

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association
QUARTERLY

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The St. Lawrence County Historical Association at the Silas Wright Museum

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a private, not-for-profit, membership organization based at the Silas Wright House in Canton, New York. Founded in 1947, the Association is governed by a constitution, by-laws, and Board of Trustees. The Historical Association's membership meets annually to elect its trustees.

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The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a not-for-profit membership organization and museum which serves as an educational resource for the use and benefit of the citizens of St. Lawrence County and others interested in the County's history and traditions. The Association collects and preserves archival material and artifacts pertinent to the County's history. In cooperation and collaboration with other local organizations, the Association promotes an understanding of and appreciation for the County's rich history through publications, exhibits, and programs. The St. Lawrence County Historical Association operates within museum standards established by the American Association of Museums.

SLCHA Membership

Membership in the St. Lawrence County Historical Association is open to all interested parties. Annual membership dues are: Individual \$30; Senior/Student \$25; Family \$40; Contributor \$55; Supporter \$100; Patron \$250. Members receive the SLCHA Quarterly, the Historical Association's bi-monthly newsletter, and various discounts on publications, programs and events.

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On the Cover

Canton High School friends
Rita Heffernan and Worth Nash
meeting during the war
(Photo courtesy Patricia H. Carson)

From the County Historian

By Trent Trulock

The summer is always a busy time for local history. Many of our town and village museums operate seasonally and summer is naturally busy for them. After a long winter people want to get out in their communities and reconnect with their past. Summer is also the season of traveling genealogists, who take extensive road trips to research their family history, and the time of year when many communities hold old home days, homecoming weekends, town wide garage sales or other community wide celebrations, including bicentennials. Many of our county's towns and villages will be celebrating bicentennials over the next few years. In fact I attended a dedication of a historic marker and a time capsule as part of the Village of Richville's Bicentennial Celebration on May 15th of this year.

But Richville is just one of many communities that recently celebrated this 200-year milestone. Lisbon celebrated its bicentennial in 2001, as it was the first town erected in what became St. Lawrence County by New York State in 1801. The following year was a big year for 200th birthdays as St. Lawrence County, Oswegatchie, Madrid, Massena, and Hopkinton all celebrated bicentennials. And the Town of DeKalb celebrated its bicentennial in 2003. Some of these bicentennials commemorate the official erection of the town while others commemorate the first settlers. In 2005 the Town of Canton and in 2006 the Towns of Potsdam and Stockholm will reach the bicentennial mark. And that is just the beginning! Over the 10-year period from 2004 to 2014 ten towns will reach their 200th birthday. Yes, summer will continue to be busy for local history for some years to come.

There were a lot of people in the audience for the dedication in Richville, just as there were a lot of people who turned out for the other Bicentennial celebrations. I'm not



The Silas Wright House, home of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

surprised when I see a lot of people at these events. I find many people in the North Country cherish their history. Even those of us who are transplants to the area feel a special connection to the region. Now you could make the argument that given the company I keep, such as historians, genealogists, and local history enthusiasts, I'm surrounded by the "choir" so to speak. But I don't believe this is so, because when I watch the students who visit the Silas Wright House and tour through the exhibits of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, or the families who stop in, I see people who are proud and excited about their heritage. And when visitors ask if we have something about their town on display or in the archives of the association their faces invariably light up when we say yes.

Celebrations, Bicentennial and otherwise, allow us to personally connect, commemorate, and mark important events in our history. The ending of a war, such as World War II, is a time for celebration. This brings me to Pat Carson's article in this issue of The Quarterly on what life was like in Canton during the Second World War. Like other wars, World War II did not effect just soldiers. All of those who stayed at home and lived through those years were affected by the war and celebrated its conclusion. Another important event celebrated in this issue is the life of Dorothy Gaffney, a very special volunteer for the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, who is a very young 101! As you consider these and other historic events to commemorate remember to celebrate St. Lawrence County's rich and varied history.

The Greatest Generation

World War II Memorial Celebration...May 2004

By Patricia Harrington Carson

Towering granite columns, sweeping vistas, and bronze wreaths and eagles were there to greet the returning veterans of that long ago war. The sun shone brightly on the heads of "the greatest generation" as they filled the mall in Washington, D.C. to attend the long awaited World War II Memorial Dedication.

It's been nearly 60 years since the end of that war, yet our interest in this global conflict is as great as ever as time pushes us further from the war itself. And now, at last, the honor so long delayed and so justly deserved has come to be.

Sixteen million served in that war, and over 405,000 never came home. Now, in 2004, the veterans who did return are dying at a rate of 1100 a day.

The morning of December 7, 1941 could not have been more beautiful in Pearl Harbor. The skies were blue and sunny. An officer had dismissed the report of approaching aircraft as nothing to be concerned about, but he was horribly wrong and it proved to be a costly mistake. As all hell broke loose, the war had begun. The following day, President Roosevelt made the now famous speech beginning, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date that will live in infamy—the United States was deliberately attacked by naval air forces of the Empire of Japan."

The nation was reeling with outrage. Within a day long lines formed at every draft board as men clamored to join the services. In the following years there were major battles with heavy losses. Casualties were high and at times morale at home was low, but everyone carried on.

From Burma to Berlin, from Iwo Jima to Normandy, from Midway to Anzio in the bitter cold or extreme heat, the boys fought on. Losses reached into the millions.

Finally...1945. With the surrender of Germany and Japan, victory celebrations abounded as J-day throngs greeted the returning veterans and now, these same veterans are once again being greeted as the World War II Memorial is unveiled. Their hair may be white and thinning, and their eyes dulled by age, but they stand straight and proud, reliving their days of glory while, at the same time, remembering their missing comrades.

As might be expected, there were those too unwell to attend, but many old servicemen and their families traveled from all over the country to participate. It was more celebratory than somber, with speeches, marching bands, and flags from every state waving in their honor. Big bands played standards from the 40's as people in their 70's and 80's found themselves dancing to *Chattanooga Choo Choo*; reliving their youth once again, perhaps for the last time.

Now in their twilight years, they're touched with glory in that hallowed place designed so that those who are still with us can hear America say, "Thank you."

Memories of World War II

By Patricia Harrington Carson

Sunday, December 7, 1941. A “Where were you?” day—a day forever etched in memory.

When I was a girl it always snowed during the short, dark days of winter. Usually after the last of the Thanksgiving leftovers were gone, and always before the first Christmas decorations went up, it would snow. Sometimes it would be a soft, fluffy blanket that would sparkle in the cold moonlight. Sometimes it would be a glistening silver icing. The snow would always arrive though, as would my grandmother, Harriet Hall, who lived in a small village in the Adirondacks. Her little coupe filled with festively wrapped packages, suitcases, hat

boxes, and overflowing brown paper bags would pull into our driveway on a late winter’s afternoon. Then we knew that the holiday season had begun.

I had started my freshman year of high school in September and all seemed right in the world. By the first weekend of December everyone was anticipating the holidays to come. The downtown store windows were gaily decorated, displaying the merchants’ finest, and Main Street was adorned with swags of greens and colored lights. Christmas wreaths were already hanging on many front doors and there was a lovely crèche set up in the village park.

The weekend had been great fun with a basketball game on Friday night and a sock-hop in lower hall on Saturday. Sunday morn-



Courtesy SLCHA Archives

Looking up Main Street, Canton, NY in the 1940's.

ing my mother, grandmother, sister Jean and I went to 10:30 Mass. My brother Jack was away for the weekend. It was a beautiful winter's morning with gently falling snow.

Upon returning home we turned on the radio hoping to hear Christmas carols. But what we heard was not Christmas carols—what we heard was beyond our comprehension

“BOMBED” 8:00 in the morning. Pearl Harbor in flames! Attackers unknown so far.

This did not mean much to us. I have to admit I had no idea what or where Pearl Harbor was. The knowledge of a catastrophe cannot be comprehended right away. It is one thing to know and another to realize. My sister asked, “Could this mean war?” My mother and grandmother answered her with great conviction, “No, no it can't mean that,” they said, repeating once again what we had

heard so many times over the years that thankfully we children would never have to go through a war as World War I had been the war to end all wars. My grandmother's oldest son Leon was in that war. He joined the army two days after war was declared, going off with a couple of high-school friends as if they were going to an away football game. He died in a hospital in England the day before the Armistice was signed. He was nineteen years old. I remember his picture, which always hung in my grandmother's living room. He was a handsome young man not much older than me, smiling and dressed in his new uniform. I realized then that my mother was not only thinking of her dead brother, but also of her soon to be eighteen-year-old son and of what the future might hold.

The first of many phone calls came in then. It was my friend Shirley Paige, who with her family was living in Canton while her father, a Major in the Marines, was stationed out of the country. Shirley was crying and I



Courtesy Canton Village Historian

A creche set up in the Village Park, Canton, NY.

could hear her mother crying in the background. They knew, and it was then I knew too that we were indeed at war. There were more phone calls and friends coming to the door. It seemed people needed the comfort of others. Mom's friend Olive Hale, who lived down the street, came running in as bewildered as we were. Within a year her two sons would be in the service...Ledyard in the Coast Guard and John in the Navy.

My grandmother, who never truly recovered from Uncle Leon's death, was very quiet. Strangely enough, two years later her only surviving son, Earl, would go into the Army. He was 38 years old and never left the country. Interesting, though, to have a son in each of the two wars. The news of December 7th hit with all the violent force of a tornado. Pearl Harbor had been attacked. One moment we were enjoying peace and a fledging prosperity, the next we were at war.

And so it began, a whole new way of life. We were going down a road most of us had never been down before and with no idea of for how long. The people of Canton's adjustment, however, was inspiring. It was a time of great personal sacrifice by mothers, fathers, children and friends who saw their loved ones go off to war. Sadness overshadowed many homes. All that our boys knew was their country needed them, and that was enough. Day by day banners began appearing in front windows signifying that this house had a son or sons in the service.

Christmas drew nearer. War and Christmas seemed incongruous. Celebrating "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men" amid the horrors of war. Young men who had, only a few years earlier, yelped on Christmas morning at the sight of a new bicycle, a BB gun, or a pair of ice skates under the tree, were now on battlefields or huddled in foxholes. The country rallied, however, and people shopped, decorated, and sent cards. Twinkling lights blinked from country homes and village windows. On Christmas Day, churches were filled with people needing to hear once again the story of the baby boy born years ago who would



Photo courtesy Patricia H. Carson

Phil McMasters on leave from the Navy meets family members and friends in Washington, D.C.

bring peace to all mankind. In my mind's eye I can still see our Main Street as it looked at Christmastime back then. I still see the white crunchy snow, the shimmering street lights, and red-bowed wreaths on the stores and the banks alike. Little ones, bundled from head to foot, with sleds in tow, gazed longingly at the toys in Newberry's window. It was small-town America...a picture of what we were fighting for.

It was now a time to tackle our new way of life. A Civil Defense Unit was set up. The backbone of the Civil Defense was the warden on the street. Blackouts became effective by 1942 with sirens blaring and the warden's nagging cry..."Get those lights out!"



Courtesy Canton Village Historian

The railway station during the maneuvers shortly before war was declared.

Patriotic slogans were seen everywhere... "Remember Pearl Harbor" ... "To hell with Hitler and Kick 'em in the Axis" ... "Slap the Japs off the Map".

Later on, another sign began cropping up around the world—Kilroy. "Kilroy was Here" refers to the ubiquitous piece of graffiti that U.S. servicemen scrawled in bizarre and unlikely places. It meant—"A serviceman was here." Juke boxes blared songs like *We Did It Before and We Can Do It Again* and *Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition*.

Blood banks were set up in Canton. The shortage of farm workers became critical, leading to the Victory Garden program, where old and young alike worked the farms. Our high school students went door to door seeking whatever materials homeowners could part with. Scrap Drives were a community activity. There were newspaper collections, metal, rubber, silk and tinfoil drives as well as drives for aluminum and tin cans which were used to make ammunition. Golfers collected their old balls which were salvaged for their rubber content. Signs were

posted saying ... "Use it up, Wear it out, Make it do, or Do Without."

Changes began taking place in school. One day a week, war-bond stamps were sold in study hall before classes. We began having Air Raid Drills (In Case of Air Raid, Walk Don't Run). The village students were told to pick students from the country to stay with them in case of a real attack. This was easy for me as my two best friends, Dorajean Kenyon and Shirley Grandaw, lived on farms. We practiced a few times and that was fun, but fortunately we never had to put it to the test. Because of the gas shortage, multiple school buses were no longer available for the away football and basketball games. Most times there was only one, so the coach, the team, the cheerleaders and whoever else could squeeze in soon filled it up. For some of the away games we all took the train, and I can still see our beloved Coach Oliver strutting up and down the train aisle singing his favorite numbers, *They Go Wild, Simply Wild Over Me*, or *When You Wore a Tulip*.

Blackouts were put into effect. Curtains heavy enough to keep the light from shining through were a must in every home. They didn't have to be black, just a dark color. I remember ours being burgundy. By 1943, rallies promoting the sale of War Bonds were taking place around the country. That winter, women began lining up to join the female services.

Aircraft spotters became familiar to Canton when an observation post was set up at the Carl Peters Farm on the Morley Road. My mother and her friend Maude Chaney volunteered early on. I think they had an 8:00 to midnight shift. I remember them leaving with sandwiches and a large

thermos of coffee in hand...happy to be doing their bit. When my cousin, Joan Daigneau, and I saw them go off we also signed up and took our turn. We scanned the skies but never saw a plane.

In May of 1942, Americans trooped to their local schools where teachers handed out the first ration books. Signs were posted with messages like: "Remember what our boys are doing with the things that we are doing without."

In Canton, a rationing board was set up with Jack Chesborough in charge of the office that rationed supplies and gasoline. In February of 1942, all new car production was cut for



Courtesy Canton Village Historian

Another Gold Star on the Honor Board

the duration. There were rules of what you must do to qualify for gasoline and tires.

Coal and oil rationing came in time for the icy winter of 1942/1943. Sugar, butter, coffee, soft drinks, gum, and candy bars as well as tuna fish, meat, and cheese were all missing from the grocery shelves. Christmas decorations were no longer being made, so those we had were especially treasured. Clothing and food were rationed. Leather was scarce. When you wanted to buy shoes you needed a ration stamp. Now that I had entered my teen years, I had been promised my first pair of high heels. But since I needed both school shoes and boots, the high-heels were a question mark. However, my mother's friend Ethel Garner, whose husband Eli was one of our local barbers, came to my rescue and gave me one of her stamps. So, I got my shoes. They were black suede from Ike Noble's Shoe Store and I loved them.

Cigarettes were really scarce. My mother, Mabel, and her sister Doris were

smokers, so many an evening my friend Dorajean Kenyon and I would sit at the kitchen table rolling tobacco in a little canvas contraption. There were thin little papers to lick and roll the tobacco in. They turned out looking pretty funny but they smoked them anyway. To replace butter, cooks mixed white oleo with a yellow capsule that provided the look, if not the taste, of the real thing. It was a lot harder at our house to do without sugar.

The women suffered, or thought they did anyway...rubber to make girdles and corsets was banned. There were no zippers (zippers had gone to war). Silk was used for parachutes and medical supplies so there were no silk stockings. Painting on stockings with leg makeup took over and you could even draw a seam up the back with an eyeliner. It might have fooled people, but didn't keep our legs warm in the cold weather.

The second winter of the war brought more changes to our family. My mother and I were alone. My sister Jean had gone with



Courtesy SLCHA Archives

The popular Sugar Bowl in the 40's. It was located on the corner of Main and Court Streets

two girlfriends to Hartford, Connecticut to work in the Pratt and Whitney Defense Plant. Later on, she went to work in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in a plant with very tight security. She later learned that what they were working on was the atom bomb. My brother, who had always been interested in the theatre, had spent the previous summer acting with "The Priscilla Beach Theatre" in Massachusetts. That fall, a phone call from a talent scout sent him packing to New York to play the part of Clarence Day, Jr. in Broadway's *Life with Father*. We were very proud of her and happy for him, little knowing that by the time another year rolled around, Jack would be trading in his 1880's stage costume for an army uniform. It was the first Christmas we weren't together, so we too were experiencing the loneliness felt by so many.

I remember that Christmas so clearly, as clearly as the happier ones when we were all together and joy filled our house. There were, as always, fresh boughs hanging outside over the front door, and our crèche, which came out every year, was once again resurrected. The figures were placed lovingly in fresh straw in the stable my brother made when he was in St. Mary's School. Our balsam tree was big and beautiful and the lovely scent filled the house. It was decorated with ornaments collected over the years, some from as long ago as when my mother was a little girl. Everything looked the same, anyway. Thankfully, Gram was with us, as she was every year, and we gave it our best, but we were really lonesome. On the bright side, Mom's shopping, as always, was wonderful...all my gifts of clothing came from "The Anne Shop" on Main Street, and no one could ask for anything better than that. Mom's and Gram's cooking was true to form, the best, and Joan and Aunt Doris joined us for the day. There were, however, more than a few tears shed by the five of us, and our pew seemed awfully empty at Christmas Mass.

With all the worries that war brings, there was an intense need for some sem-

blance of the old, carefree days and radio seemed to fill that void to a degree. It entertained, and yet in times of crisis such as President Roosevelt's death, and D Day, it rose to the occasion admirably. Evenings found families laughing together as they listened to *Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy*, *Eddie Cantor*, *Jack Benny*, and *Fibber McGee and Molly*. We loved being scared by *The Shadow*—(Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? Only the Shadow knows), and *Inner Sanctum*. Reading became more popular than ever with books like *The White Cliffs of Dover* and *Since You Went Away*.

We all loved going to the movies. It was probably our favorite diversion...our enjoyment and escape. Though escape, as such was not possible as the *Movietone News* always preceded the main feature. It was intense and real and suddenly we could see what war was really like and what our boys were suffering to preserve democracy.

Saturday was always a double-feature, a Western, along with a *Charlie Chan* or some other B movie. During the cowboy movie, as we called them, the guys in the audience would whoop and ya-hoo right along with the screen cowboys and Indians. It was not a quiet few hours for sure and most adults wisely stayed away. Sunday was when the prestige movies were shown. The MGM Technicolor musicals, the big star romantic movies, and the moving war films. Weekends were continuous performances, so we'd stay on until hunger drove us home. In those days, food was not sold in the lobby.

Big bands like Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey and singers like Frank Sinatra (who launched the Swooner/Crooner craze) and Perry Como drew the crowds to the theaters and dance halls wherever they appeared. There were no bigger entertainers than the Andrews Sisters, who visited the troops and whose music filled the airways with songs like *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B*. Music played an important role in everyone's lives. It helped servicemen remember what they were fighting for. Songs like *I'll be Seeing You*, *Sentimental Journey*, *The White Cliffs of Dover*, *We'll Meet Again*, and *When the Lights Go On Again All Over*

the World aptly conveyed the sentiment of the times. Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*, sung by Bing Crosby, had been released in 1940 and was a true sentimental favorite through the five war-time Christmases. In 1943, *I'll Be Home for Christmas* came out, and it seemed to say it all... "I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams." Wartime Christmases were a most poignant time for everyone. Bob Hope was undoubtedly the one who did the most to bring Christmas joy to our servicemen overseas. He and his USO troupe brought to our boys laughter, hope, and a feeling of home. *God Bless America*, written by Irving Berlin and sung by Kate Smith, became the unofficial national anthem during the war period.

My friends and I loved to go to Watson's Music Store, which was combined with the Western Union Telegraph Office located in the Town Hall. Mrs. Watson would cheerfully let us hear all the new records before making our choices. Her husband was a kind, serious man with a job I'm sure no one envied at that time. It was to him the notices came

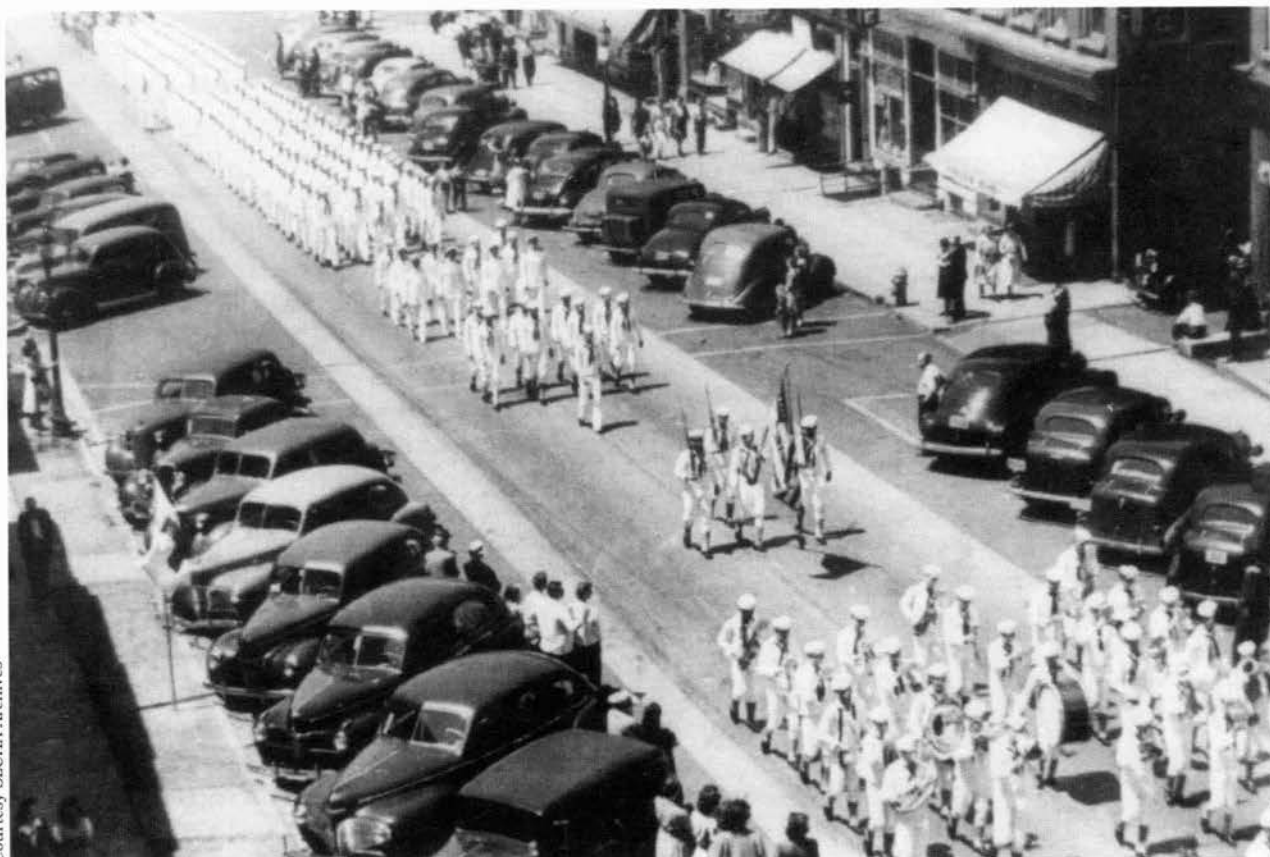
through on the wireless from the War Department. When a message came in he would quietly fold the yellow paper, put it in an envelope and get on his bicycle to deliver it. Everyone knew what he was delivering and people on the street would wait with bated breath to see at which street he would turn and at which house he would stop. In time, a large Honor Board was created in the Park with the names of all the local boys who had entered the service, and sadly a gold star added when that dreaded telegram was delivered to their home with the message ... "We regret to inform you..."

A year or so into the war, Canton was changed in yet another way with the arrival of the V-12, a naval unit that was assigned to St. Lawrence University. It was comprised of young men who had enlisted in the Navy and had been accepted for officer training. Most of them were recent high school graduates who were away from home for the first time. They seemed to fit easily into the community and to enjoy themselves. It was fun to see



Courtesy Canton Village Historian

SHIP AHOY * N. C. C. S. Club for Servicemen. Canton. N. Y.
Ship Ahoy, Canton's USO (48 Park Street) for the V-12 Naval Unit from 1943 to 1945.



A Navy V-12 Unit marching up Main Street in the Memorial Day Parade of 1944

them walking up and down the streets in their white bell-bottoms in the summer and their navy blue bell-bottoms and pea coats in the winter. I'm sure the SLU co-eds were glad they were here, since by that stage of the war the male students still on campus were few and far between.

A USO was set up for them at 48 Park Street. It was named *Ship Ahoy*. My mother, along with other mothers volunteered to chaperone, supply home-made food, and make coffee and hot chocolate. There was a soft drink machine, a ping pong table, a juke box, and a dance floor. Songs like *Elmer's Tune* and *Chattanooga Choo Choo* blared from the juke box over and over. Cautious parents gingerly permitted their daughters to be hostesses. I, of course, signed up to be one. So, dressed in sloppy-joe sweaters, bobby-sox, and saddle shoes, we happily did our patriotic duty.

After school, if I didn't have cheer-leading practice or a meeting, I'd head with friends

to 'Ship Ahoy'. The boys were sometimes lonely and our little USO filled a need for them. They'd talk about their hometowns, their families and friends, and sometimes about the girls they left behind. We'd play cards and ping-pong and we'd dance, and speaking of dancing...at one of SLU's functions held on campus for the V-12, I was dancing with a sailor named Jerry. We were doing pretty well until an announcement was made that a jitterbug contest was taking place and the judges were now watching, followed by prizes to be awarded to the winners. Well, that did it. I had been able to keep up with him until then, but all of a sudden he began flying all over the place. He'd lie on the floor, he'd get up, and he'd kick in every direction with every move he could think of. I was mostly watching him by then, as was everyone else in the place, and guess who won? I don't know if the judges thought maybe we could dance, or just felt they had to reward him for all of his efforts. Anyway, I got a loving cup and Jerry got \$10.00.



Courtesy Patricia Harrington Carson

Canton's Walter Heffernan is met by sisters Mary and Rita on his first leave.



Courtesy Patricia Harrington Carson

Canton High School's Marching Band practising behind the Grammar School 1942.



Courtesy SLCHA Archives

Sand Banks, located on outer Park Street, was the public beach in the 1940's.

My friend Wanda Phelps, who lived down the street, was a couple of years older than me, and getting ready for college. She enrolled at St. Lawrence University in the fall of 1943. By then, the male student body was almost entirely made up of the V-12. When Wanda went to the big prom that fall, a group of us high school girls went up on campus to peek in at the dancers. The girls were all decked out in beautiful formal gowns. Wanda's was red velvet, which she had made. Their dates, who in earlier days would have been attired in tuxes, were now dressed in sailor suits. The war changed many things large and small.

Our swimming spot was the Sand Banks located on outer Park Street. It was a popular place for the V-12 on the warm summer days of the war. In their free time, they would walk out for a swim and an afternoon's diversion. More importantly, however, there were some who didn't know how to swim, and they would go there for supervised lessons.

It seems likely that if you were going to be in the Navy, you should know how to swim.

In those days, the 'Eskimo' was the hang-out for the high school crowd and the 'Sugar Bowl' drew the college students. The sailors frequented both places. They were seen everywhere in their spare time and they did seem to perk the village up. 'Billy's Restaurant', with its wonderful home-made food, was another favorite spot for everyone. The Eskimo was also the Greyhound bus stop, so the days we were there we would make our cokes last long enough to be around when the 6:00 p.m. bus arrived. Many of the passengers were sailors arriving in Canton for the first time, so it gave us a chance to wave coyly to each and every one.

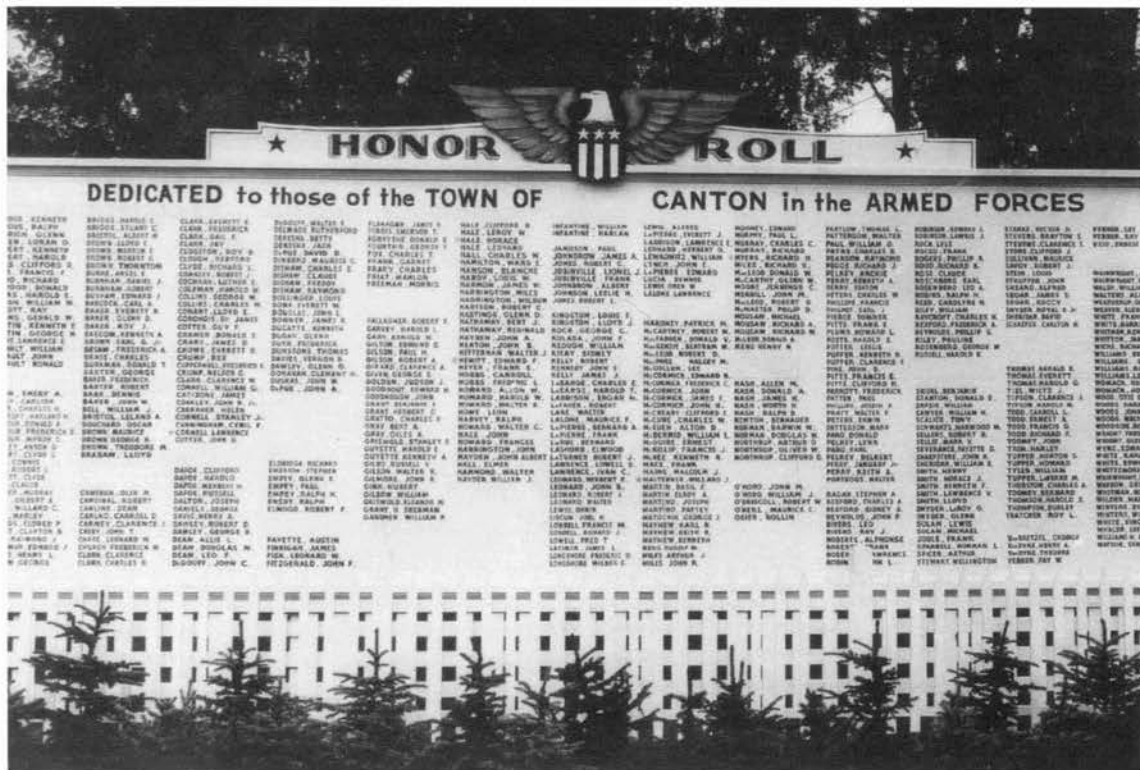
Many of the high school girls made friends with the V-12 boys through the *Ship Ahoy* and the SLU sponsored dances. Our Junior Prom found five of us with Navy escorts. Our mothers, anticipating that our dates would not have corsages for us (Slab City was then the closest florist and the boys had no access to cars), took over. Winnie Barber, whose daugh-

ter Marion had a Navy beau, invited our moms over to her garden to pick lily-of-the-valley and other dainty flowers. They then wove them in with ribbons of velvet and entwined them in our hair. They looked so pretty and somehow this memory has lingered longer and sweeter than that of any real corsage I ever received. Most likely it is the memory of my mother's love and caring.

With patriotism at an all-time high, Canton greeted the 4th of July and Armistice Day (Memorial Day) with enthusiasm. The annual Memorial Day parade was always led by the Canton High School Band joined by veterans, other marching bands, firemen, policemen, girl scouts and boy scouts, along with decorated floats and antique cars. They would assemble that May morning on the Main Street Bridge. Then with flags waving, cymbals clashing, drums beating, and crowds cheering, they would proudly march up Main Street to the Park. Adding to the charm, and most likely the chaos as well, were

the many kids on bicycles. They would spend hours decorating their bikes with strips of red, white, and blue crepe paper woven in and around the wheels. Then with streamers flying from their handlebars, they would ride along to the music, happy and proud as they could be. In the Memorial Day parade of 1944, the Navy V-12 unit marched; it was an impressive sight.

The train station was next door to the 'Ship Ahoy'. There a scene played out time and time again. On any given day, you could see a serviceman coming or going with his family and friends there to greet him or to bid him a tearful goodbye. One of my favorite memories is when my brother came home. My mother, Aunt Doris, cousin Joan and I were at the train station to meet him. A cute young boy named Jimmy Burt, who played in the CHS Band, felt that anyone who had been on Broadway was pretty special, as was coming home, so he talked other band members into coming to the Depot the day Jack was to arrive. So there was Jimmy,



An Honor Board was set up in the Park listing the names of those who had entered the service.

trumpet in hand, with all the other band members he had gathered up. Dressed in their gold and brown band uniforms, they played for all they were worth when Jack stepped off the train. Jack was more than a bit surprised, and it gave us a wonderful laugh and a memory to treasure.

Families living near military bases were encouraged by the Government to invite a serviceman to Sunday dinner. Once the V-12 was here, the Canton people gladly joined in this project. After church services, family members, along with a young sailor or two, would gather around a food-laden table giving thanks. The boys were grateful to be a part of family life again if only for a few hours. Peeking in a window at the gathered group would, I am sure, be like looking at a Norman Rockwell painting...a vision of what it was all about...patriotism, generosity, and warmth of family.

Sadness touched our family when our red-haired friend Junior Cornell was killed. Junior was sweet and fun-loving and stopped in at our house often. His family were friends of ours, and of course they were devastated. Seems the whole town mourned as they did for each and every boy who would not be coming home, and each time it brought the war closer. Though Junior was the one we knew

best, there were other friends to mourn: Jack Denesha, Penny Reynolds, Ted DeGouff among the many...too many to list, but all missed and remembered for the sacrifice they made. Junior's nickname was "Speed"; the nickname most likely came from various escapades on his beloved Indian Chief Motorcycle. During the war, he served as a dispatch motorcycle rider for General George S. Patton. On his return home, he planned on joining his father in his Motorcycle shop, but this was not to be. Junior was killed in action in September of 1944 near Merz, France. There was now one more gold star on the Honor Board.

Things went on pretty much the same for a while. Patriotism grew with every passing day. We had learned to live with war. There were ups and downs in the war news, and far too many of our boys came home in coffins to broken-hearted families. On April 12, 1945 at 3:55 p.m., while in Warm Springs, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage while having his portrait painted. Americans were stunned and momentarily devastated. Vice President Harry S. Truman was sworn in as President. There was little comparing of Truman and Roosevelt. People simply willed him FDR's mantle of leadership. Truman seemed to have Roosevelt's magic. There was a heady optimism in the air, a sense of great events marching towards consummation.

Indeed, the war was rushing at break-neck speed towards the end. In May, Berlin fell and Germany surrendered. Victory in Europe came on May 7th. The turning point of the war arrived in the clear, sunny skies over Hiroshima on the morning of August 6th, 1945 in the form of a mushroom cloud that could be seen 250 miles away. The president's decision to drop the bomb brought a decisive end to the war in the Pacific. It was a time of incredible achievement and endless horror. A second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and five days later the war was over. It was the end of an era for the world, and for that one day we were all blissfully united in world-wide peace.

Three little words were on the lips of every serviceman: "We're going home!" People gave themselves up to an orgy of celebration. In



Courtesy Patricia Harrington Carson

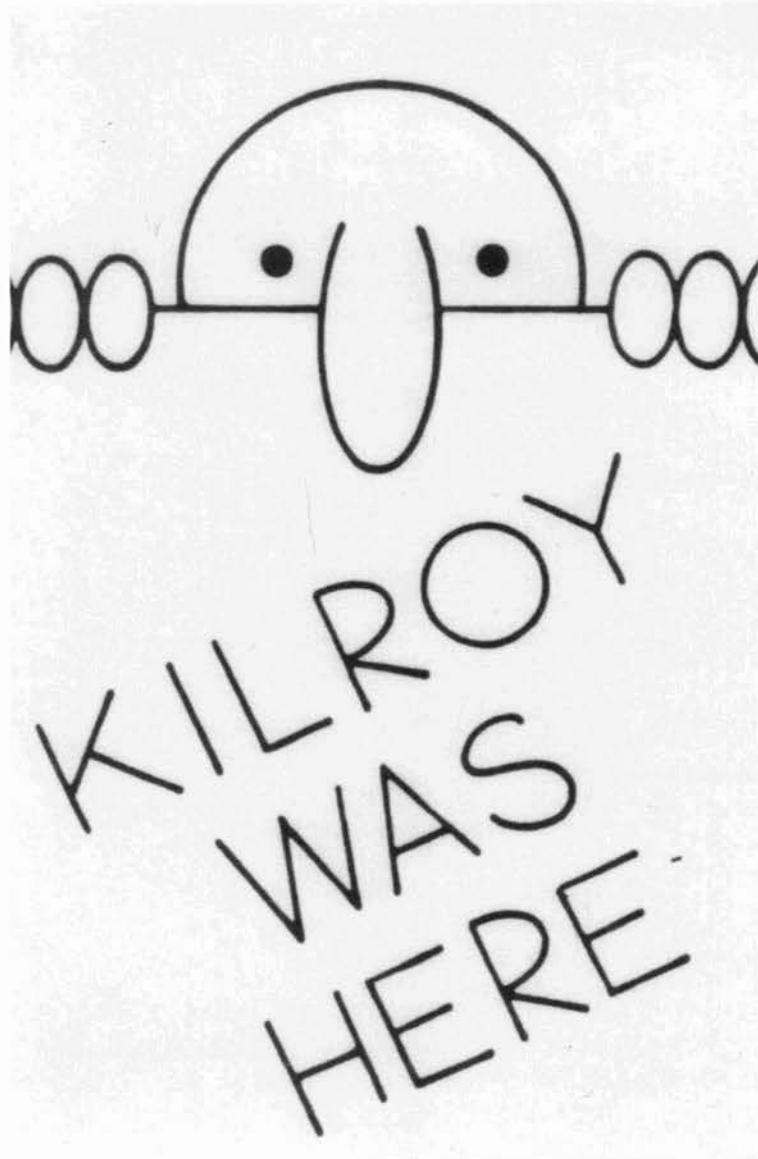
Picture, autographed 'Speed' that Junior gave to my sister. It was taken in Montreal, Canada, in 1943-just before he left for the war

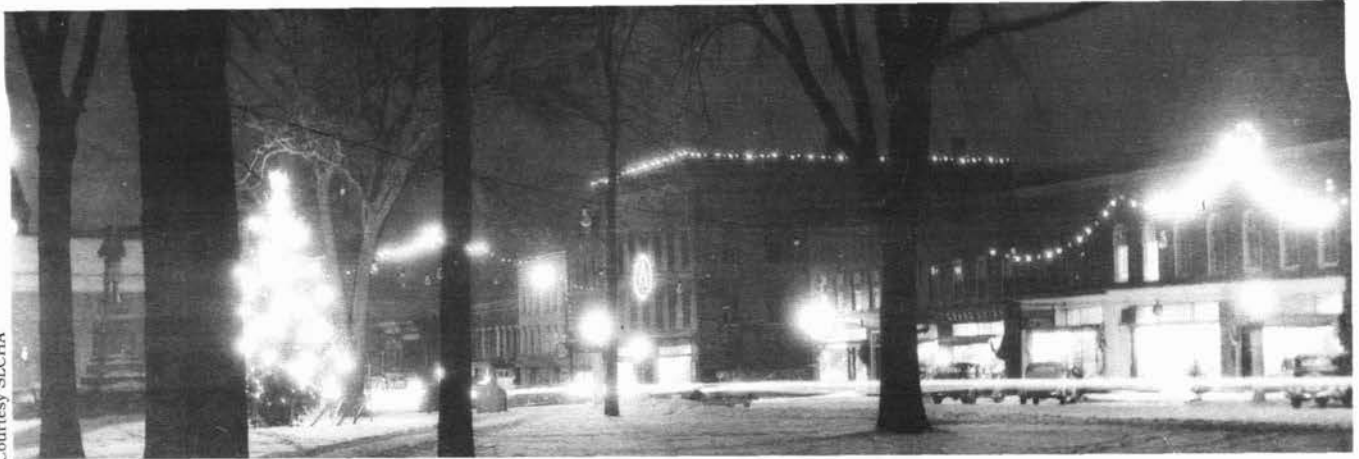
Canton church bells rang, sirens blared, and whistles blew. Noise, confetti, blowing horns, and song took over as people celebrated together like never before. Joy and relief were on every face.

My mother's dear friend Mamie Smith's daughter, Dorothy, used to say, "If I ever get married, every bell in the town better be ringing." She indeed got her wish as the date of her wedding to Bill Butler was August 14th, V-J Day. As the couple came out of the church, the melodic bells of the SLU chapel and every church in town greeted

them. Horns and whistles created a symphony of joy.

And so the war was finally over. We were victorious. America had certainly fulfilled its rendezvous with destiny.





The snow was falling gently and all seemed right with the world

It was a time of peace and contentment
It was a time we all thought would last
With thoughts of Christmas before us
Bringing glimpses of future and past

It was Sunday and all was familiar
When suddenly everything changed
The news of Pearl Harbor resounded
And never would life be the same

My mother had lived through the last war
Her memories still vivid and clear
It was called the war to end all wars
So we'd thought we had nothing to fear

She had lost her young brother in that war
Now she looked at her son the same age
And wondered what fate held in store for her
Now there was a war to be waged

The young and the old, the rich and the poor
All marched to the tune we now heard
We knew peace would be ours again one day
We'd be strong until Victory occurred

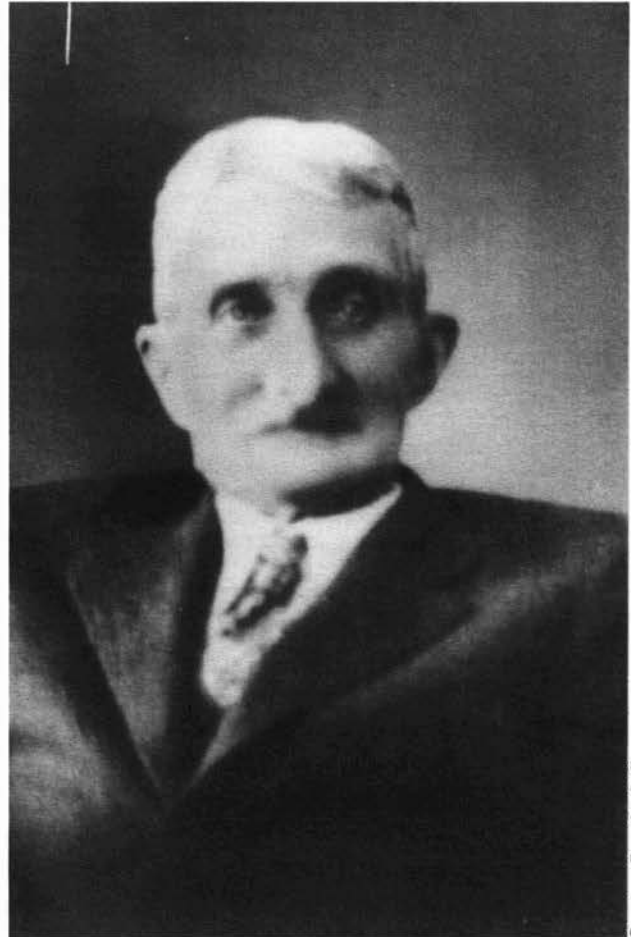
The boys left...the world cried
There was sadness like never before
But everyone rallied and life went on
As we prayed for peace evermore

The snow was falling gently and nothing seemed right in the world

--Patricia H. Carson

Dorothy

By Patricia Harrington Carson

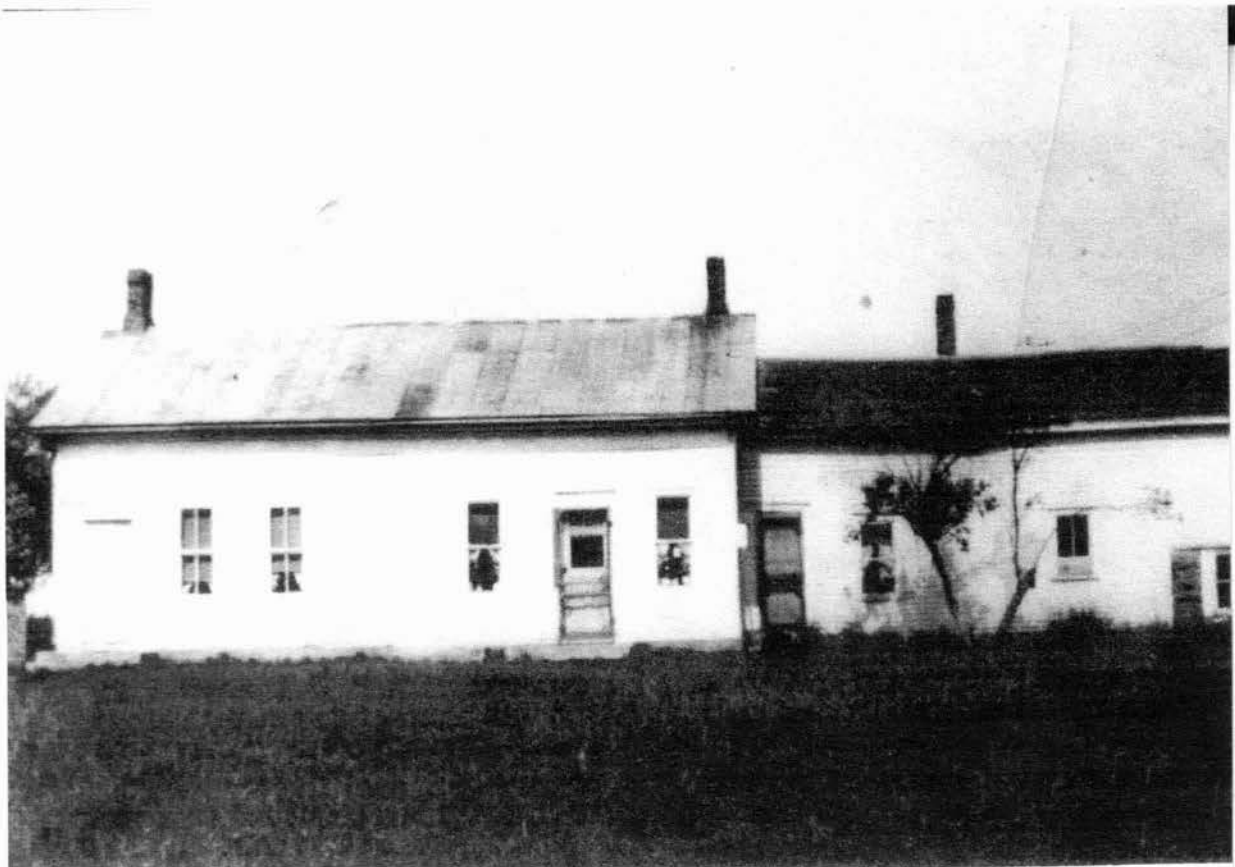


Courtesy Dorothy Gaffney

Professional photographs of Anna and Warren Frenette in their middle years.

Editor's Note:

Thanks to Dorothy for sharing her memories, to her late brother Ed, who had put in writing his stories remembered of the O'Hara and the Frenette families, and to Leon Burnap, Norfolk Historian, who kindly provided the pictures of Norfolk in the olden days, as well as of the fire of 1915.



Courtesy Norfolk Historian

The family farmhouse, located on the Yaleville Road, where Dorothy was born.

It was 1903. America was at peace, Theodore Roosevelt was in the White House, Admiral Perry had made many more unsuccessful attempts to reach the North Pole, and Wilbur and Orville Wright were about to make history with the flight of the Kitty Hawk.

On March 7th of that year, there was much excitement in the house of Anna and Warren Frenette located on the Yaleville Road near Norfolk. A baby was on the way with six siblings anxiously awaiting the arrival. Margaret, the oldest of the family, was doing her best to be helpful while brothers Edward, Frank, Marshall, Charles, and Warren attempted to stay out of everyone's way as they waited to hear the news. There was no doctor present, but a friend Mary, from a nearby farm, was there to help with the delivery. Before the day was over, a little girl was born. She was named Dorothy. With her arrival a feeling of joy filled the house.

Dorothy's grandmother, Margaret Oakes, was the first of her family to make her way here from her homeland, Ireland. She was at the time only sixteen years old. The story goes that she was severely punished by her step-mother for eating a cold potato. Being of an independent nature, this was enough to make her leave home for good. She first made her way to Montreal, then on to Ogdensburg, finally ending up in Colton, where in time she would meet her husband-to-be, Charles O'Hara. Mr. O'Hara had left County Mead in Ireland, rather hurriedly, for as a youth he had been engaged in the continuing fight to free Ireland and because of his aggressiveness, became a marked man. Hiding from the British, he stowed away on a boat lying off the Irish Coast, and with the lifting of the anchor his journey to America began. After landing in New York and learning of British agents in the area, he welcomed the opportunity to join a group going north. They were

willing to endure the rugged winters in exchange for relative security.

And so it was that Margaret Oakes and Charles O'Hara, far from their homeland, settled in the same place in the same era. How they met and when they married is unknown, but what is known is that they first set up housekeeping in a log hut. Mr. O'Hara was a man of the soil. Perhaps it was the memory of Ireland's potato famine that led him to become a potato farmer. But this he did, and his fields were the largest and his plants the biggest in the area. It was said this pleased the "little folks", the fairies and the leprechauns, who played among the potato tops after sunrise and before the dew dried. His potatoes were purchased by lumbermen, furnished for log drives, and sold to starch factories...in other words, the O'Haras prospered. Mr. O'Hara always planted an extra row in his fields for the poor of the community or for the hungry traveler. In time the O'Haras became the parents of five children. One of the five was a daughter named Anna, which brings us now to the Frenette family.

On the same scene at the same time were a group of men from Nova Scotia, whose power was in their skill with their hands. These were the Frenette men. Ezra, the patriarch, was a man at home with an axe in his hand. He transformed gigantic trees into frame homes and barns. He became proficient as a wheel-wright, and was in demand for barn raisings and for building sleds for loggers. He made piece by piece the family's buggy, farm wagon, hay-rack, and sleigh. He and his wife had a son and a daughter, Warren and Bertha.

So, as fate would have it, in the little village of Colton, the Frenettes and the O'Haras were neighbors. Based on background, the two families had little in common. Differences in religion, occupations, and general temperament provided something of a barrier. However, when the Frenette boy met the fairest of the O'Hara girls, the barriers disappeared.

Anna O'Hara and Warren Frenette married in the late 1800's, and purchased the 114-acre farm where they would live for the rest of their lives. The property consisted of a house and barn and several outbuildings. There was also a gravel pit on the property, the only one in the vicinity, which over the years added nicely to the Frenette's income. There were neighbors within walking distance, which was a bonus, as farm folk in the olden days relied on each other for company and support.

Growing up, the children did not live in luxury, but they never lacked for any of life's necessities, and there was always plenty of love to go around. Anna O'Hara was brought up Catholic, and Catholic she forever remained. Every Sunday and Holy Day the Frenette children were dressed in their best and lined up ready to climb into the horse-drawn buggy or the horse-drawn sleigh for the 1 ½ mile trip to the Church of the Visitation. Gramma O'Hara always hoped for a priest in the family, but none has surfaced so far.

Baptisms, First Communions, and Confirmations of all the children were important occasions. Holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas were modestly celebrated. The dinners, which oftentimes included a few relatives or friends, always featured turkey and mince-meat pie. There was no decorated tree at Christmas, but fresh greens and pine cones were brought into the house. The children hung their stockings which were filled with some sweets, a piece of fruit, and small toys. After the presents, it was off to Christmas mass. One Christmas Dorothy received a doll. She only remembers receiving the one, but the one was enough as her interests leaned much more to playing ball, or any other game with Charlie and Warren, than to playing with dolls.

With seven children to ready for the night, their bedtime was scheduled early, especially if there was company as their few chairs were needed for the guests. However, the children found that the voices would pass through the large, square stove-pipe hole and register on their inquisitive ears. The boys especially enjoyed the stories told, many of which could have been inspired or exaggerated by the contents of the

empty flask which they would salvage the next morning for a two-cent refund at one of the many saloons.

The children did not need a lot of material things to make them happy. They had some sleds and each had a pair of ice skates. Many of their winter afternoons were spent skating on the Raquette River which ran beside their farm. Although they had a handyman on the farm, each child, when old enough, was given a job to do. These were seven-day-a-week jobs. The five boys, during the summer or after school on school days, were to get the cows in, feed them, and milk them. Margaret helped with the housework and cooking. Dorothy recalls that her jobs were to feed the chickens and gather the eggs, as well as set the table. Another job that fell to the children was to fill the water tank each day. Warren also raised bees on the farm, so all in all, it was usually a long day for everyone.

Many of the joys of growing up in the Norfolk area were the various festivities that took place in the village, generating camaraderie and warmth. The fourth of July celebration was one of the best examples. It consisted of games, races, parades, contests, and lots of food. It was greatly anticipated each year, with most of the people in the area joining in. At the time, Norfolk was blossoming. There were two hotels: The American House and The Riverside Inn, which is still

in operation today. It was here that various functions were held, such as holiday get-togethers, weddings or other local events. Primarily, however, they offered rest and sustenance to the weary traveler. Travel in those days was slow and difficult, and these havens were much appreciated by many. There was usually much rapport and good will exchanged in the lobby, or more likely in the pub, as the transients sat around a glowing fireplace or rocking on a cool veranda exchanging stories. Norfolk's Main Street housed many thriving businesses. There was a grocery store, a hardware store, law office, barber shop, restaurant, and furniture store on the block. Everything that a little town needed.

Summer thunderstorms were fairly frequent and always seemed more severe in the country. When a storm hit, Anna would get the children out of bed and downstairs. Then the eight of them would light holy candles and recite the rosary until the storm subsided. Warren, however, said to heck with the weather and elected to stay in bed and get his sleep.

There was no telephone or radio in the Frenette house and news of the world reached them only through the two weekly newspapers: *The Breeze*, and *The Norwood News*. The magazine they subscribed to was *The Saturday Evening Post*. On weekdays, Warren walked to Norfolk to pick up the mail. When Dorothy was nine years old, the world was shaken with the news of the sinking of the Titanic. On the night



July 4th, 1911



Courtesy Norfolk Historian

American Hotel in Norfolk. One of the two thriving hotels in Norfolk in the early 1900's.

of April 14, 1912 in the waters of the North Atlantic, the luxurious ocean liner, on its maiden voyage, collided with an iceberg. Fifteen hundred passengers and crew went to their deaths in the icy waters. The terror and tragedy gripped the world's imagination. As isolated as they were, their only information came through the newspapers, and the Frenettes did not at the time realize the enormity of the event.

Wakes were an institution in those days. When one of the younger boys was spending the night with his grandparents, a fellow came to the door to ask his grandfather to join him at a wake as there were no criers. Mr. O'Hara refused to go, firstly because he didn't know the bereaved, and secondly because he was out of practice. But after a little persuasion, the two began to practice. The wailing and the moaning the two of them set up frightened the boy so much that he couldn't sleep that night or for many nights afterward. Later he said he'd like to hear them cry once more, but only in the daylight.

The one-room schoolhouse the Frenette children attended was 1 ½ miles from home. But, walk it they did each day, whatever the weather, carrying their tin lunch pails which usually held bread and a little cake. When it was time for lunch, one of the boys would go to a nearby farm, pail in



Courtesy Norfolk Historian

Riverside Inn, in business in the early 1900's, and still in operation today.

hand, to have it filled with water. Each child was to bring their own cup from home each day. Dorothy had a collapsible one that held great appeal for all the children. So, with or without Dorothy's permission, it usually passed around the room, used by one and all.

When the Frenette children were still quite young, Grampa O'Hara died. Mourning was to the family a symbolic ritual. At the family farm in Colton, when the wake was held, all the mirrors and portraits were draped with black, which was an old Irish custom. The combination of the open coffin, burning candles, the missing familiar photographs, and the crying and the moaning, left more than a lasting impression on the children.

At some point after Mr. O'Hara's passing, Gramma O'Hara decided to leave the family farm and move in with daughter Anna and Warren, seemingly not at all daunted by the houseful of children or the lack of extra space. She was happy to have everyone around and she, in exchange, was accepted and cared-for by all.

Tragedy struck the village of Norfolk when a fire of unknown origin destroyed most of the



People viewing the devastation caused by the Norfolk fire of March 31, 1915.

downtown. Early in the morning of March 10, 1915, Leslie Crabbe, 35, a Town Supervisor and member of the firm of Crabbe and Curry, discovered the fire. Mr. Crabbe died of smoke inhalation when he returned to the building to retrieve books and papers from his safe. He was the fire's only casualty. The cause of the fire has forever remained a mystery. When the fire-bell sounded that morning, a severe storm was raging and the snow, wind and cold hampered the firemen. Every store and business was lost. The following day the newspaper ran pictures of the devastation with the headline: "Views of Fire-wrept Norfolk".

The Frenette's gravel pit came to the aid of the village as they began to rebuild. The gravel, made into cement, was used to restore the Main Street. Young Charlie and Warren shoveled the gravel into waiting horse-drawn wagons. It was a most difficult task for the boys because of the weight of the gravel and the huge amounts that were needed. However day by day they persevered, never quitting and showing the spunk of the Frenette men.

When grade school was finished, and it was time for the children to continue their education, one-by-one they left for Norfolk where they worked in various homes for room and board while they attended school. The children's religious training continued and Marshall was much encouraged and pampered by the local priest, Father Landy, who had great expectations of Marshall becoming a priest. Needless to say, Gramma O'Hara harbored the same hope, but much to their disappointment, Marshall was to follow a different path in life.

It was now time for Dorothy, the baby of the family, to leave home to pursue the next chapter in her life. It was decided that she would enroll in a Convent in Brasher Falls. She traveled there, accompanied by her mother, by train. She would live there for the next four years, returning home only for holidays and summer vacations. The school was run by Father Crowley, with four nuns to teach and oversee the students' daily lives. Though sometimes lonely for her family, Dorothy was happy there, and had many friends.

During her time there, many changes were taking place in the world. The United



Courtesy Norfolk Historian

Norfolk's Catholic Church of the Visitation, that the Frenettes attended all of their lives.



Courtesy Norfolk Historian

Soldiers going off to war in 1917.

States entered into World War I, and Dorothy saw three of her brothers, Edward, Frank and Marshall, leave to enlist in the army at the recruitment center in Ogdensburg. Soon all three of them were stationed in France, though none together. A gift Dorothy received from

Marshall when he was in Paris was a piece of white silk to be used for her high-school graduation dress. What a thoughtful gift ... silk from Paris. Her dress, a loose tunic and skirt, was made for her by a Norfolk dressmaker. The



Courtesy SLCHA Archives

Dorothy Gaffney, seated on right, Herb Judd, seated left, standing left - right are Wendy Hill, Fran Doyle, Mary Ruth Judd, and Trent Trulock, SLCHA Executive Director. This photo was taken June 6, 2003.

boys returned from the war safe and sound to pursue their future lives.

When Dorothy's days at the Convent came to an end, she continued her education at Potsdam Normal School. After graduating, Dorothy took her first teaching job which was cut short when her mother suffered a heart attack and Dorothy returned home to care for her. Anna died at the age of sixty-two and was buried in the family plot in Colton. Warren lived on 'til his mid-eighties and died a peaceful death at home.

Following her mother's death, Dorothy took a job in the Massena school teaching second grade. It was while she was there that the man she was to marry came into her life. Charles Gaffney, a Canton man who worked for St. Lawrence University, along with another young Canton man, Walter Lake, were in Massena to attend a Knights of Co-

lumbus meeting. Through friends they met that night after the meeting and at the end of the evening Charlie asked Dorothy out. Their relationship blossomed, and they were married in a small ceremony in the Norfolk Church in 1934. They moved to Canton into a charming house on Pearl Street, where they lived their entire married lives. Dorothy, for many years, taught in the Canton schools.

Two children were born to them, a daughter named Margaret Ann, and ten years later a son, Edward. With two children, nine grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to enrich her life, Dorothy has indeed lived the good life. At her one hundredth birthday celebration, there were over a hundred yellow roses and cards for her, plus hundreds of people in and out during the day. Many of those arriving from various locations were her students from years gone by. It was indeed a moving tribute in every sense

of the word. The Village of Canton proclaimed it "Dorothy Gaffney Day".

So, this is the story of a lady who, through her many years, has lived her life with grace, charm, and a wonderful sense of humor. Today, she resides at Partridge Knoll, with her son Ed and his wife Anita close at hand. She has many visitors, plays bridge, attends weekly Mass, goes out to lunch with friends, and is a volunteer for the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

Mystery Photo



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