have his wood in sled lengths. He'd draw it up in sleds, put it up on a pile . . . set up the saw right in the middle of it—*that* was a job. Then put your logs on the cradle. Some of them were that big [circles arms]—you'd have to roll them over—the saw wouldn't be big enough to cut them all the way through. Then you'd split it by hand. You'd cut it for the year ahead. As soon as the crops were in, that was the next job—saw the wood pile up! Get it ready for winter! The neighbors would work together on that, too. You had your neighbors in the house a lot."

### Making Food and Eating Together

M: "We made potatoes and meat for the crews—salt port was one of the things they always had. And, believe it or not, I always liked it. Sometimes you'd serve chicken. You'd get vegetables—of course we always had our own vegetables. And just cooked a regular farm meal."

Was everybody a good cook, I asked? Mary says, "I never heard it if we weren't! I didn't see anybody turn anything down! There were mostly good cooks up here at that time." Virgil interrupts: "There were some places, you had to have an excuse to go home for dinner . . . I'd have to go home to feed the horses or something . . . I'd have to go home and feed his hens or do something! It was just plain uneatable!"

M: "We saved ahead for this—we had roast meat, we had chicken. We used to put up pork. You can't keep pork very long. But there was a kind of a pickle we called it. It was made with brown sugar, salt . . . I can't remember right now what all goes into it. But we put the fresh pork down in it and it would keep it a real long time. Put it in the cellar where it was cold and we would have that, too, at different times. Deserts were pie, cakes, all different things. They were great cooks for deserts. Puddings. They liked pies. We used the long blackberries; we always had lots of long blackberries. Men always like apple pie—they always like apple pie. Virgil's father—he'd always have apple pie. There would be all kinds and he's ask for apple."

V: "Most generally the first one in got the most—the dish went around, you know, there wasn't very much left on some of them! So you got to the table first—that's what you did!"

AP: "There was an understanding that those with money put out less food.







The better off didn't put their money on the table. The poorer saved their best roast and brought out their best potatoes. The garden was not in yet; you saved pickles, relishes, canned goods. You made fruit pie—you could not get by with cake!"

Art H: "It seemed as if the better off you were the worse you cooked. I've seen it where they'd kill the rooster at eleven and have it on the table at noon. I'd go home: 'I've got to milk the cows.'" Ruby chuckles; agrees. Art continues: "Some would feed you so bad you couldn't work for two hours. That's no exaggeration."

### The Social Side of Changing Works

JF: "There was always chuckling about someone who tried to outdo the other one, and go faster than anybody else—there was always a lead horse, you might say, in the group. Someone would be pitching faster than anybody else . . . well, that's just fun and part of human nature. There were those who had eccentricities about their horses. Their horses would always have to have grain, and in their routine, they would have to be watered first, and then get their grain and then their hay. And there were a few particular ones that, you know, were chuckled about . . . well, everything would have to be so-and-so for *his* team. Then there were always the more easy-going ones . . . that's just the fun of it, of course . . ."

JH: "We were threshing and one of

the men told me: put a rock in Carmen's sack. See, we had to carry the sacks of oats to the barn. So we put the rock in the sack, and, oh, it was heavier. When Carmen dumped the load he found the rock, and we heard about that when we came back!"

AP: "Those who got out of line were dealt with with what you'd call 'Rural Humor.'"

L: "I remember once we stopped for lunch, and a neighbor filled up his tractor with gasoline—we were using the tractor to run the ensilage cutter to fill the silo. Well, somebody drained all but a little of the gas out so when we started up after it run just a little while and then the shoot got plugged. Oh, he had a hell of a time unplugging it. And he *knew* somebody had done it to him! Just to get him!"

D: "Was he not as hard a worker?"

L: "He was a bachelor farmer and he lived with his mother. It was more that people did not like the way he talked about his mother!"

LP: "Oh, he got it a lot of times. I remember one time somebody put ripe tomatoes in his boots. We took our boots off during lunch. They were right down in his toes and damn he was mad! Then another time somebody took a corn cob, all oozing with blight—black and slimy—and ran it across his face. He chased him all the way to the river. But it was all in fun. Nobody ever got hurt. Now one of the other neighbors threw a skunk into the silo when a man

was working in there. *That* wasn't funny. It was a hell of a mess."

A: "Yeah, they got dealt with with 'Rural Humor.'"

### The End of Changing Works

JF: "The scene changes with the older people being less able to work . . . we went through a stage where I can remember Dad saying, 'Well, the changing works aren't like they used to be.' It used to be the farmers changed the works themselves; then it got to a stage where they all sent their hired men—and you had a different group of people.

"I can remember feeling . . . I had forgotten that . . . but I can remember in our lifetime even, of feeling that the whole scene changed and the hired men didn't have the same attitudes we had had. Some of them were Indians from Hogansburg that were employed by the farmers around, and they tended to stay a little bit by themselves. Then there would be a few of the farmer's sons, but more of the hired man type of workers.

"When I became involved in 1936 it was still done by the farmers. But as they moved up to a little larger step and got, say two hired men, which we did, then the owners tended to let the men go on the work routine . . ."

JF: "It usually took a month or so. You would do the grain in August and you would have probably ten days of doing grain and there would be a break, and then about the tenth of September it would begin again (for silo filling) and wouldn't be done until the middle of October, or later. There would be some pretty miserable days in there. So, whereas the changing work sounds great, and was fun a lot of the time, there was that element of wanting to do something better and more efficient, and when you saw this amazing machine come in that would do all of your heavy work with none of the pitching by hand, it was a temptation.

"People weren't too nostalgic about the end of changing works. Actually, it sounds romantic and good, but there were some bad features. By the time you got all the way around in the fall, you were usually practically in the snow and the rain on a cold day and tromping through the mud and be just numb practically when the day was over. So you remembered those things and when you could think, 'Oh, if I had my own machines, and could work when the weather was nice, and get my crops all in a week, wouldn't it be great! And I wouldn't have my month going around to all these other farms.'"

*All photographs in this article are reprinted by permission of the Ekstrom Library, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky.*

## Barbour's

QUALITY LADIES' AND MEN'S  
APPAREL AND SHOES

*Proudly Serving  
the North Country  
Since 1912*

13 Hodskin Street  
Downtown Canton



## Sperling's

FURNITURE STORES

**At home in  
Northern New York**

*Since 1919*

OGDENSBURG • MASSENA  
POTSDAM • WATERTOWN  
PLATTSBURGH

**newell**® HOME  
HARDWARE  
COMPANIES



**BULLDOG**  
HOME HARDWARE

**DORFILE**  
STORAGE & SHELVING SYSTEMS

If you have enjoyed reading **The Quarterly** and are not currently a member of the Historical Association, please consider joining now.

To become a member, simply send a check with your name and address to: St. Lawrence County Historical Association, P.O. Box 8, Canton, NY 13617.



### 1990 Membership Rates

Patron Member	\$100 and up
Sustaining Member	\$75
Contributing Member	\$50
Regular Member	\$20
Senior Citizen (65 and older) and Student (Under 22) Members	\$15

## CLEARVIEW

RESTAURANT AND MOTEL

*Pool • Telephone • Color TV  
Northern New York's Finest Food  
Italian and American Cuisine*

Your Hosts Joe and Carolyn Pistolesi  
South on Rt. 11 • Gouverneur, NY

## PUBLICATION DATES

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association has changed the dating of **The Quarterly** from January, April, July, and October to Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall since our experience over the years has made it clear that dating by month raised unrealistic expectations among our readers in light of the complex and unpredictable circumstances faced by our contributors and staff.

Address Correction Requested  
P.O. Box 8  
Canton, N.Y. 13617

BULK RATE  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 21  
Canton, N.Y. 13617

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION

# CANTON FEDERAL NOW OFFERS A MONEY MARKET PASSBOOK



**Features:**

- Interest credited monthly**
- Interest rate established monthly**
- Interest paid day-of-deposit to day-of-withdrawal**
- Minimum balance requirement - \$1,000.00\***

\* If balance is reduced below the minimum, the rate of earnings shall be reduced to the rate paid on regular savings accounts.

# canton federal

127 MAIN STREET

• CANTON, NEW YORK •

386-4533