The St. Lawrence County Historical Association
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The St. Lawrence County Historical Association

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Issue Editor:
Susan Omohundro

On the Cover
The Hannawa Falls Railroad #2, photographed near Potsdam. The Hannawa Falls Railroad was a spur that ran between Potsdam and the Hannawa Falls hydroelectric power cum paper pulp plant to carry products from the pulp mill and sandstone quarries. It also carried a few passengers. It operated from about 1900 to 1915, when the tracks were taken up and reused on the line from DeKalb Junction to Hermon. Photo from the Potsdam Museum.

From the County Historian

By Trent Trulock

This issue of *The Quarterly* finds the St. Lawrence County Historical Association thinking about money. Money is never a popular subject at a museum- mostly because, just like at your house, there never seems to be enough of it! Be that as it may, we are spending some time looking at how things turned out for 2004 and setting up the budget for 2005.

As I look at our budget I'm struck by the fact that our members are our life-blood. This really doesn't surprise me, because I'm always telling people this. Since the SLCHA was formed in 1947 as a membership organization it makes sense that members are so important to us. But seeing just how much of our revenue comes from members really drives this point home.

For the 2004 budget $46,300 of our $151,084.96 general operating revenue is budgeted to come from members (as I am writing this in December I don't yet have our fiscal year-end numbers). So almost 31% of our operating revenue is from member support. Support from members includes membership renewals, new memberships, the summer and year-end appeals, miscellaneous donations, and memorial gifts. If you look at the chart on the next page you can see that our members are our largest single source of support.

I think that the large amount of support from our members will probably surprise a lot of people. Because we are the St. Lawrence County Historical Association there are many who are under the mistaken notion that most of our funding comes from public sources, which is certainly not the case.

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

The SLCHA is certainly fortunate to have so many dedicated members. As of December 7, 2004 we had 975 members. And one of the great things about our members is that they renew their memberships! The SLCHA's renewal rate is 91%. This is a phenomenal rate that many museums would love to have. In fact, a renewal rate of 75% or more is considered excellent. A high renewal rate like this tells me that the SLCHA is doing its job well of collecting, preserving, researching, and interpreting the history of St. Lawrence County.

I certainly can't take much of the credit for this success with our members. Our mission has always driven the SLCHA and our ability to fulfill this mission is only possible because of our fine staff, dedicated volunteers, and generous members. As a private non-profit organization our members are the main reason we exist. And support from members comes in many forms beyond money. Our members use the research room, visit the museum exhibits, attend programs and events, donate artifacts to us, volunteer in the

museum and archives, and shop in the gift shop. Our members have made St. Lawrence County history a priority in their lives. This history is a passion of theirs, and I am grateful that they feel this passion. It certainly makes me feel the relevance of working at the SLCHA.

A passion for St. Lawrence County history can also be seen in the articles that make up this *Quarterly*. These stories of our history, from the families who settled our county and made it their home, to the cheese factory that prepared dairy products to be used both locally and far away, to the railroads that connected us to outside markets for our products and also connected us to each other, tie us to our past in a very personal way. That personal connection is what makes our history relevant and important to us. I hope you enjoy this issue!

SLCHA 2004 Budgeted Income

The largest part of SLCHA income comes from annual member dues and gifts, supplemented by museum money-raising activities and income from long-term assets donated by members. Only a little over 20% comes from government and other public agencies such as NYSCA (New York State Council on the Arts).
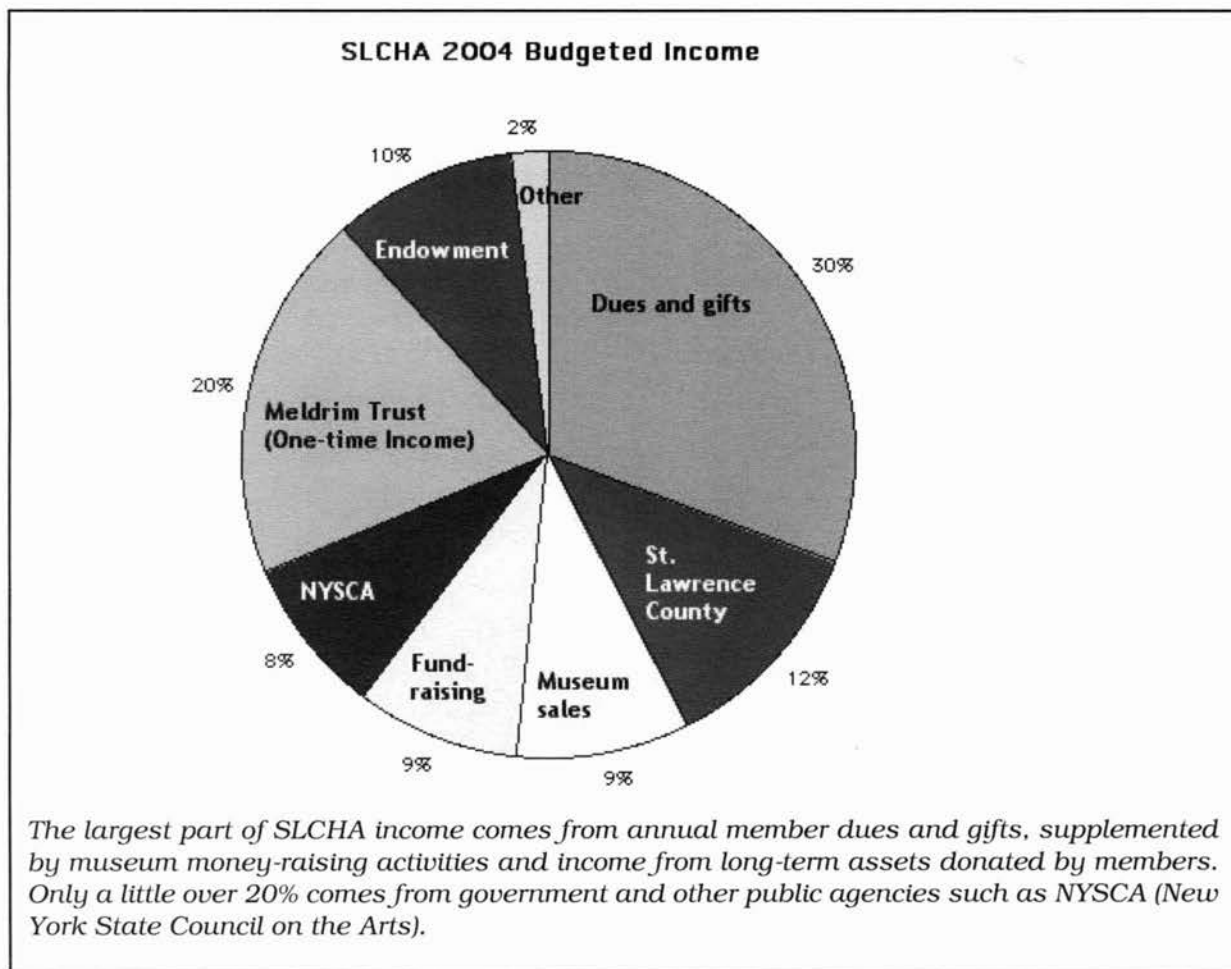
Editor's Corrections and Additions:

Regarding "*Tale of the Baby of Crossover Light*" in the last issue of *The Quarterly*, we should mention that the former Town of Hammond Historian, Mary Biondi, is now known as Mary Hadlock Smallman, and she is currently the Village of Hermon Historian. Also, the Six Nations Museum is in Onchiota. DeValcourt Kip married Harriet Ball (not Hall) in 1859 (see p. 8).

A Circuitry of Steel:
Railroad Connections in Northern New York
Arthur L. Johnson

No single factor had more to do with the industrial revolution and its transformation of American life than the railroad. Along with the steamboat and the Erie Canal, it created a continental market. It led to the concentration of manufacturing in cities and to regional specialization of agriculture. For northern New York, this meant a shift to dairying, still a regional specialty. The train allowed for wide marketing of cheese, butter and milk, especially after the invention of the refrigerator car, reportedly in the Ogdensburg yards of the Rutland Railroad in 1851. The railroad also enlarged the area of a day's travel by several times for those near its route. As John Stilgoe says in his *Metropolitan Corridor*, it brought the city to the country in many ways. With a few exceptions, like Henry David Thoreau, most people and communities welcomed the rails which linked them to the outer
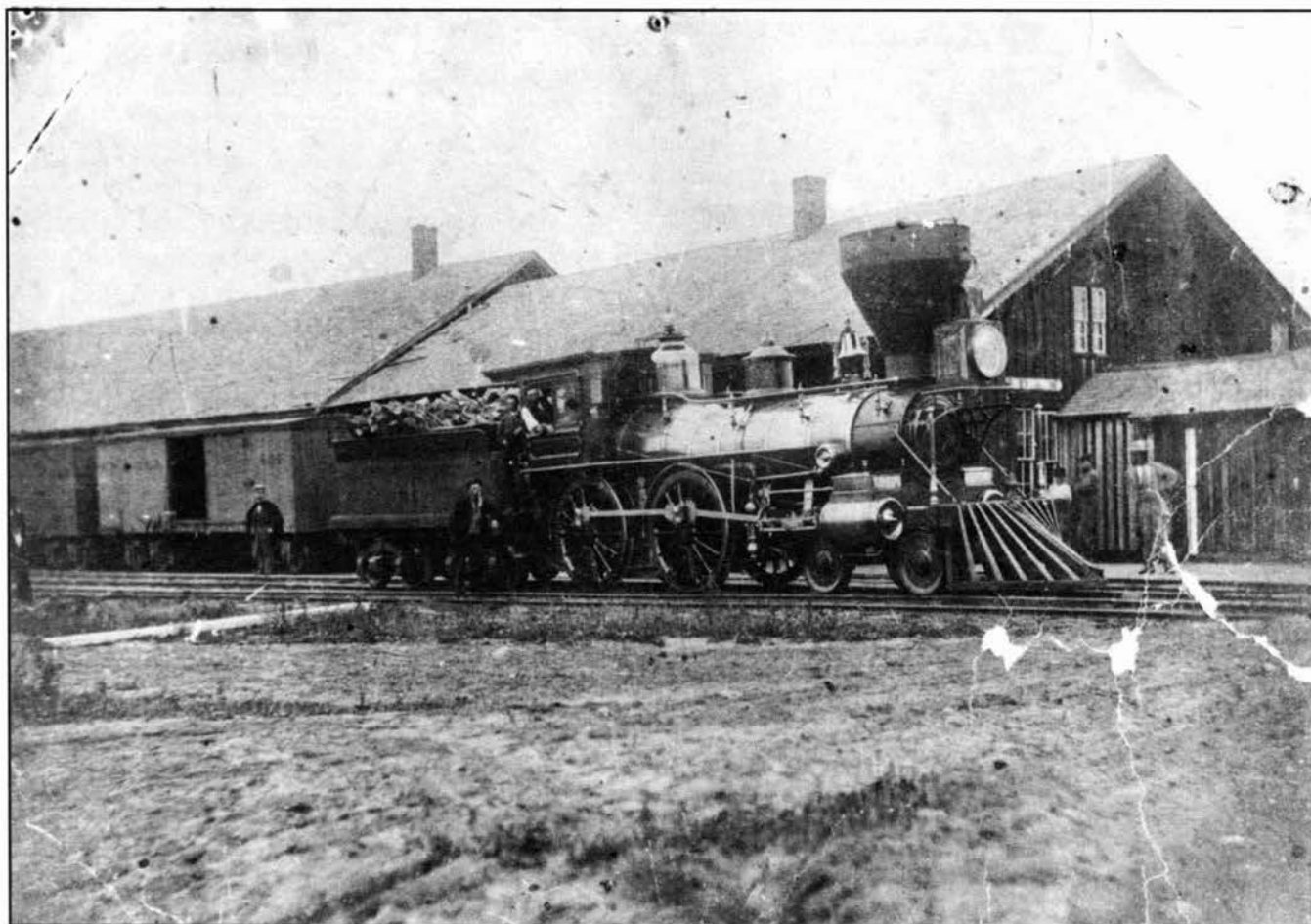
A woodburning 4-4-0 photographed at Potsdam in 1856, just after the opening of the railroad line from Potsdam to Watertown. Photograph provided by Art Johnson, copied from the collection of the late Roger Whitney.

world and changed their life-ways forever. By the time of the Civil War, the rail network had become a marvelous continental circuitry with the lowliest rusty spur connected to great cities, their yards and terminals.

The Rutland in New York State began its life in the 1850s as the Northern Railroad, between Rouses Point and Ogdensburg--the first railroad into St. Lawrence County, beginning a service which lasted just over a century under different names. The first company went bankrupt in 1858 and the company reorganized as the Ogdensburg Railroad. More difficulty and the line became the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain in 1864. Until 1913 the railroad owned a marine subsidiary which ran ships up the Great Lakes from Ogdensburg. The Rutland Railroad, of Vermont, bought the line in 1901 and ran it for 60 years before abandonment in 1961. The freight and passenger trains ceased operation and the tracks were lifted in 1963 between Norwood and Rouses Point. The stub between Norwood and Ogdensburg went to the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority and has been operated by a number of companies since, to provide Ogdensburg with a link to the Syracuse-Montreal line currently owned by CSX.

I am not attempting here anything like a complete history of North Country railroads, but rather to treat those lines which connected with the Rutland at Norwood, Moira and Malone. Walk east along the CSX main at Norwood and on the right side, in the brush, you can find the remnants of a large rail yard. Hard as it is to imagine today, Norwood was a busy rail junction for decades. The chugging of switch engines working the yard must have been a daily background noise. The fallout from locomotive smoke gave a dark tinge to the red brick buildings. The Montreal branch of CSX still runs daily freights through on the line that began as the Potsdam and Watertown Railroad in 1856. It interchanges at Norwood with the New York & Ogdensburg, which operates the lines to Ogdensburg and part of the defunct Norwood & St. Lawrence to Norfolk. CSX and Canadian National freights run between Montreal and the Selkirk yard south of Albany. These trains have cars for the DeWitt yard near Syracuse, Watertown, and Massena. In addition, a semiweekly local from Massena serves the Agway and the bottled gas plant in

The Norwood and St. Lawrence #211 at Norwood, photographed in 1934. The engine was built by the Baldwin Company. Photograph provided by Art Johnson, copied from the collection of the late Roger Whitney.

Canton and the paper mill in Potsdam. Local freight has mostly gone to trucks.

The Montreal line began its life as the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg, which connected at Massena in 1886 with a branch of the Grand Trunk Railway to Montreal. (Canadians still use the English *railway* rather than the American *railroad*.) The RW&O was, like most lines of any size, a combination of short lines. When the Rome & Watertown reached Watertown by 1851, merchants and others in Potsdam, Canton, Gouverneur and Philadelphia were eager to plug into the system with the Potsdam & Watertown, completed in 1856 from the Northern at Norwood (a. Raquetteville, b. Potsdam Junction). Imagine the impact of the railroad on these small, mainly agricultural villages: the boost to land values, the sudden increase in travel capability, the *Watertown Daily Times* arriving on the day of its issue, the local industries with a greatly expanded market and their urban competition. It was an economic revolution.

The frantic optimism that went with this inspired such dreams as a spur to Sackets Harbor from which a steamship line would operate up Lake Ontario. The P&W would then, the brochures boasted, be a link in the line of transportation from Boston to the lake ports. This optimism ignored the Mohawk Valley short lines, soon to be combined into Commodore Vanderbilt's New York Central, "the water level route." It also ignored one great flaw in the Northern: the grade which crested at Churubusco and limited the freight efficiency of that railroad. Long freights needed helper engines to get over this summit. But it was an optimistic time. P&W directors negotiated interchanges with the Northern and the Rome & Watertown. The latter road guaranteed the bonds of the P&W. Construction began on May 4, 1854 on the 76-mile railroad. The first train ran through on February 5, 1857, carrying the usual ceremonial complement of company officers and guests. The train ran through to Norwood and up the Northern to Ogdensburg and back.

The P&W was instantly popular. On a single September day in 1859 the Potsdam station agent sold 805 tickets. The station agent was a busy man. In addition to selling tickets he was the key to traffic control. He was a Morse telegrapher, relaying train orders and setting signals, vital to avoiding collisions on a one-track line. Occasional sidings allowed trains to meet but the meets had to be carefully coordinated. Despite its popularity, the company had enormous construction costs and foundered in bankruptcy by 1860. The Rome and Watertown acquired the line, built a line from DeKalb Junction to Ogdensburg and reconstituted itself as the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg in 1861. At Ogdensburg, a ferry connected it with Prescott, Upper Canada, and with the Prescott & Ottawa Railway. Another spur went to Cape Vincent and another ferry to Canada. An ad in the Albany *Atlas & Argus* for July 2, 1861 shows two daily passenger trains on the RW&O.

The RW&O was successful but perhaps that success tempted the company into fatal ambitions. By 1875 it had acquired track into Syracuse and began to build westward along the lake shore to Lewiston and Niagara Falls, poaching on Vanderbilt territory. It also took over the Utica & Black River Railroad, giving it a second line into Ogdensburg. A branch to Clayton from this line was instrumental in popularizing the Thousand Islands as a summer destination. A ferry from Clayton ran to Gananoque, Ontario (Upper Canada became Ontario as part of Canadian Confederation on July 1, 1867). This line would see heavy summer traffic.

Norwood was the interchange point for passengers and freight. In the late 1800s the *White Mountain Express* ran from Niagara Falls to Portland, Maine with a breakfast stop at Norwood.

The RW&O was a tempting morsel for William Vanderbilt. He made its president, Charles Parsons, "an offer he couldn't refuse," undoubtedly with the implied threat of a parallel line northward from Syracuse. So the 30-year-old Rome Watertown & Ogdensburg sold itself to the New York Central & Hudson River in 1891 and became the

St. Lawrence Division of that system. The NYC&HR dropped the *White Mountain Express* and other interline trains, but it did improve service to northern New York, including through sleepers to New York and Buffalo and Boston. At this writing, in 2003, there are people in Canton, Potsdam and Massena who remember boarding sleepers to Grand Central Station. The jet airliner and the interstate highway system combined to finish most of the national passenger trains by 1970. Passenger service ended in 1964 on the St. Lawrence Division and, effectively, for northern New York.

In 1968 the New York Central combined with the Pennsylvania Railroad to form the Penn Central. This consolidation was bankrupt by 1972 and became part of Conrail, formed by the federal government to maintain freight service in the Northeast. Conrail did well and was privatized. In 1999 two southern systems, CSX and Norfolk Southern divided it between them, with CSX acquiring the former NYC routes, including the Montreal Secondary. The line sees four or five through freights daily, some of them over 100 cars long. A local from Massena serves the Agway and a bottled gas plant in Canton but trucks have taken over most of the interline freight.

Another interchange at Norwood for a time was with the Norwood & St. Lawrence Railroad, built in 1909 to Norfolk and Waddington on the St. Lawrence River. The St. Regis Paper Company at Norfolk operated this line, bringing in pulp from the dock at Waddington to its mill in Norfolk and shipping paper out by way of Norwood. A common carrier, the N&SL ran passenger trains into the late 1940s. Its old depot still stands in Norfolk. Just beyond it, at a bend in the track, stands an old locomotive watering pipe, a mute monument to the steam age. The New York & Ogdensburg engine house is in the Norfolk yard but track between there and Waddington has been taken up.

An interesting but shortlived tributary of the St. Lawrence Division was the Hannawa Falls Railroad, a six-mile line up along the Raquette River between Potsdam and Hannawa Falls. There is little precise information on this short line which seems to have operated between 1900 and 1915. Owned by the Hannawa Falls Water Power Company, it served a paper mill and a rock quarry. A home-made caboose took people on Sunday excursions up the river. Helen Hosmer, late dean of the Crane School of Music, remembered riding it to a Sunday School picnic. The grade and bridge piers in the river are still visible to the observant canoeist. The track ran south from the New York Central at Pine Street, behind the former Clarkson University ice arena and up the river on bridges and islands to Hannawa Falls.

Moving eastward along the Rutland's route to Moira, we reach another junction point. From Moira south ran a railroad built to serve a single industry. Lumber entrepeneur John Hurd bought thousands of acres of woods in the northeastern Adirondack upland. He incorporated the Northern Adirondack Railroad in February 1883 and began building south. The tracks reached Santa Clara in 1884, where the old depot still stands as St. Peter's Church. Hurd built on to St. Regis Falls and Tupper Lake by 1889. The railroad carried passengers as well as lumber and served as a common carrier. Passengers could come in from New York or Boston by sleeper. St. Regis Falls became for a time a bustling industrial center with lumber mills, a box factory and large tannery. Branch tracks ran east to Everton (on the present Route 99, the Red Tavern Road) and westward through the forests to Lake Ozonia. Hikers can see the grade of the Lake Ozonia branch, now a dirt road, from the summit of Azure Mountain. The Everton spur ran six miles east of the Falls to a point where it was 960 feet above Moira. The Northern Adirondack brought sportsmen to Santa Clara which had a small hotel for them. There still is a hotel there, probably still for hunters.

Hurd's line was bankrupt in 1895 and sold out to a group who incorporated as the New York & Ottawa Railroad. They built north from Moira, bridging the St. Lawrence
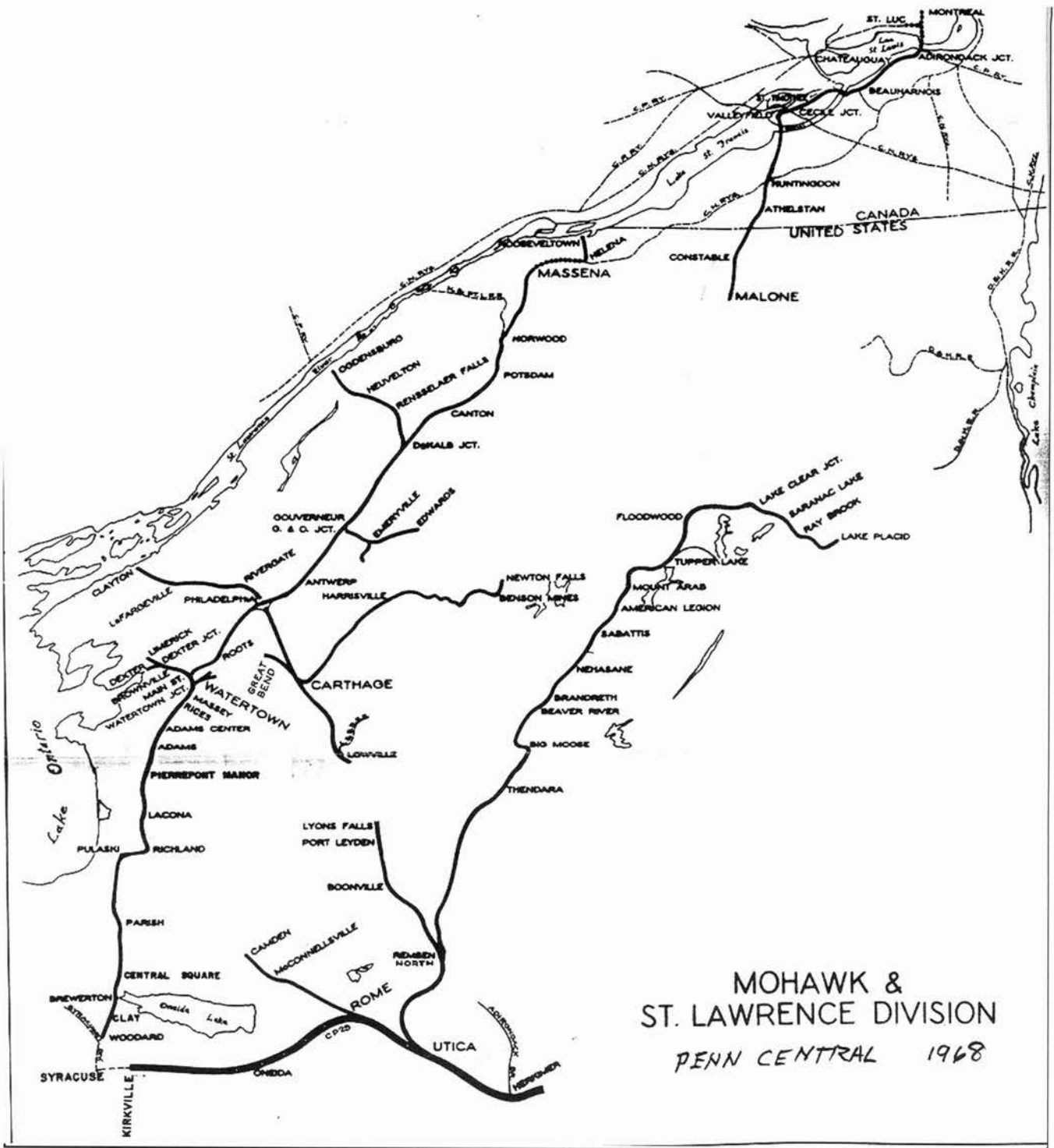
The regional Penn Central lines c. 1968. Diagram provided by Art Johnson.

River at what later became Rooseveltown, meeting the Ottawa and New York on the Canadian side. They crossed at Moira, whose old Rutland station still stands, just north of the village. The *Ottawa Citizen* of April 3, 1900 lists two daily trains each way. The Imperial New York Central bought the NY&O in December 1906 and it became the Ottawa Division. The line was not successful and the Central abandoned it in 1937 between Moira

and Tupper Lake. Passenger service between Helena and Ottawa continued until 1954 and freight between Massena and Ottawa until 1957. The bridge was torn out after that but the track north from Helena to Rooseveltown still serves a General Motors plant near the St. Lawrence River.

Moving eastward on the Rutland the next interchange would be at Malone with the line pushed through from Utica to Montreal in 1892 by Dr. William Seward Webb, who had married Lila Vanderbilt, the Commodore's daughter. It is hardly surprising that his Adirondack St. Lawrence soon became the Adirondack Division of the New York Central. Frank Graham (*The Adirondack Park*) describes Webb as "a maker and a shaker, a tall, regal man with light hair and a George V moustache and beard." He owned 4,000 acres in Hamilton County which he called Nehasane and through which his railroad ran. He had his own station there and nobody could get off the train there without a note from Webb to the conductor. Work on the line began on March 3, 1891, just 11 days before the New York Central bought the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg. The Central would have two routes to Montreal. Webb moved fast, perhaps fearing conservationist opposition. A *New York Times* editorial on May 28 warned that the lumberers and railroaders, presumably in league or the same people, would soon turn the Adirondacks into a version of the Jersey Meadows. Henry Harter's *Fairy Tale Railroad* mentions labor troubles and stories of repression of the men, largely Italian immigrants. But it went through. Lines building toward each other joined at Twitchell Creek and trains began rolling through to Montreal in 1892.
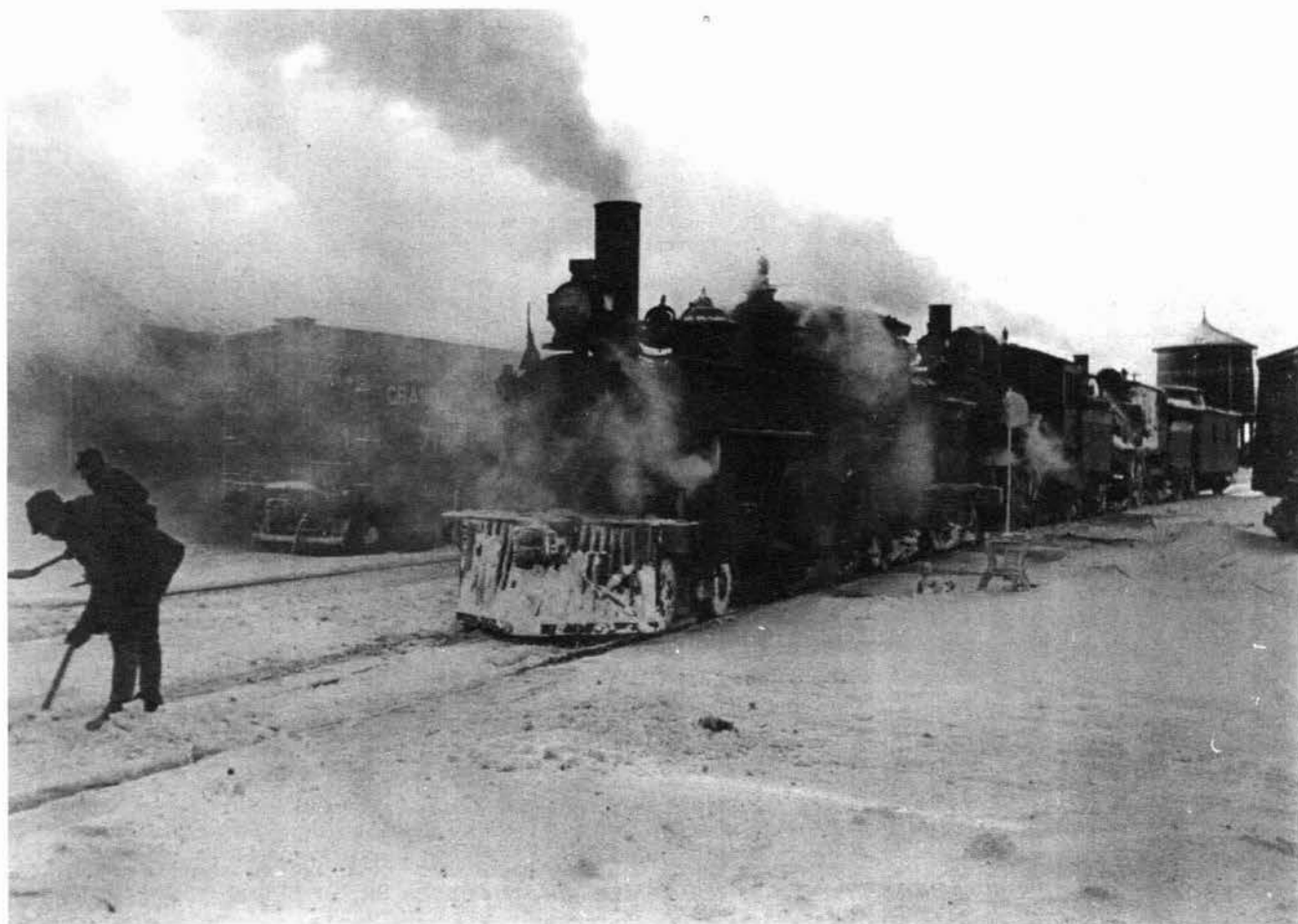
Removing snow from the tracks in Potsdam, early 20th century. Photo from the Potsdam Museum.

The division helped to turn Lake Placid and Saranac Lake into resorts with a branch from Lake Clear Junction to Saranac Lake and running rights over the Delaware & Hudson line to Lake Placid. Union Station at Saranac Lake served both railroads and now serves the Adirondack Scenic Railroad's summer tourist train to Lake Placid. Branches to Raquette Lake and the Fulton Chain brought vacationists to those areas. Picturesque short branch lines included the Grasse River Railroad, branching off the division at Childwold to serve the Emporium Lumber Company whose headquarters were at Conifer. This lumber spur was also a common carrier and served Cranberry Lake village with motorized passenger cars. Then there was the six-mile trolley line Paul Smith built to bring guests to his hotel from Lake Clear Junction. Passenger service on the Adirondack Division ended in 1963 and freight ten years later. The company lifted the tracks between Lake Clear and Malone in 1963 but the state acquired the line between Utica and Lake Placid. This line enjoyed a brief revival as the Adirondack Railway in 1980, serving the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid. Plans to revive it permanently ran into financial difficulties but in 1993 a group called the Adirondack Railway Preservation Society opened it for short tourist runs out of Thendara. Later they revived summer runs between Saranac and Placid and opened the line south to Utica. It is enjoying huge success as a tourist attraction on those segments. The line between Saranac Lake and a point north of Thendara is open only for positioning moves, but there is talk of eventual through service.

The Rutland Railroad is long gone. Its Vermont trackage is part of the state-owned Vermont Railways today. VTR recently acquired the New York and Ogdensburg, the

The Potsdam railroad depot in its prime, c. 1914. It was constructed of local red sandstone in a style popular in early 20th century depots, especially in the Southwest, incorporating broad overhanging eaves, tile roof, and Mission or Craftsman-style details. Photograph from the Potsdam Museum.

old Norwood-Ogdensburg segment of the Rutland. Could they be thinking of reconstituting the route?

Still busy is the Montreal line and those are the whistles we hear in Canton and Potsdam.

The Rutland main between Norwood and Lake Champlain is long gone but you can still see its grade along Route 11 east of Malone. Depots remain, including Moira, Ellenburg, Chateaugay and Malone. The twin towers of the Malone depot now house a bank just north of Route 11, behind the old Hotel Flanagan ruin. Last time I looked, the Agway at Moira still used an old Rutland baggage car standing on a piece of track in the rear of the building. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

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Researching the Minnicks
of the Town of Fowler:
Adventures in Family History
Bill Woodward

A Stirring of Interest

In 1979, four years before she died at age 85, my grandmother Beulah Minnick Woodward requested to do something she had done yearly for over 80 years. Her wish was to "go to the cemeteries." That meant a trip to Hailesboro for the Minnicks and to Spragueville for the Woodwards. I was visiting my parents in Heuvelton at the time, and I traveled with them to United Helpers Nursing Home in Ogdensburg to pick Grandmother up. This was one of Grandmother's last visits to the cemeteries, and she wanted to be sure

that we had learned all that she knew. We went on a day of family discovery that is still as fresh as if it happened yesterday.

As a child I was the only grandchild who showed a keen interest in family history. When we visited Grandma and Grandpa Woodward's home at 70 William Street in Gouverneur, my brothers, sister and cousins played in the back yard, waved at the engineers in the trains crossing the Oswegatchie, or played "I spy the cars," but I sat for hours on the stairs and listened to the adults talk.

Beulah and Charles Woodward, the author's grandparents, at the family farm near Spragueville around 1923. L to R: sons Allen, Charles, John (the author's father), Donald, Larry. Charles drowned in the Oswegatchie River in 1939.

I remember one quite spirited conversation about the Civil War. My Grandfather Charles Woodward was the second child of the third wife of his father, who was about 60 when he was born. Two of Grandpa's uncles had fought in the Civil War; one had the distinction of having been on the Wheatfield in Gettysburg and surviving to talk about it. As I sat on the stairs listening, Grandpa was telling his brother Henry, my father John, and John's brother Allen about the prestigious war records of the "Woodward Boys." When Grandmother had heard about enough of that, she went to her Larkin oak sideboard and proceeded to show off the discharge papers of her grandfather, Charles B. Minnick, who had served in the New York 14th Artillery Company D. He had seen action at the siege of Petersburg and at Weldon Bridge. So began a long-running discussion of the Minnicks versus the Woodwards. Uncle Henry was spurred by these regular conversations to do family research and was the first to trace the family tree.
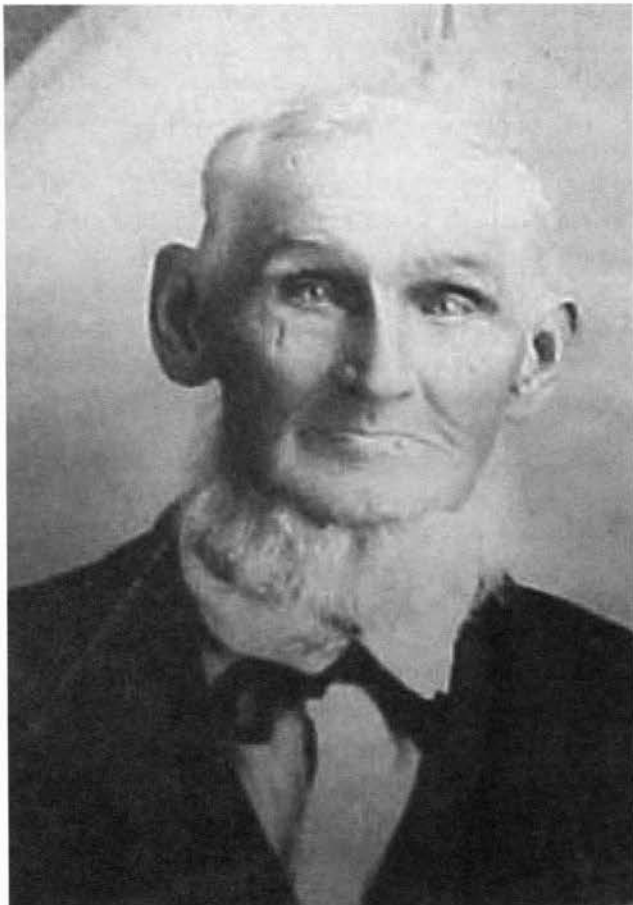
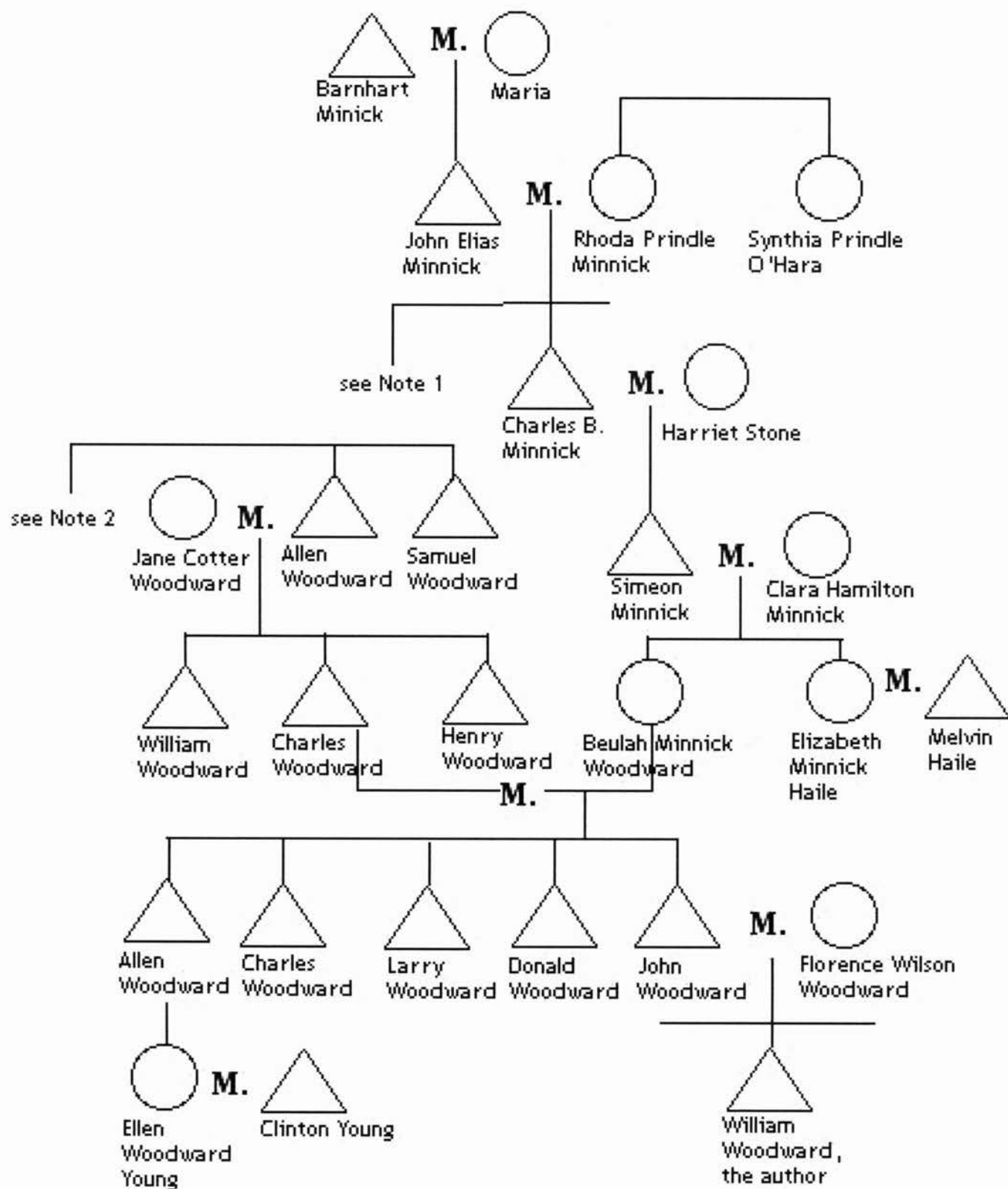These discussions also got me interested in family history. A year before he died, when I was 11, Grandpa Woodward introduced me to the Woodward plot near the front of the Spragueville Cemetery. He pointed out his father and mother, Allen and Jane Cotter. He told me about his uncle Samuel Woodward, who had been a bit "tetched" and had fallen off a wagon tongue and died at a young age. In 1967, when I was 17, my Grandmother Woodward gave me the letters and notes about the Woodward family researched by Great-uncle Henry before he died in 1964. With this information I wrote a paper for my high-school history class in Heuvelton. As I found additional interesting tidbits I jotted them down and kept my notes in an envelope. In 1973 for Christmas I published a pamphlet of Woodward family history. I gave 40 copies to Grandma Woodward and she distributed them to all the family.

I then turned my attention to the Minnicks. Our 1979 visit to the cemeteries was my first introduction to the Minnicks in Hailesboro. Grandmother Woodward first showed me the graves of her father and mother, Simeon and Clara Hamilton Minnick. I saw the grave of Grandmother's grandfather Charles Minnick, the Civil War soldier. The graves of some of Charles' siblings, his adult children such as Simeon, and three children and grandchildren who died in infancy were all gathered in one place in the cemetery. Then Grandmother led me to the oldest graves. They were about 10 yards toward the road from the main Minnick plot. The stone read,

John E. Minnick
Died
Dec. 7, 1869
Aged 79 yrs 7 mo 7 da

Next to John's (Elias's) grave was another stone, which read,

Charles B. Minnick, the author's great-great-grandfather, taken around 1912. He was killed by an exploding oil stove at his home in Fowler in 1913. He fought in Company C, 14th New York Heavy Artillery, in the Civil War.

Barnhart Minick **M.** Maria

John Elias Minnick **M.** Rhoda Prindle Minnick   Synthia Prindle O'Hara

see Note 1

Charles B. Minnick **M.** Harriet Stone

see Note 2

Jane Cotter Woodward **M.** Allen Woodward   Samuel Woodward

Simeon Minnick **M.** Clara Hamilton Minnick

William Woodward   Charles Woodward   Henry Woodward   Beulah Minnick Woodward   Elizabeth Minnick Haile **M.** Melvin Haile

M.

Allen Woodward   Charles Woodward   Larry Woodward   Donald Woodward   John Woodward **M.** Florence Wilson Woodward

Ellen Woodward Young **M.** Clinton Young

William Woodward, the author

Minnicks and Woodwards mentioned in this article.

Rhoda
wife of
Elias Minnick
Died Sept. 15, 1876.
Aged 86 years.

Both John (Elias) and Rhoda Prindle Minnick were born in 1790. They are my great great great grandparents.

After our cemetery visit, I wanted to know more about where Elias Minnick had come from. Grandma gave me some papers in her grandfather Charles Minnick's handwriting. It showed that his parents Elias and Rhoda had raised 11 children. Grandma showed me a few more papers with Elias's and Rhoda's names on them. After that day, I began to correspond with her about the family history, but she had little more information to go on. On February 3 of the winter after our cemetery visit, I received a note from Grandma with this story:

Minnick is a German name. My ancestors came here from Massachusetts by way of the Mohawk Valley. I do not know where and I do not have any one to ask about them. Elias Minnick came near being scalped by an Indian on land now Camp Drum. He was a small boy and had a basswood whistle which he made. He blew the whistle as the Indian was ready to scalp him. The Indian grabbed the whistle and ran away.

This prompted me to begin researching Elias. I decided to search records for the Mohawk Valley for a baptismal record of him. I live in Glens Falls, which is only an hour's drive to Fonda, to a building that once was the county seat for Tryon County, which later became Montgomery County. Grandma had said she thought that the Minnicks had come from the Mohawk Valley, so I checked the 1790 Census for Tryon County and found one "John Minck" in that vast area. Then I spent four hours going through church records, finding mostly members of a religious sect who immigrated from Germany's Palatine region. When I finally came to a birth in 1790, it turned out to be a girl, Wiendtze. I was completely stumped.

The Internet to the Rescue

It was almost 15 years of sporadic searching before I found what I needed to add some more history to the mystery of Elias's family. The breakthrough came when I purchased my first computer and connected to the Internet. When I uploaded my GED-Com file to Ancestry.com, the Minnicks came out of the woodwork.

It turns out that in one of the Jefferson County histories was a small list of the first settlers of LeRay. Included were the names Elias and Barnhart Minick. Further searching online brought up the information that Elias had been a member of Detachment 108 in Major Britain's NY Militia in the War of 1812. This information was confirmed by Barb Olbertz, a fifth cousin in Littleton, Colorado. Barb also confirmed that Barnhart (also spelled Bernhardt, Bernard, and Barnhard) Minick shows up in the 1800 Census of Turin, Oneida County, with a son in the "under 16 years" category. Presumably this son was Elias. Further searches revealed that Bernhardt had been a Revolutionary War soldier in the LINE Third Regiment at Fort Klock in the Mohawk Valley. By searching birth records Barb found Elias's birth to Bernhart and Maria Minick at German Flats in Herkimer.

Online, I also met two fourth cousins, meaning that we share Elias as our great-great-great grandfather. Tina Smith, in Idaho, has been searching the Alexander Minnicks of Pitcairn. Joan LaTourno, in Boston, explores the Rhoda Minnick Stowell line. Both cousins are evidence of how Elias and Rhoda Minnick and their 11 children could spawn nearly 200 cousins.

Recently I found online a Woodward in California who is my age. His grandfather is my fourth cousin. He represents part of the great westward movement, in his case from Spragueville and Antwerp to Iowa, Kansas, Texas, and now to California. I have also made contact with a fourth cousin who is a Cajun woman of mixed race in Louisiana, and another cousin who has a Spanish surname.

One story that came from my Internet cousins was of Rhoda Minnick, who in her old

age petitioned for a war pension from the government. Rhoda proclaimed that she had had a father-in-law in the American Revolution, a husband in the War of 1812, and three sons in the Civil War—two of whom were permanently disabled and one was killed. "If anyone deserves a pension," she argued, "I do."

What I Have Learned

What I found in my research is, in one sense, the history of most 19th-century families in St. Lawrence County. The settlement of the western states was a great draw, separating families. Elias and Rhoda's children responded to that draw. A few stayed in New York: Elizabeth Minnick Fuller in Fowler, Charles Minnick in Hailesboro, and Rhoda Minnick Stowell, his younger sister, in Gouverneur, as did Jacob. But the others went west: Bernard moved to Oconto, Wisconsin; Leronzo moved to Rockford, Ill; Lucy Ann Parkinson moved to Pensaukee, Wisconsin; Elaxander ended his life in Hot Springs, South Dakota. Simeon died from disease in

The reunion of the Woodward siblings in 1904. The siblings had not been together since 1868. On his way to the St.Louis Fair with his family, Charles Emmett Woodward decided to return to Spragueville and contacted all of his family for a reunion. It was their last time together. Copies of this picture are in homes in Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Utah, Idaho, California, and of course, St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties. It is often used as the proof of kinship among us. Seated L-R: Allen Woodward 2nd (the author's great-grandfather), Spragueville; Olive Woodward Ellis, Rutland, New York; Andrew Woodward, Gouverneur. Standing L-R: Henry Woodward , Sand Springs, Iowa; Charles Emmett Woodward, Lyndon, Kansas; and Spencer Woodward, Antwerp.

Simeon Minnick and Clara Hamilton, the author's great-grandparents, at the time of their marriage, July, 1890.

Fiftieth anniversary photo of Simeon and Clara Minnick, at Melvin Haile's residence in Richville, 1940.

the Civil War, and William I can't find yet. After family members headed west, the occasional letter was usually the only communication with home.

The next generation included 32 offspring distributed across the nation. That generation produced at least 66 cousins of which I have record, and each of those cousins have started families. There are nine generations of cousins today, and we family historians are finding Minnick relatives in most states of the union.

It is always a treat to hear from these new cousins. I immediately send them a photo of the cemetery stone of their Minnick ancestor, to their great delight. My relatives throughout the country consider a visit to the cemeteries of St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties to be one of their life goals. One distant cousin traveled five hours to visit our region and to search for gravesites. She found distant relatives in Riverside Cemetery in Gouverneur, but she left without finding the graves of Elias and

Rhoda Minnick, only four miles away in Hailesboro. Alas, I could have told her!

My knowledge of my family continues to grow. My great great great grandmother Rhoda Minnick was born a Prindle in Rutland, Vermont. Her sister Synthia (also sometimes Cynthia, but it's Synthia on her headstone) is buried next to her in Hailesboro. One of my distant cousins found a direct line from Rhoda back to Scotland to a William Prindle, who emigrated to the American colonies in 1654, where he died in 1689. There are many web pages devoted to this Prindle family

The Minnicks were never well-to-do. They always worked hard, farming in the Chubb Lake and Battle Hill areas. To supplement the farm income, the Minnick girls were hired out to help clean houses and work on others' farms. This was how my grandmother Beulah met her future husband Charles Woodward. My Uncle Allen Woodward told me that Beulah and Charles met during "thrashing" season, when he was working on a neighbor's farm and she was the hired girl there. I learned on the Web that another Minnick, from Pitcairn, probably one of Alexander's sons, was sought for murder and poaching in the Seveys Corner area about 1900. That was also about when Alexander went west to be with his other children in South Dakota, so there may be a connection.

Reliving the History

The Minnick cousins are not just a list on paper; they're an actual social group. There has always been a Minnick family reunion. In the 1930's family members from around the state met at the home of Simeon and Clara Hamilton Minnick, who lived in those years in Richville and Hailesboro, and later in Pulaski. In 1940 on the occasion of their 50th anniversary, over 50 people gathered at the home of Melvin and Elizabeth (Minnick) Haile on the Richville-Hermon road to celebrate the family reunion. Cousin Lucy Minnick Kerwood, from Mansfield, Ohio, had traveled the farthest.

The Minnick reunion continues today as the Minnick/Woodward annual reunion.

Last summer about 25 people attended the reunion at the home of Clint and Ellen Woodward Young in Edwardsville. The family tree and old photos are always on display. Each year at least one of the Minnick clan wants to hear the stories of who they are. Then the age-old competition begins again. The Civil War is re-fought and the answers to who was more important, the Woodwards or the Minnicks, fills the air with hearty laughter. It is a St. Lawrence County day for me, eating the delicious home-cooking, listening again, and now sharing what I've learned of the family history.

End Notes

1. Elias and Rhoda Minnick's complete list of children is Elizabeth, b. 1813, Bernard, b. 1815, William, b. 1816, Leronzo, b. 1819, Elexander (Alexander), b. 1822, Lucy Ann, b. 1825, Charles B., b. 1826, Rhoda, b. 1829, Jacob, b. 1832, and Simeon, b. 1836.

2. Allen Woodward 2nd's siblings are identified in his photograph.

The Neil Family,
Master Cheesemakers of Upstate New York
Nicole L. Neil

Chester Neil and Lyman Moore in front of the Belleville Cheese and Butter Factory, in Halls Corners, near Edwards, New York

The Neil family is well-known in upstate New York for their wonderful cheese products. Father, sons, and nephew were all engaged in the craft. Their story begins in Gouverneur, New York, when Chester A. Neil (1888-1959) married Jennie Overacker on June 15, 1912. Chester went to work for his father-in-law, Albert W. Overacker, who owned the Cream of the Valley Cheese Factory in Gouverneur. Chester soon became the manager. He made cheese there for four years. The factory burned down in May, 1914, but Chester rebuilt it and continued for another two years, when he sold it. In 1921 he purchased the Belleville Cheese and Butter Factory, in Halls Corners, near Edwards, New York, which he and his two sons Edwin (1916-1997) and Irwin Neil (1920-1999), operated until he closed it down in 1954.

Chester was of the opinion that "Cheesemakers are like baseball players: they are born and not made." Chester had more than forty years in the cheesemaking business and had strong opinions about how to do things right. He didn't think that many cheese factories were worthy of the name. He used to say, "You can't hurry cheese, and you have to have a feel for it." "Cheesemaking is not for the lazy man," he would say; "it involves many steps." Water quality, too, plays an important role in the cheesemaking operation. At the Belleville Cheese and Butter Factory, the water came from a spring on a hill across the road from the building. A limitless

supply was piped by gravity from an aluminum spring house to the building.

At the Belleville Cheese and Butter Factory cheese was made as follows. Once the milk was weighed, it was strained through very fine steel mesh and piped into vats. These containers, lined with stainless steel, held about 3500 pounds of milk apiece. A lactic acid bacteria culture was added; without it, the cheese would not develop. Then rennet, made from extracts taken from the stomach of newborn calves, was added in the proportion of about 3 ounces to 1000 pounds of milk. The rennet was mixed into the cold milk at the rate of about 18 ounces to 11 quarts before being put into the vats. Very gradually, the heat was increased in the milk mixture from about 86 degrees to 98 degrees. During this stage the ingredients were mixed thoroughly with wooden rakes.

The milk thickens in about thirty-five minutes. Then, working swiftly, the cheesemakers cut the mass horizontally and vertically with curd knives, forming cubes. The curd particles are pushed to one end of the vat and become matted together. This process, called cheddaring, is the procedure from which the cheese gets its name.

With long, sharp knives, the cheesemakers cut a trench through the heavy curd by turning the center mass of curd over that on the sides, creating a long drainage trough for the whey to escape.

The curd, now in large chunks, was repeatedly turned to allow more whey to drain away. After standing for an hour and a quarter, the slabs were then fed into the curd mill above the vats, and the shredded curd fell back into the vats. The shreds were then worked over by a four-armed stainless steel agitator which moved on a track above the vats. This machinery saved many hours of arduous hand labor once performed by the cheesemaker with rakes and forks. The curd was tested to determine its acid content, but Chester and his sons seemed to know the exact time to act merely by the feel of the curd. The curd was thoroughly agitated and drained for three or four minutes, then stirred again.

Salting the curd came next, which drew out more whey to drain off. Once the last of the whey was gone, the mixture was once more turned by the agitator.

Finally, the young cheese was ready to be pressed by hand into the metal cheese hoops. While in these forms, it remained on a long table under pressure overnight. The next day the hoops were removed from the press and the cheese carried to the curing room.

In the curing room the cheese rounds were arranged on wooden shelves and turned every night and morning for 60 days. Cheese made from un-pasteurized milk must be kept for 60 days before being sold to the consumer. By the end of that period, the lactic acid has killed all harmful bacteria. The ideal temperature for curing cheese is 60 degrees F., but unless a plant is air-conditioned, this temperature cannot be maintained in summer. In the winter, on the other hand, heat was let into the curing room to achieve the ideal temperature. During the curing step the rind forms. On Friday and Saturdays, the cheese made during the week was waxed.

While the curing process has been going on, two other procedures have been underway. The whey draining from the vats has been piped into an adjoining room and run through a cream separator. A surprising amount of cream is released and is kept to be made into butter. The skimmed whey is conveyed again by pipe into a wooden whey vat located downhill from the factory. This byproduct was made available to area residents to feed to their pigs.

During the flush season of spring and early summer, the Neil factory produced about five tons of cheese a week. As the milk supply lagged, production dropped to about 2500 pounds in winter. A large amount of the factory's output was sent abroad. Also, much of their cheese was sold to big companies such as Armour.

There were four types of cheese boxed at the Neil plant. The most popular were the "picnic twins," weighing 12 pounds each and packaged two in a box. In addition there were the singles, called Daisies, weighing 21 pounds;

The Belleville Cheese and Butter Factory in winter.

the larger singles, weighing 40 pounds; and the cheddar hoops, weighing 75 pounds.

Chester's two sons both continued in the cheese business after he retired. Erwin "Ike" Neil worked 14 years with his father at the Belleville Cheese and Butter Factory, and another 14 years at the Sunnyside Milk Plant. Edwin Neil worked not only with his father at the Belleville Factory but also in the mid-1950s began work with his cousin, Clarence J. Neil, in Palmyra, New York, at the Palmyra Creamery.

Clarence J. Neil, the son of Robert and Minnie Neil, was born in Antwerp, New York, in 1911. He graduated from Cornell University in 1936 and married Mary Esther Engelson that same year. They lived in Palmyra, NY where Clarence owned and operated the Palmyra Creamery. Clarence owned 11 state licenses to test milk and butter in multiple states as well as being a master cheesemaker. The Palmyra Creamery

made and sold butter and ice cream—as many as 15 flavors—to a large part of northern New York. Clarence sold the creamery in 1962.

In 1954, when he was 10 years old, Clarence's son Larry began helping his dad make butter and ice cream. Larry spent many days after school and on weekends learning the craft from his father. Although Larry did not become a master cheesemaker like his dad and uncles, he appreciated the fact that he had the opportunity to learn about the trade.

All of the Neil master cheesemakers have passed away, but their memory will stay with us for many years to come.

The author married Larry Neil in 1966. He chose a career as planner with Niagara Mohawk, from which he is now retired. Nicole worked for 15 years as a medical billing supervisor and is now a substitute teacher's assistant in the Watertown School System.
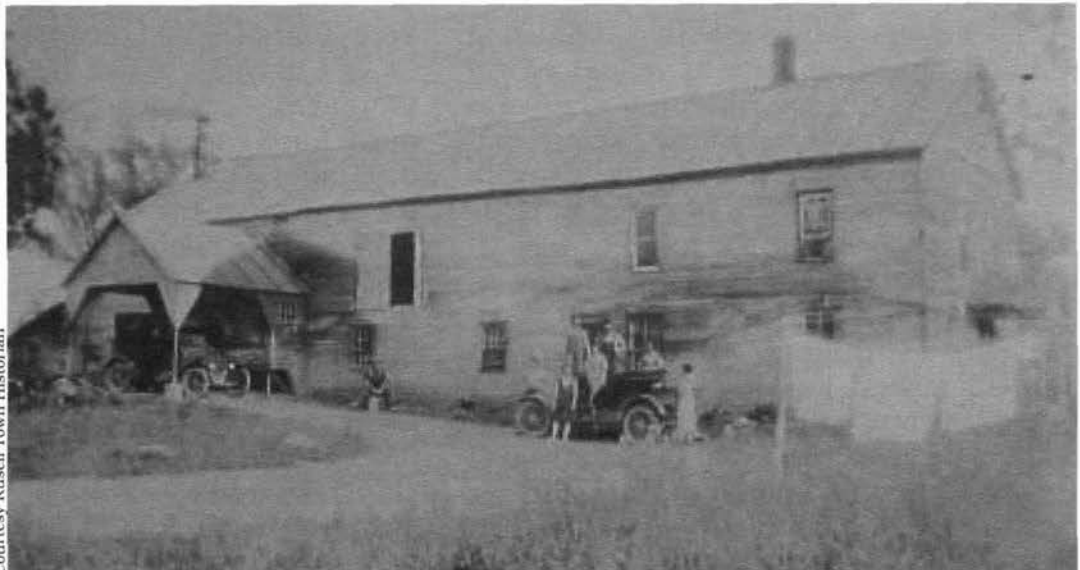
Russell Cheese Factories:
a Photo Album

Russell Town Historian Marie Rocca contributed these photographs of now-defunct cheese factories in the town. She is collecting materials about Russell history and invites readers with information or artifacts to contact her at 315/562-3487 or pmrocca@tds.net


Palmerville Cheese Factory, early 1900's. Exact location uncertain. Palmerville had a school, post office, general store, and dairy farms to support the cheese factory. There was also a grist mill turned by Plum Brook, a tributary of the Grasse River. Photo by Northern Survey Company, Albany, NY.

Beech Grove Cheese Factory, on the Lazy River Road off the Russell-Pyrites road, in Russell, about 1918. From left: Gilbert Cunningham, carpenter; Albert Banford, cheesemaker; Josie Banford, Fay Smith, Elta Banford, George La Faver, Mrs. Albert Banford, Laura Banford. This building has been made into a home and is still standing. Photo loaned by George La Faver.
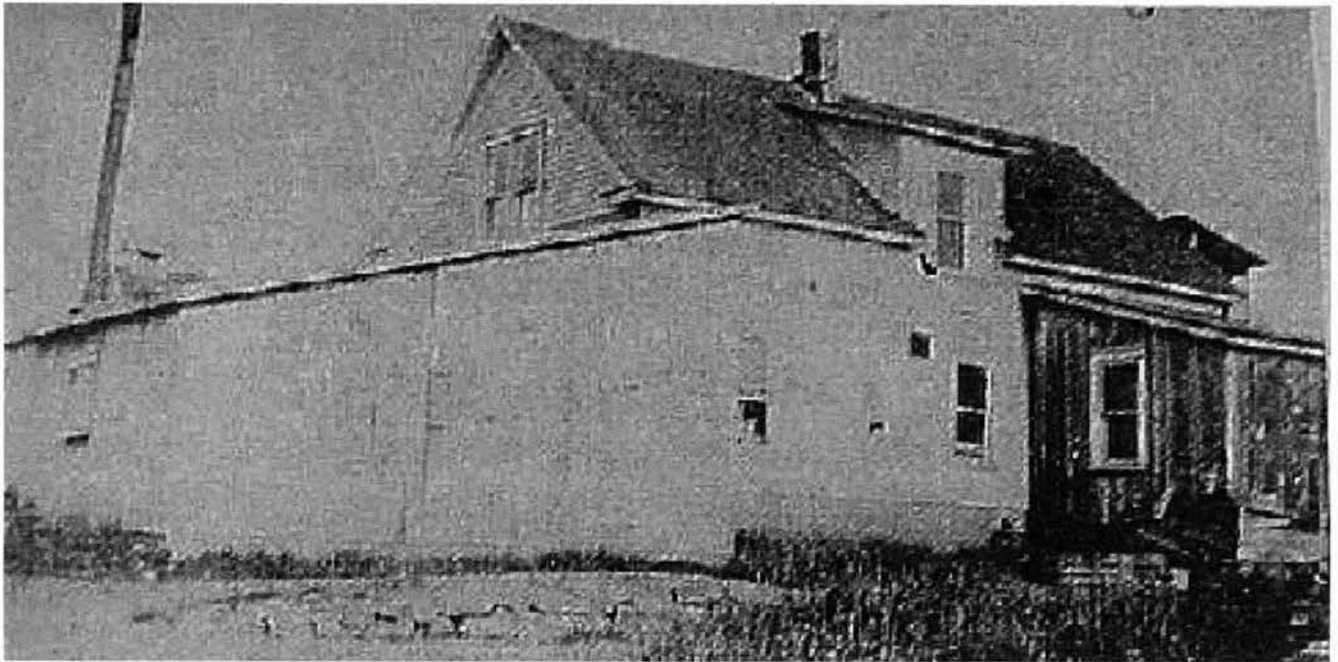
DeGrasse Cheese Factory, about 1925-26, reproduced from the 1969 St. Lawrence County Historical Association Quarterly.

Cheese Factory in North Russell, about 1912. Operated by Leonard Clark, owned by William Poole.

Mystery Photo

The economy of almost all small communities in St. Lawrence County in the late 19th century depended in part on dairy products. Most of the small businesses have vanished with hardly a trace. It looks like this was a family-run business (note the babe in arms). The signboard "Sharples Tubular Cream Separators" may leave us wondering whether the family here was named Sharples or whether Sharples was a brand of "tubular cream separators" (whatever *that* is). Note also the smaller sign saying "All work strictly cash after Sept. 1st" - an indication of doubtful creditworthiness of some customers? Does anyone know where this photograph was taken or what this business was? From the SLCHA collection.

Joan Hadlock of Hammond identified the last mystery photo as the wooden Presbyterian Church in Hammond. The church shown in the photo burned in 1915 in a fire that began in the manse and threatened to spread to all of Hammond. The clapboard-covered church replaced a log church on the site, and in turn was replaced by the present stone church. The stone church displays a photograph of its predecessor.

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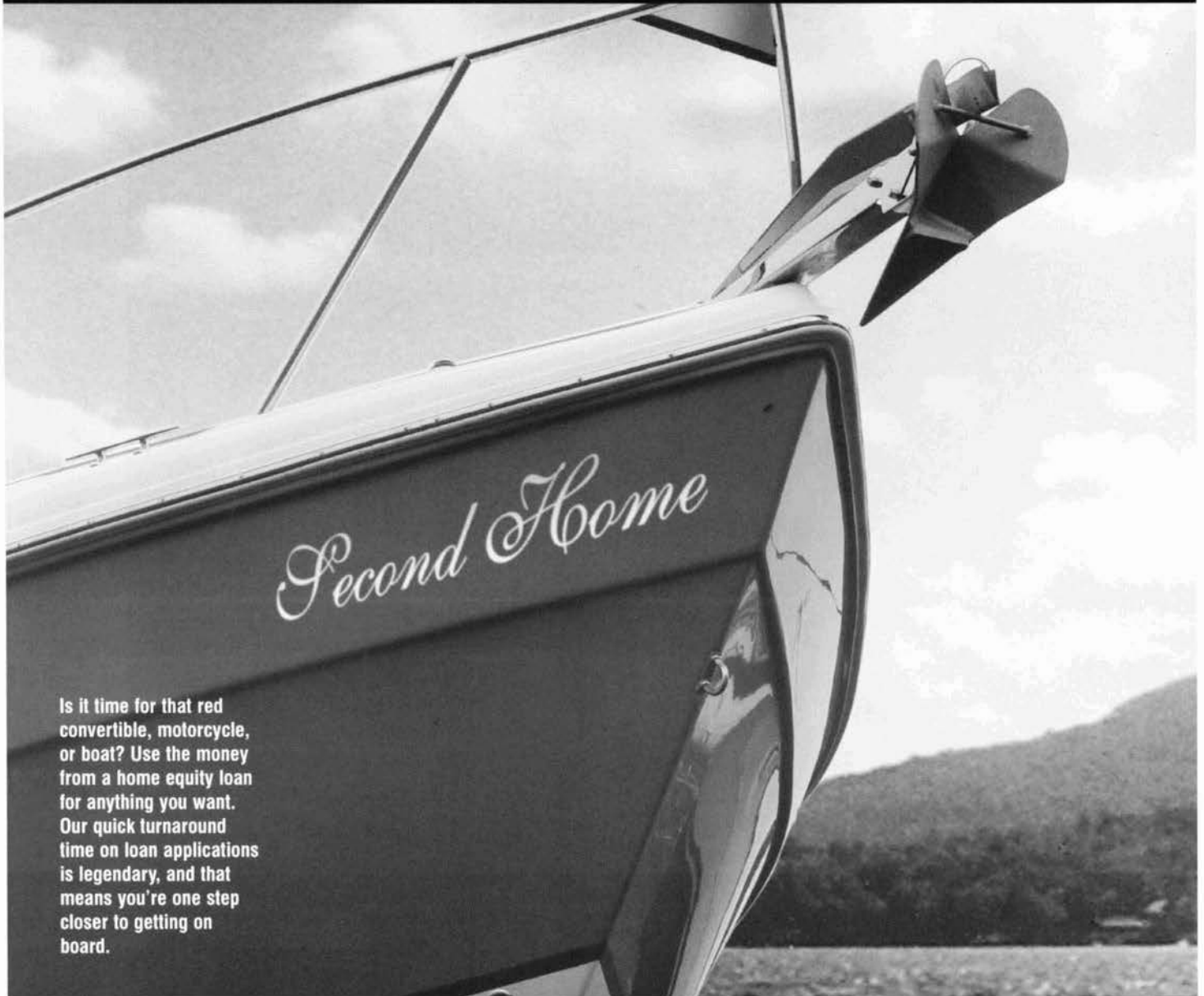
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