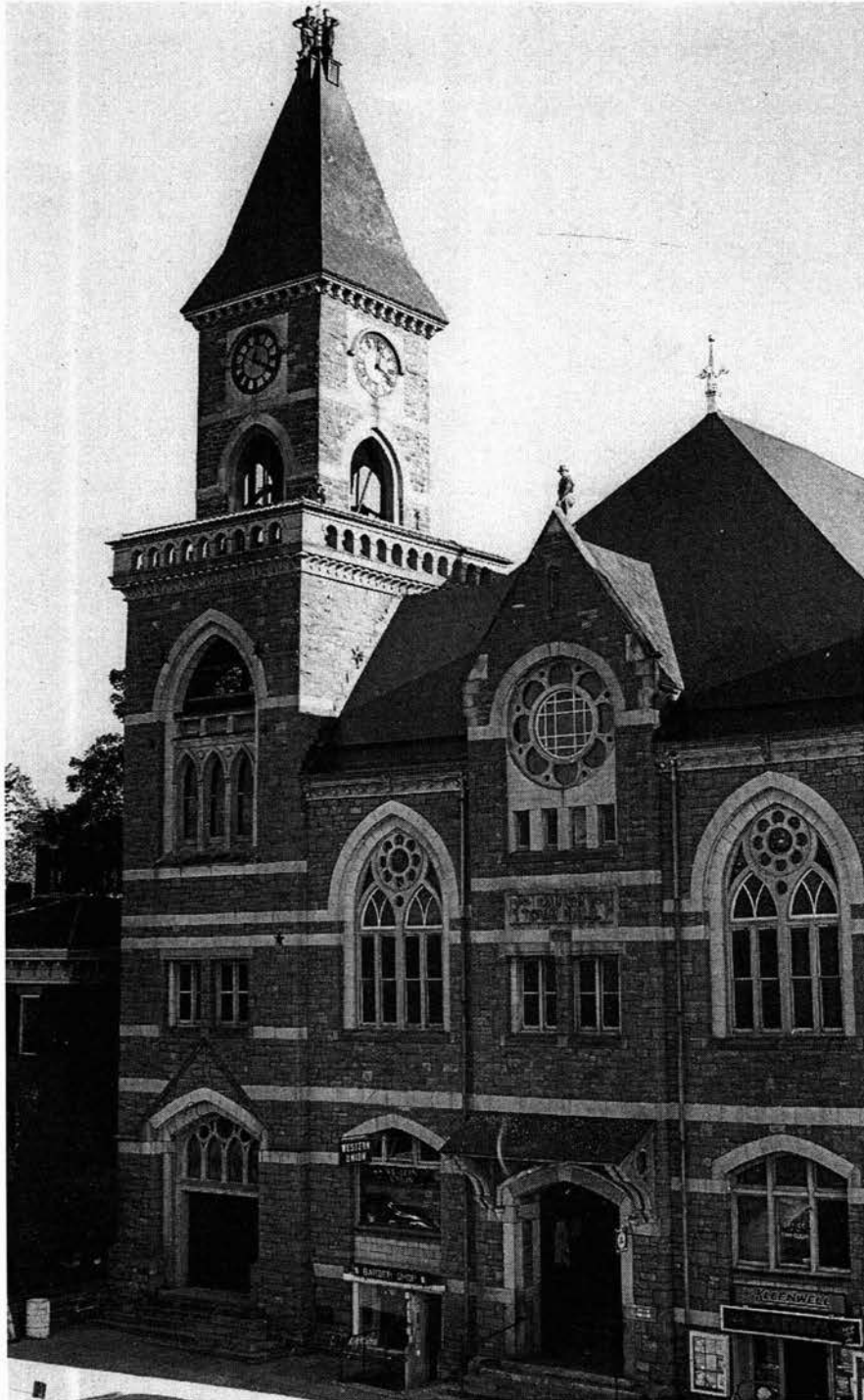


The St. Lawrence County Historical Association
QUARTERLY

Volume L

Number 3

Summer 2005



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.

St. Lawrence County Historical Association

at the Silas Wright House
3 East Main Street, PO Box 8
Canton, New York 13617
(315) 386-8133
fax (315) 386-8134
e-mail: slcha@northnet.org
www.slcha.org

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Publications Committee
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Contributions:

The SLCHA Quarterly welcomes contributions. To submit a manuscript, or for further information, please contact the editor through the St. Lawrence County Historical Association. Please address communications to: Managing Editor, *The SLCHA Quarterly*, P.O. Box 8, Canton, NY 13617.

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QUARTERLY

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CONTENTS

From the County Historian <i>Trent Trulock</i>	2
Canton Opera House	4
Pyrites Paper Mill: Town of 60 Years Ago <i>Marie Rocca</i>	5
Brick Chapel <i>Marilyn Rodee</i>	14
Morley <i>Kay Casey</i>	15
A Last Trip Down Memory Lane... Remembering Life on the Thompson Farm <i>Judith Thompson Liscum</i>	20
Rensselaer Falls, "the other village in town" <i>Sally White Hartman</i>	26
Jerusalem Corners: Bypassed by Route 11 and History <i>Ashley Elliott</i>	42
Mystery Photo	44

Issue Editor:

Cathleen O'Horo

On the Cover

A view of the old Canton Town Hall and Opera House

From the County

Historian

By Trent Trulock

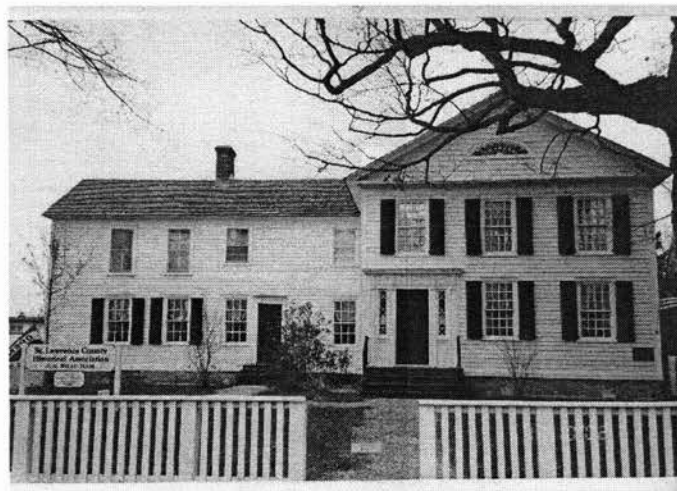
We celebrate the Town of Canton's Bicentennial in this issue of the *Quarterly*. When Canton began 200 years ago its destiny was by no means certain or preordained. There was no guarantee that it would survive for a few years, yet alone 200 years. An interesting aspect of Canton's history is that the first non-native settlement almost began with Canadians instead of New Englanders.

After the American Revolution, in 1787, New York State began auctioning off so-called "unappropriated land" in Northern New York. This land had been sold to the wealthy fur trader Alexander Macomb. The land was auctioned off to bring the state badly needed revenue to help pay war debts from the American Revolution and also to lead to settlement of this buffer zone between the newly created United States and Canada. Within this great Macomb's Purchase were the original ten towns of St. Lawrence County, which included the Town of Canton. At this time Canton and the other towns only existed on a map and had not yet been surveyed. So in 1799 surveyors arrived in Northern New York to go to work.

The following is taken from Hough's 1853 *History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties New York*.

As the surveyors began their work they also traveled to the border towns in Canada. After a short while a group of 30-40 Canadians learned of this area from the surveyors who had surveyed the townships of Canton and Lisbon.

The Canadians formed an association and were looking to settle on a ¼ of a township in either Lisbon or Canton. This Canadian association went so far as obtaining a conditional bargain to buy the land from the current owners. They then decided to jour-



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

ney through the area to choose the place for the settlement. As Hough's history relates the members of the Canadian group:

"taking several days' provisions on their backs, and guided by persons who had been employed in the survey, they separated in small parties, and pursued their course in various directions, through the woods. At night they would meet at an appointed place, kindle an immense fire of logs and dry materials which they collected, and camp around it for the night.

Everything proceeded agreeably for a while, but unfortunately for their harmony, numbers of them came from different quarters upon a remarkably beautiful tract of land, in the southeastern part of Canton where the hard timber was unusually clear and lofty, and a meandering stream wandered through the forest between banks that, in their native growth of timber and herbage, and in the soil at the surface, betokened unusual richness and fertility. Here, without the knowledge of each other, several parties resolved to locate their interests, and in accordance with the prevalent custom, commenced slight improvements, which in their opinions, would confer a preemptive right to the soil. These proceedings soon became known to the whole party, and the overlapping claims of rivals engendered a party strife, in which each loudly vo-

ciferated his claims, and insisted upon the priority of his arrival, and in an incredibly short space of time, the schemes of the whole party were dissipated. Of confidence in each other's honor, they had none; and the mutual distrust led to the dissolution of the company, who scattered immediately, and by different routes, sought the St. Lawrence, and crossed again to Canada. Some being ignorant of the course of the rivers, wandered from their way, and did not reach the great river, till they had arrived in Louisville; and when they gained the settlements, were nigh exhausted with hunger and fatigue." *A History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties New York*, Franklin B Hough, 1853, 1970 facsimile edition, Regional Publishing Company, Baltimore, p273-275.

And that is how Canton was not settled by Canadians. It is stories like this that makes history fun for me!

On a slightly different topic, my thanks to Mary Smallman, Hermon Village Historian, for pointing out spelling errors in the Louisa Thayer Meyer article in the winter, #1 2005 *Quarterly* on page 14. She pointed out that the maladies discussed in the 1st paragraph should have been "scrofulous" and that "reverend" was incorrect in the 6th paragraph. Thanks for your input Mary and keep reading closely!

Canton Opera House



Another view of Canton's old Town Hall and "Opera House". It stood at the corner of Miner Street and Main Street where the present Municipal Building is. It housed the Town of Canton offices as well as several businesses including a news shop and appliance store. An auditorium on the upper floor was used for plays and high school and college graduations. The auditorium was not used for many years prior to the fire because of safety concerns. The clock tower contained a bell run to signal fires and other events in early years. The bell can still be found outside the Municipal Building. This building was destroyed by fire on a cold February morning in 1962.

Pyrites Paper Mill— Town of 60 Years Ago

By Marie Rocca

Author's note: The following article was written by Edward Austin for the Quarterly in July 1965. He has graciously permitted me to copy it for the Canton Bicentennial (2005). As I have written the article, I have obtained more history on Pyrites and have included it along with the original.

Just below the High Falls on the Grasse River, near the southern part of Canton lies Pyrites. Copperas and alum were manufactured here in 1832 by S. and H. Foote of Canton who were later joined by C.W. Shepard and J.C. Bush of Ogdensburg.

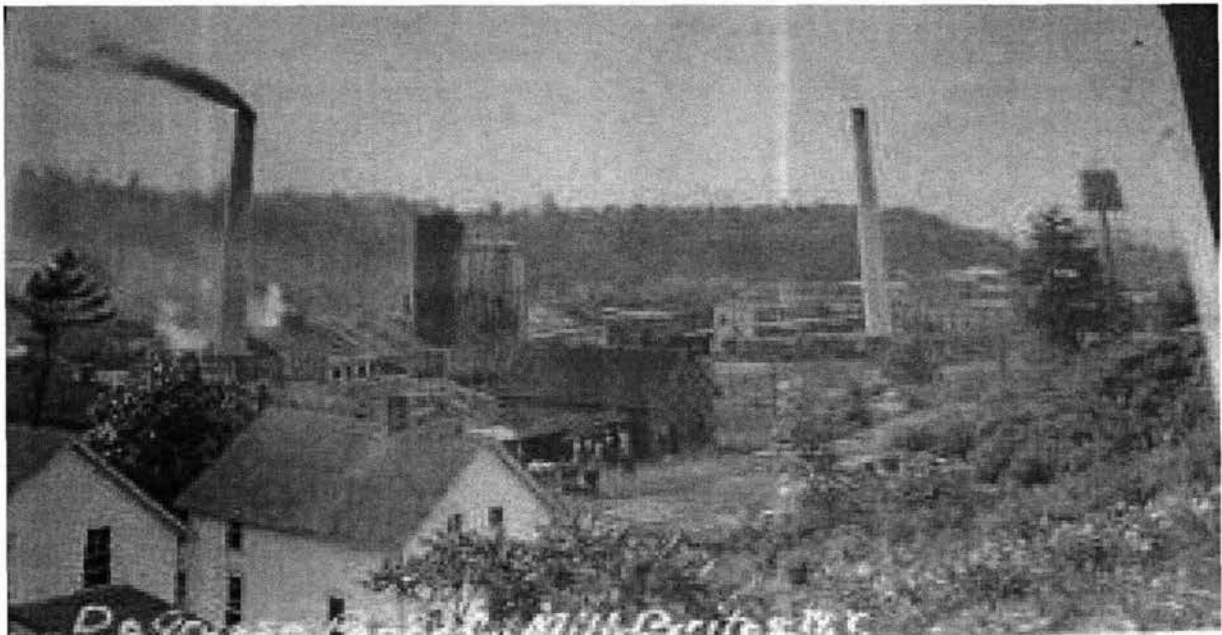
The first year not much was accomplished except for getting things ready. But then the enterprise was found unprofitable, and so was abandoned after 3 or 4 years.

The rocks were found to be rich in iron, however, and being porous in nature, were

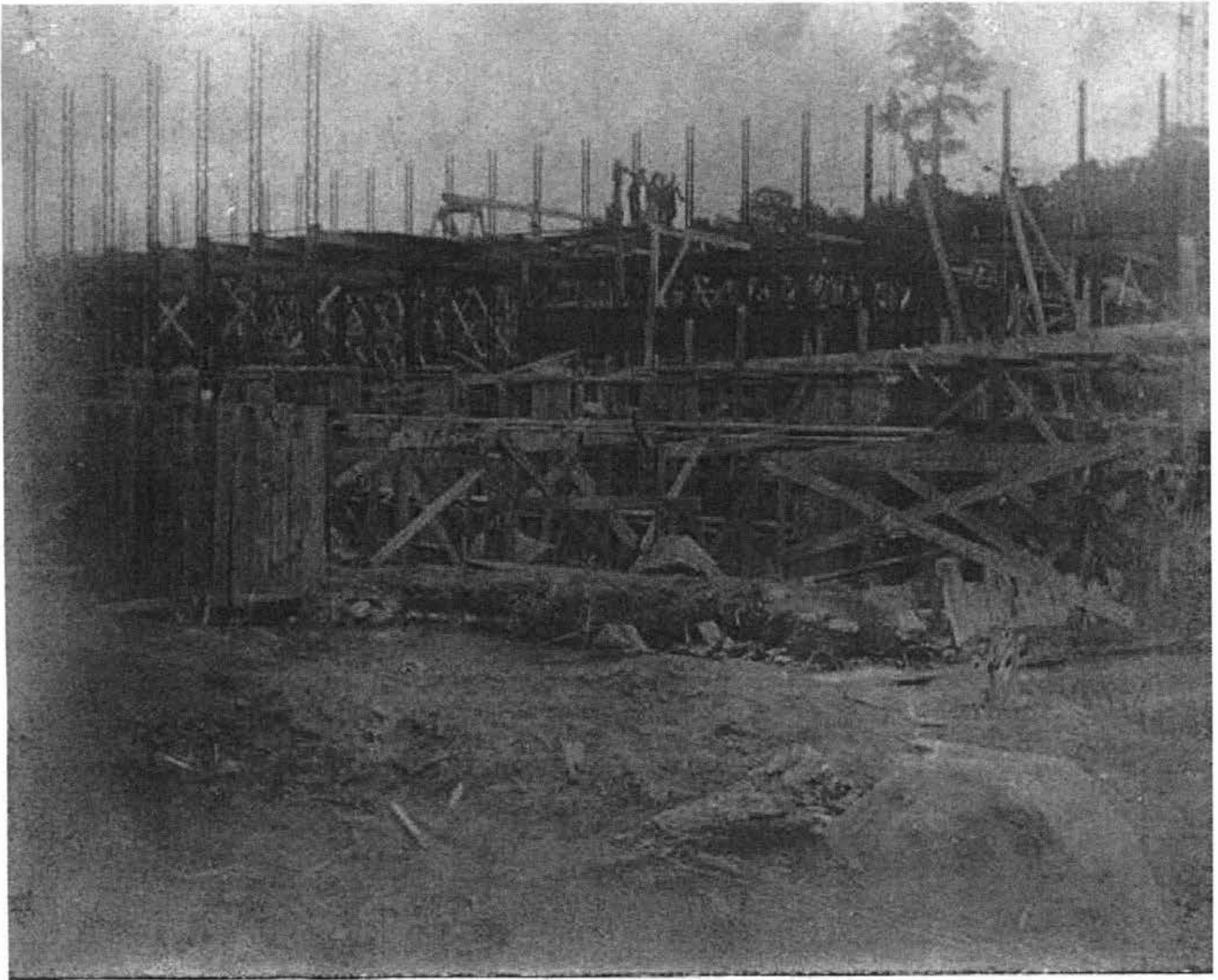
easily broken out by hand. One part of alum to three of copper was found. A thousand tons of copper and a third as much of alum were obtained before the project was given up. The New York markets used most of the production.

Because unlimited quantities of iron pyrites existed here, a sulfuric acid plant was later built in the locality. This was constructed on the island, a short distance below High Falls. By 1893 pulp was being made here and sent to other mills in the vicinity to be made into paper. It was drawn by teams to Canton or Eddy and shipped by train to other places. The sulfite pulp was made in the form of laps which would be handled easily, because it could be made into rolls.

Logs were floated down the Grasse River for pulp from which to make the sulfite



Paper Mill



Construction of DeGrasse Mill - 1903

laps. A mill was all that was needed to make it possible to complete the process of paper making at this location. In 1903, construction of a paper mill began.

The late Frank Augsbury Sr. was one of the promoters of this paper mill. The lack of adequate capital made progress slow. However, the project proved successful. The operation became known as the DeGrasse Paper Company and continued to manufacture newsprint paper until 1919. At that time the firm was sold to a New York newspaper, the old New York World. In 1927, the Interna-

tional Paper Company took over the mill and continued to operate it until 1930 when the mill was closed and equipment moved away. The closing resulted from the high cost of wood pulp and crash of the New York stock market.

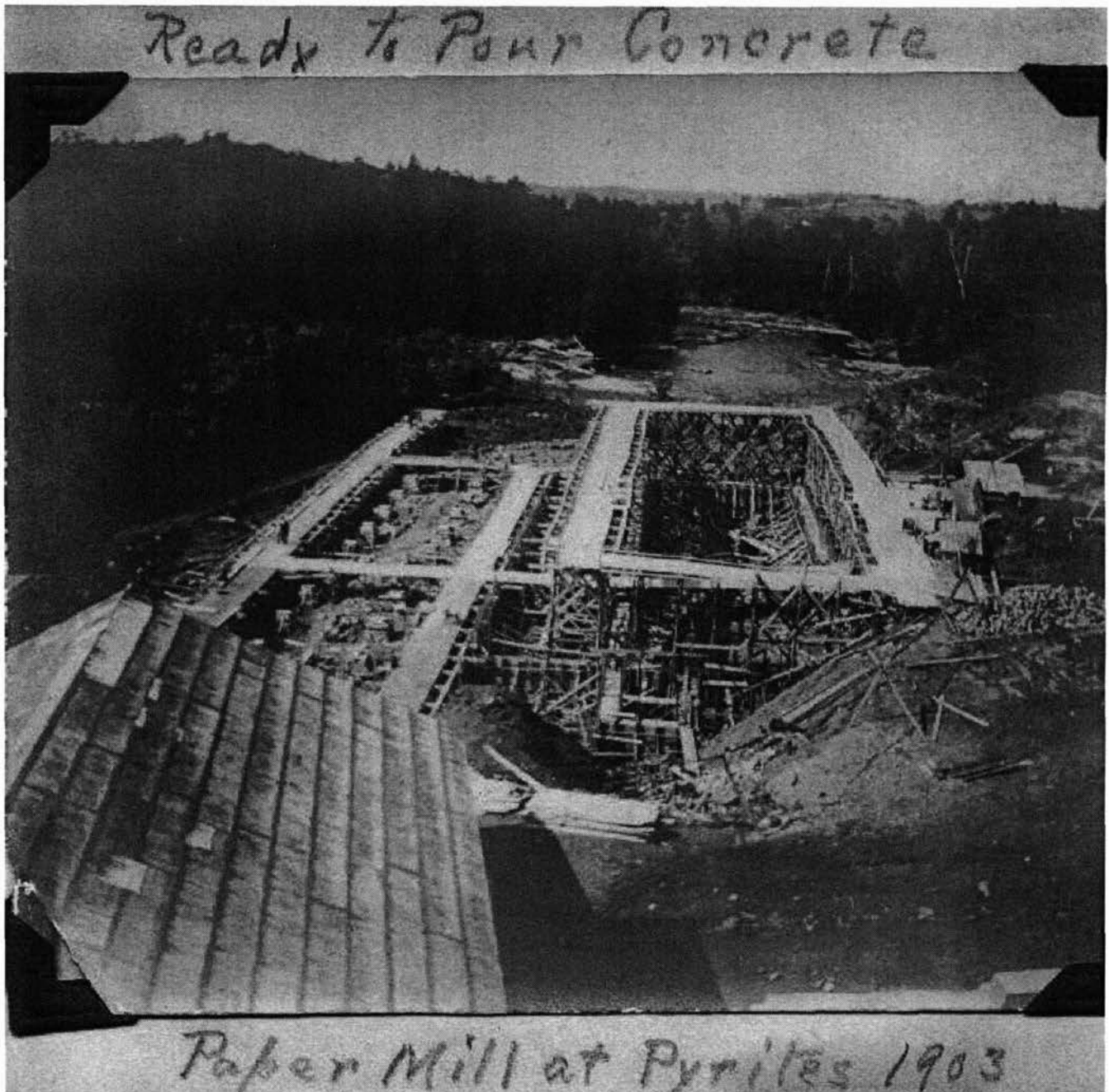
At the height of the industry, the population of the village reached about 1500 but soon after the mill went down this began to diminish rapidly. Houses were sold and torn down for the lumber and were transported to various points for other uses. One reason for this was that the company did not own the

land on which they were built, so they could be sold only with the understanding that they were to be moved. The people who remained in Pyrites owned their homes.

The closing hit hard, not only Pyrites but Canton also because of the \$15,000 weekly payroll. Most of the business was done in Canton.

In May, 1894, seven blocks had been laid out, containing 182 building lots. Plans were made for more houses to be built. A road

running along the line of the river was named Main Street. Broadway ran from the corner where Pelton's Store was and up past where the school stood and by the St. Paul's Catholic Church. Churchill Street ran from Pelton's Store on the corner up past where Robert Kelly had a gas station and his mother, Ethel Kelly, was postmaster for many years. This street was named after O. B. Churchill who built most of the houses.



O. W. Crane gave a building site and grounds for a school. Later two other schools were built, the Townline School and the Cousintown School. In 1915 the Pyrites district met to organize the district as the Pyrites Union Free School district. This was the first step in the move for a new high school. In 1919, a special meeting was held and \$50,000 for a new high school was voted, and construction was started in October 1921. In 1922 the school had a registration of 258 with 233 in grade school and 25 in high school. The school had 9 teachers and a principal. Fortunately the construction, which was financed by a bond issue, was completely paid the year the mill closed. In June 1938 the high school closed and students moved to

Canton. The first 6 grades continued to attend school there.

During the period 1921-22, the library was built. A four-day carnival was held to raise money to build the building. Charles D. Ingram of Ogdensburg was put in general charge of the carnival. Dancing, baseball games, and many events were held. Later, card parties and similar events were held to raise additional funds. The library continued to operate until it burned in March of 1959.

Pyrites never had any local government except that provided as a part of the Town of Canton. Group meetings were held to communicate and present the ideas and wishes of the people to the Town Board.



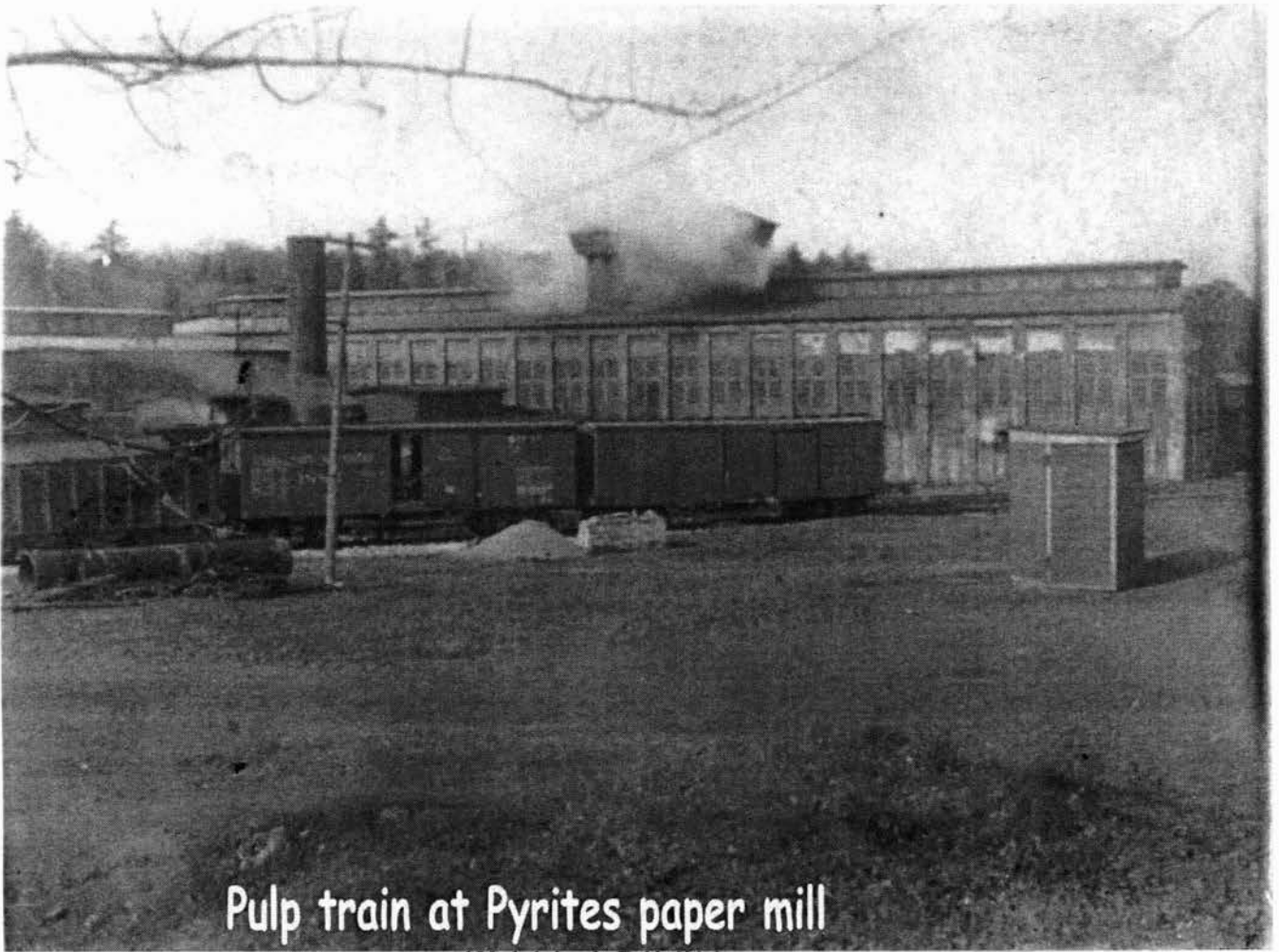
*Finishing Room Help - DeGrasse Mill - Pyrites -
1904.*



The first fire department was organized in 1919, with 20 members, later increased to 35. Some of the members included J. J. St. Louis, Sam Hewitt, George Newman, Herb Morgan, James Given and Frank Lavery. The first department had two horse carts and 550 feet of hose, a hook and ladder wagon carrying 500 feet of hose and three 40-gallon chemicals on wheels.

The Crane Memorial Church was built on land donated by the Crane estate. Originally it was a Union Church and later Episcopalian.

St. Paul's Catholic Church was built in 1921, primarily through the efforts of one man, Father Michael Kelly. Father Kelly was a native of Ireland, born there on April 14, 1885. He was appointed resident priest in Pyrites in 1919. Since there was no proper church, mass was said and catechism was taught on the top floor of the three-story building called the Murray block, located on Main Street. Father Kelly soon began to exhibit his abilities as a carpenter. Using every hour he could spare from his duties, he gradually built St. Paul's Church with the help of local parishioners. The beauty of this



Pulp train at Pyrites paper mill

11/11/1903



Pyrites - 1903.

Pyrites Paper Mill

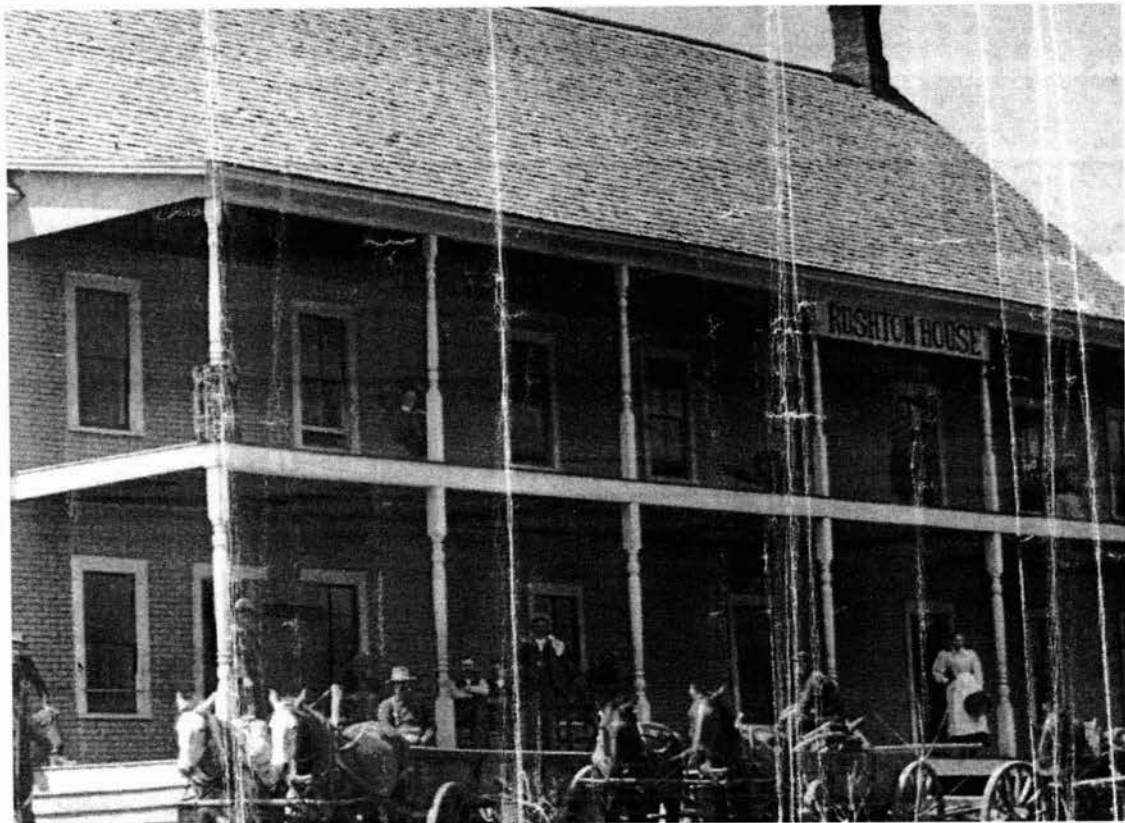


Lockin Hotel in Pyrites





Murray Hotel



International Hotel



structure is remembered by all who view it, the gothic design of the altar, the oak pews and wainscoting lends a sense of warmth to the interior as the light shines through the multi-colored stained glass windows.

Pyrites enjoyed the entertainment and social life typical of a small community. Box socials and dancing were popular, so popular that a dancing class was started in 1902. During the latter 1920's, there were numerous clubs and associations: the Dramatic Club, the Library Association, Tennis Club, and Ladies' Aid Society and even a "Pyrites Improvement Society." In the early days, "medicine" companies such as the Oregon Medicine Company and the German Medicine Company visited Pyrites for a week or so during the year. Another company that visited Pyrites was the North American Concert Company. In addition to these organizations there were two unions, the Pyrites Local No. 54 of the Inter-

national Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulfit and Paper Mill Workers, and Local 136 of the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers.

There was a theater, and a community gathering place, Murray Hall, later known as Union Hall. This was used for all social occasions. Bazaars and sometimes church services were held there. The main social event of the year, The Papermakers Ball, was held Easter Monday evening.

Brick Chapel

By Marilyn Rodee

Plans for the present Brick Chapel Church were discussed by inhabitants of the Town of Canton on March 10, 1819. The first board of trustees organized in 1815 and the first church edifice in Canton was constructed in 1823 on property donated by William Richardson. He designated this property for church and cemetery. The walls were of solid brick, the seats were rough boards without backs or cushions. It was lighted with tallow candles and heated by burning charcoal in a potash or iron kettle. In 1858 the old church edifice was replaced by a new building which stands today. Bricks of the old building were used inside the walls of the new one. A parsonage was built in 1845. Electric lights were installed in 1931 and currently the church is heated by oil. The basement was remodeled for better dining and kitchen facilities in 1930, and then remodeled again in the 1980's. The front steps have been rebuilt several times, most recently in 2004. A handicapped ramp was added in 2004.

Brick Chapel was a Methodist church until 1912 when it came under the jurisdiction of the St. Lawrence Presbytery, now known as the Presbytery of Northern New York. After the Methodists built another church in the village of Canton, the Brick Chapel in South Canton became pretty much a rural church supported by the families of the area. It has remained a small, but important church through all the years. A dedicated core of long-time families has always kept the church going, although there were periods when regular services were not held.

Six memorial windows were dedicated and installed in 1923. The same year the bell from the old White Church in Crary Mills, given to that church by H.E. Pierrepont, was raised into the steeple of Brick Chapel where it still tolls before each service today. Two stained-glass windows have since been installed from the Todd and Rodee families. Through all the years since 1858, the Ladies Aid Society has played an important part in the maintenance and support of the church. The LAS has held many dinners and socials and other activities to keep the church going in its lean years. Today they still meet monthly for a potluck dinner when the yearly chicken barbeque and ice cream social are planned.

The years have seen many ministers, student ministers and others guide the congregation and young people of Brick Chapel through regular services and Sunday schools, plus summer programs and Bible schools. The church now holds services from June through September with special services at Christmas and Easter. It is the setting of many weddings each year.

From the early prayer meetings of 1808 to the present, the church society has continued through good and poor times. Although it is not quite as old as our town, it has withstood the test of time and still flourishes as a worthy descendant of that first Brick Chapel of 1823.

Morley

By Kay Casey

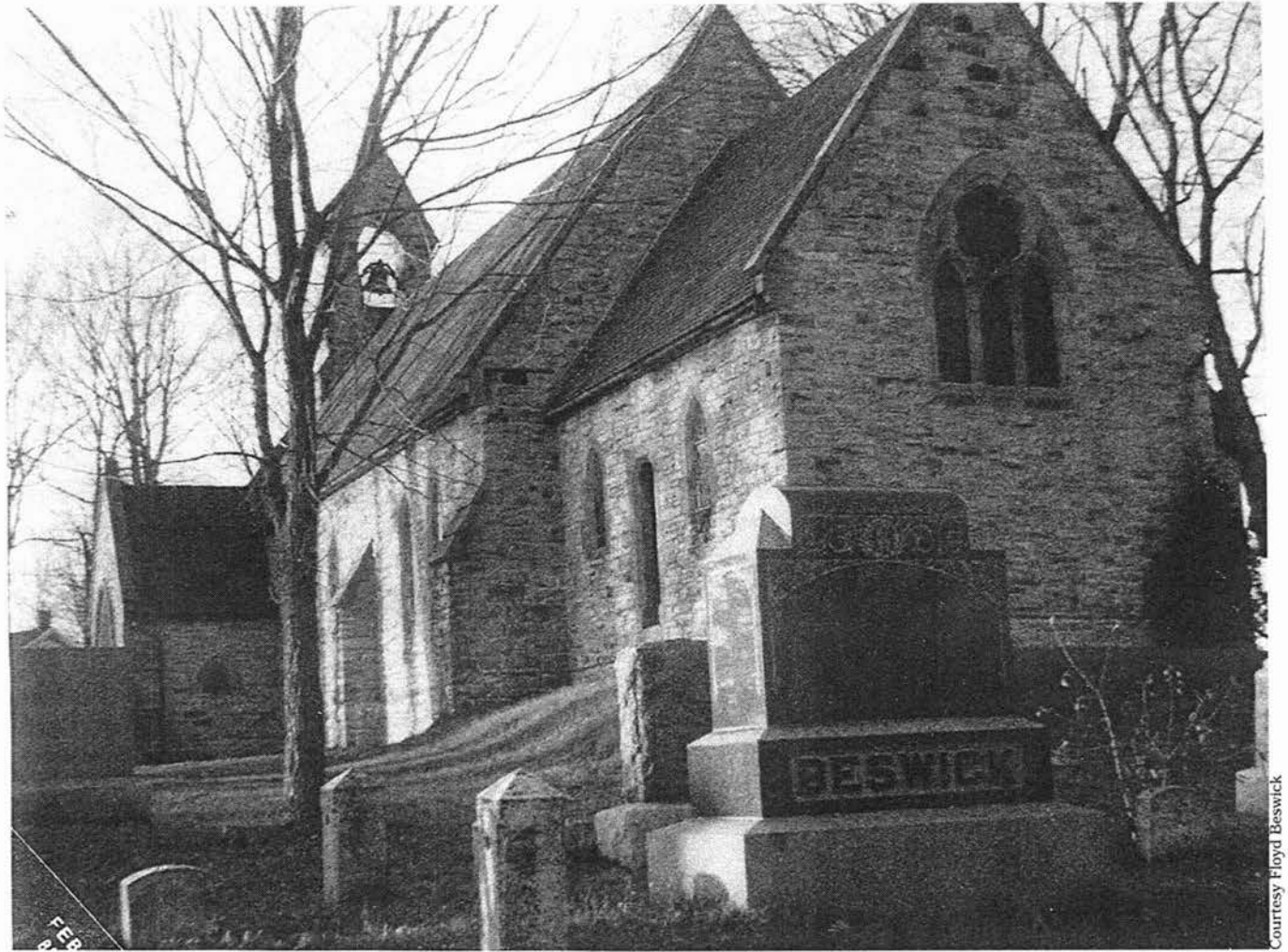
(Additional Research contributed by Floyd Beswick)

Morley, formerly known as Long Rapids, is pleasantly situated on both sides of the Grasse River in the northeast corner of the town. It is near the line between Canton and Lisbon, and six miles from the Canton village. Stillman Foote began the settlement by building a dam and erecting a sawmill in 1810. Christopher Wilson and Pitts Bailey from Vermont bought the village site and the sawmill in an unfinished state. In 1815 they put into this mill two runs of rock-stones with a bolt. Two years later they built a new mill. These two mills stood about four rods east of the present stone mill. In one corner of the last mill Thomas Fenton had a room where he carried on wool carding and cloth dressing. Wil-

son settled on the east side of the river, and built the first frame house. Mr. Bailey built a frame house on the west side of the river. The first bridge was built in 1820. Before this the settlers on the west side, when going to the mill, would stop on the bank with their horse and a flat-bottomed boat.

Charles Barrett built the first sawmill, on the west side. J.P. Cummings kept the first store and goods. A year or two later he built the stone building which Issac Whitney ran as a store. The present Grist Mill was built in 1840, which was owned by Thomas Harrison. William Washburn was the first blacksmith and Eden Ray was the first carpenter in the village. The stone schoolhouse





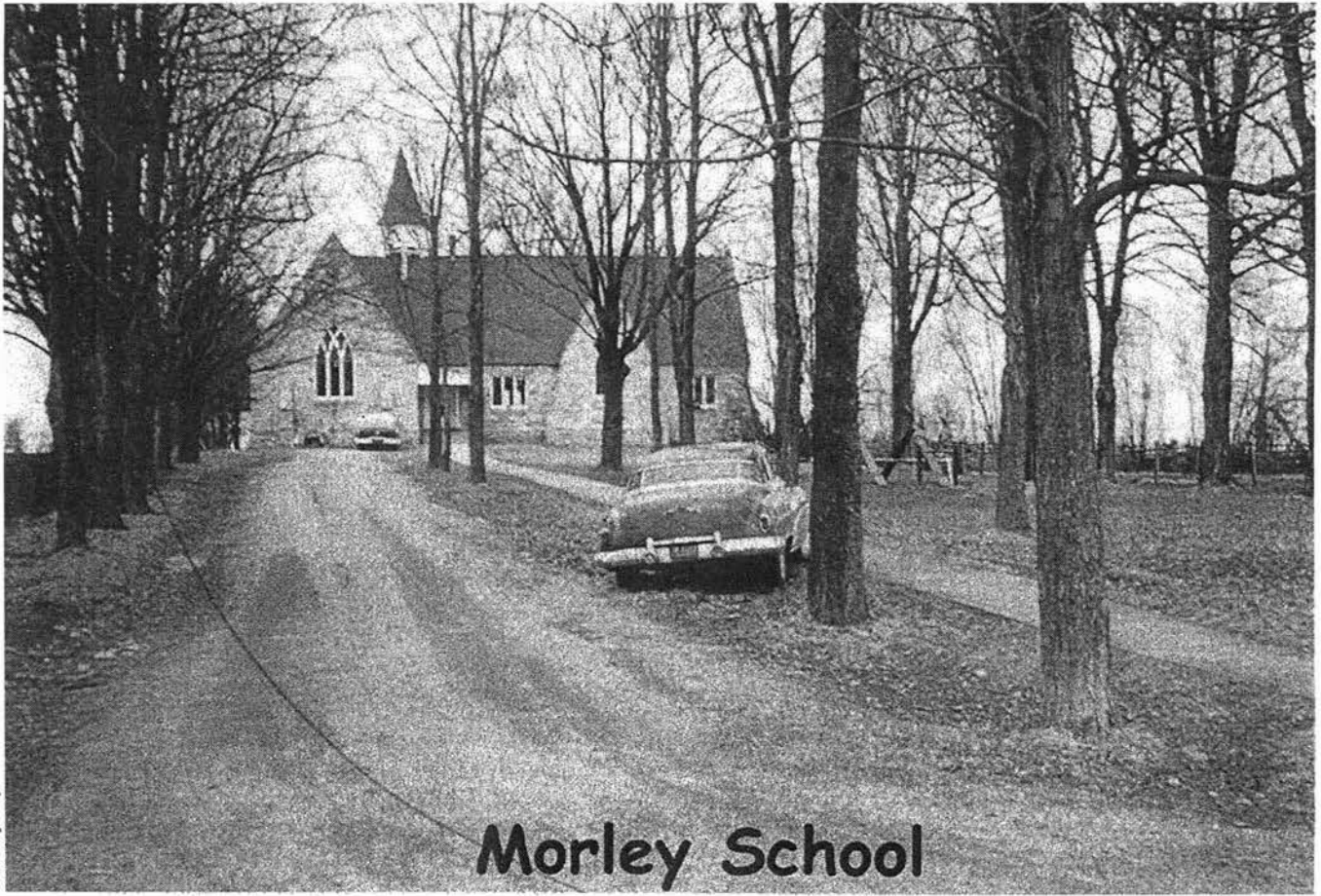
Trinity Chapel

was built in 1857 after plans furnished by Mr. W.H. Harrison. When the Post Office was first established here at Mr. Harrison's request the name was changed to Morley. Mr. Harrison was secretary of the State Agriculture Society. On his farm near the village, which is now the Neil Jordan farm, he had the finest herd of shorthorn cattle in the country. He occasionally sold cows for \$6,000, and a bull for \$15,000 or \$20,000. In 1878 the population was about 300 people.

Many changes have taken place in Morley during the past 80 or 90 years. At that time there were huge log drives on the Grasse River, to the James Spears mill at Bucks Bridge, one of the largest mills in the North Country. There were four general stores, operated by William Scruten, Healy

Fenton, W.Z. Whitney and Ed Spaulding. There were three blacksmith shops run by Frank Fulton, Martin Scanlin and Anson Butler. Orson Robinson was Postmaster. Morley had two hotels, which were run by Isaac Whitney and Mr. Cunningham and two feed mills run by Frank Whitney and Harley Philpot. Henry Fenton and son, Elmer, owned and operated the sawmill; William Smith the cider mill; Deforest and Prentice Whitney the cooper shop; and Thadius Thayer the wheelwright shop.

In the early days the two churches were filled to capacity on Sundays, as many as seventy-five youngsters attending Sunday school at Trinity Chapel and also the Wesleyan Church. At times there were as many as 120 children attending the old two-room stone



Courtesy Floyd Beswick

Morley School

school, which was the oldest school in the Canton area, having operated continuously for 125 years.

The first annual tax on Morley was \$150 in 1859 for three terms, fall, winter and summer, each for two and a half months. By 1942 the Morley School budget had reached \$3,075 and in 1944 it reached \$4,439. William Harrison, a nephew of Canton pioneer Thomas E Harrison, planned the Morley School originally

Stone for the school, originally a two-room structure of a quaint Gothic style, which made it look like a church, was quarried in the nearby fields of the Finnimore farm on the Canton road, owned today by Lloyd and Betty Smith. The same stone was used to build the Episcopal Chapel across the road from the school. At one time there were nine grades in the school, for more than three-quarters of a century it was heated by a large box stove in each classroom.

Previous to 1900 other businesses were located in Morley, such as the tannery, owned and operated by R.M. and L.D. Witherbee; a melodeon factory operated by Joe McKee; and a carding mill built by Thomas Fenton and operated by John Corey. Three asheries at one time were operating day and night. John Johnson ran one; later selling to his son Crawford; the other two owners were Isaac Henson and Asa Fenton. Three shoe shops were operated by Felix Murray, John Taylor and Alec Amo.

Morley Asheries

One of the progressive businesses in Morley a century ago was the ashery business. Young boys used to earn money by buying ashes for six or seven cents a bushel and selling to the Johnston Ashery for ten cents a bushel.

At the beginning of the cold weather Mr. Johnston, who owned the two asheries, would equip several sleighs with high boxes driven by a collector who covered a certain territory. There were as many as four of these outfits at one time, and the collectors were Rob and Crawford Johnston, sons of the proprietor, William Hurst and Dick Finnimore a farmer living in the Olin settlement. These collectors on the night previous to their trip would go to the barrooms and stores and exchange bills for small change to be used for paying for the ashes the following day. Some days they would make a great many miles, and during a blizzard it was a tough job as the roads were piled deep with snow.

The ashes were shoveled into big vats or bins, at the bottom of which was placed a large quantity of straw. Water was pumped into these vats, which leaked down through the ashes. The lye was caught in a receptacle, from which it was dipped and poured into a large iron kettle which was placed and boiled to a certain degree of strength. This was called

“potash”. Placing it in an oven constructed especially, and pearled or made white by the action of the extreme heat that beat upon the ash in question made pearl ash. The market was very fluctuating for these commodities and often they were sold at a loss to the maker. A Mr. Arnold who had a shop over the river was a cooper who made the barrels for these products.

Morley Mill

The Morley gristmill on the bank of the Grasse River is the only one in St Lawrence County surviving in its nearly original design. It was built in 1840 by Thomas Ludlow Harison and managed during the 1840's by Rufus K. Jackson. The rough ashlar limestone walls are trimmed with sandstone lintels. The symmetrical window arrangement, Federal doorway, and gable roof are characteristics of the early 19th century architecture in this area. The stone was taken from Harison's quarry in Morley. Local families took the grist of wheat, oats, bar-



ley and shelled corn to the mill where four runs of millstones ground the grain into various flours. For several months of the year this process continued day and night. Operations of the mill ceased in 1935.

Trinity Chapel

Trinity Chapel, located on the banks of the Grasse River in Morley, is an important example of the 19th century church movement known as "Ecclesiology." The Ecclesiological movement stressed a return to the devout Middle Ages, including construction of churches modeled after 13th century churches in England. Trinity Chapel is a North Country example of this religious fervor. Its fieldstone exterior, gable end bellcote, side entrance porch, open beam rafters and many other details suggest that it may well be an

exact copy of a rural Gothic church somewhere in England. The Rt. Rev. William C Doane, the Episcopal Bishop of Albany, a man well acquainted with the Ecclesiological philosophy, consecrated the chapel in 1871. He may have assisted in the design of the chapel.

The church walls are made of brick two feet thick with a native stone on the exterior. Local stone was also used to carve the altar and font. An early member of the congregation carved the pulpit and pews in Morley. Above the altar was installed a stained glass window imported from England in the 1870's. Much of the floor is comprised of stone flagging. The church's first recorded baptism occurred on November 14, 1869.

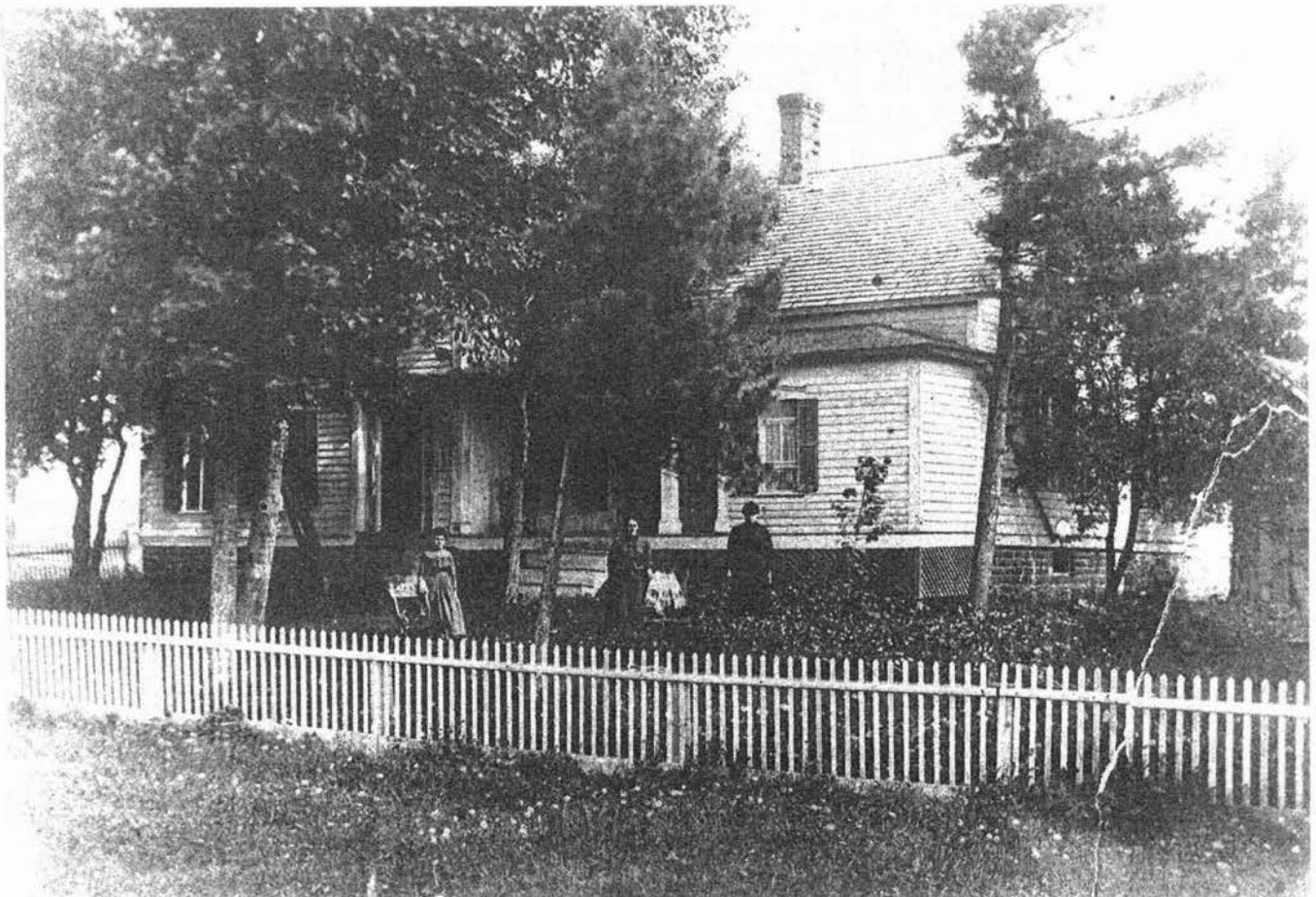
Today the chapel is still in good condition and special summer services such as weddings and christenings are held there.

A Last Trip Down Memory Lane... Remembering Life on the Thompson Farm

By Judith Thompson Liscum

In the spring of 2004, the Thompson family homestead was razed. The present owners of the property, SeaComm Federal Credit Union, took down the house, making way for a new credit union building. However, the big red barn was saved. The Thompson farm sits within the village of Canton at 101 East Main Street, across Rt. 11 from the Best Western University Inn. St. Lawrence University bought the property from Stanley and Jean Thompson in 1973.

The Thompson family ties to that property date back nearly 100 years. Our grandfather, Elmeron E. Thompson, was still in his teens when he wandered up onto the farmhouse porch in 1911 looking for work. The owner, Abbie Squires Martyn, needed a farmhand and asked one question: "Can you milk?" The young fella proved he could by hand-milking twelve cows in forty-five minutes. Grandpa was hired on the spot! Abbie's husband Elisha was incapable of running the



Memberes of the Martyn Family at the Thompson Farm. Possibly relatives of Tyler Martyn.

farm, and possibly had been incapacitated for some time. My brother Larry remembers Grandpa telling that as part of his job, he "slept with one eye open" in case Mr. Martyn should wander about at night. Elisha Martyn died on November 15, 1913, survived by his widow and seven nieces and nephews.

Apparently, following the death of her husband, Abbie changed the spelling of her surname. All records refer to Elisha and his parents as Martyn, not Martin. The Martin/Thompson plot at the Evergreen Cemetery, which also entombs our parents and grandparents, has both Martyn and Martin markers.

Elmeron Thompson was an ambitious young man, and proved to be an excellent farmhand. He had served on a handful of farms since leaving his father's house at fifteen. Larry recalls Grandpa's tale of flight from his home on a rural road near Potsdam. The youngest of seven children, Grandpa fled his parents' house and never returned. His sisters had graduated from the Potsdam Normal School, and brother Irving from Clarkson. Grandpa was beaten regularly by his father and told he would never amount to anything. He had saved \$100 from raising hogs (a huge sum for his day), and left on his bicycle with just a change of clothes. Great-grandpa Thompson never found him for a year. It seems that Elmeron's love of horses had led him to the St. Lawrence County Fair. At that time, the fair was held in September each year on the county fairgrounds just off Riverside Drive which is known as the "Fairlane Development" here in Canton. His job was to hold the farmer's team of horses. Elmeron's father met up with him at the fair and begged him to come home, saying that his mother missed him. However, Grandpa knew that if he returned home and forgot to do a menial job, something simple like locking the back door, the beatings would begin again.

Elisha and Abbie Martyn's farm was larger than the present property. All the land across the road from the Cooke property line, (Best Western site) nearly to the Canton Village line belonged to the Martyns. This in-

cludes the present day Noble Medical Center and Romoda Drive. Deeds I have studied show that Elisha Martyn's warranty deed was recorded on June 28, 1872. In that deed, there were several conditions which may be considered eccentric today: "The premises described in the deed, upon the express condition that the said party of the second part (Elisha) will furnish to the said party of the first part (Tyler) at all times that the said party of the first part may elect to remain with him, his board and the exclusive use of a certain bedroom now occupied by the said party of the first part, free of charge. And upon the further condition that the said party of the second part shall not sell the above described land at any time before the death of Tyler Martin without his consent thereto." Going back further, I discovered that Tyler's parents, Albert and Mary had made similar requests when turning the property over to their son in 1842.

Unfortunately, I was not able to trace back any further than 1842. However, mention is made of Festus Tracy as the owner of one of the parcels which was added to our farm in the early years. Festus was the Vermont surveyor who laid claim to the farmland beyond the present SLU riding stables and across Tracy Brook. He was the first land owner in the town of Canton. That was in 1799, a year before Stillman Foote purchased the mile square on which the Canton village stands. Interestingly, according to Dr. Payson, a renowned Canton historian, Elisha Martin was the grandson of Festus Tracy.

A call to Herb Judd brought additional information regarding the earliest years of the Thompson Farm. According to Herb, his great-great-great grandfather Dan Judd, the first miller in Stillman Foote's mill, was an early owner of the property; perhaps the first. Dan was another Vermonter who braved the wilds of the Chateaugay trail as he traveled (circa 1802) with his wife and children from Vermont to Canton. In 1809, he built his house on the property, most likely a log cabin. A son, Daniel Socrates, was born the same year. Dan Judd died in 1836 at seventy-six

years leaving a very feeble widow, Elizabeth. It is not known to whom the property was sold following her death. Thus, there is a gap in land ownership between 1836 and 1842. With perseverance, I will find the missing piece!

Getting back to Abbie and Grandpa, it is recorded that Abbie Martin sold the 53.5 acres to Grandpa Thompson on October 12, 1917 for \$1.00. However, Larry remembers Grandpa saying he paid \$100 an acre, probably as a land contract. Then, the elderly woman moved to Jay Street, but Grandpa was not to be alone for long. We are uncertain how Grandpa met our Grandmother Carrie Bacon, but assume they were introduced by one of his sisters, a classmate of Carrie's at the Potsdam Normal School. Carrie taught at the Old Canton Grammar School for a time, but resigned in 1918 to be married. In those days it was not customary for a married woman to teach. Besides, Grandma was needed to help with barn chores, take care of the children, and "keep house". Grandma and Grandpa had three children. The oldest, Warren, was born in 1919, Stanley (our father) in 1920, and Shirley in 1928.

Back when the horse was king, Grandpa was very influential in constructing much of the grounds at St. Lawrence University. Aided by a wagon with a "bottom dump box", he molded parts of the golf course and contoured the fill around the university buildings. He was also responsible for keeping the ice skating rinks clear of snow with the aid of a horse-drawn scraper. When SLU decided to plant the "Avenue of the Elms", located between the golf course and the riding stables, it was Grandpa T. who put in the American elm saplings. Of course, he was exhausted running the farm and working at SLU fulltime, so he caught a nap whenever he could. His team knew the way to the milk factory in Potsdam so, wrapped in a heavy blanket, Grandpa often leaned against the warm milk cans and caught a few winks along the way.

In the early years, it was evident, given Warren's love of farming, he would take over the farm eventually. However, he died at twenty in an automobile accident. So,

Grandpa farmed alone for a few years. Finally, in 1946 my father Stanley answered the call to return to the farm. Dad had been working at GE in Schenectady, but the war was over and jobs were scarce. Mom had always lived near the city, thus the move to the farm with its North Country winters was quite an adjustment for her.

A few years earlier, Grandpa had prepared a tenant house. It had been a Seventh Day Adventist Church and was located on the edge of the village. Grandpa applied for a permit to cross the highway, but it was slow in coming. Thus, he used his team to skid that house down the field and across the road. The permit arrived the next day. We lived in the "little house" for four years. But, as our family increased from four to six, we switched houses with Grandma and Grandpa.

Of course, the little house had been modernized, and was quite comfortable. Mom and Dad saw to that! Now, Dad was faced with renovating a century-old farmhouse. I remember as a little girl finding the woodshed very spooky. The windows were covered with cobwebs and hadn't been washed in years. It had an old plank floor, and the door creaked when opened. Entering the kitchen, the first smell was the kerosene in the three burner cook stove. The parlor was closed off by beautiful French doors, and seldom used. Ornate ash woodwork, supposedly cut off the south side of the present golf course, adorned each room. Grandpa had shingled the farmhouse in his spare time, taking five years to do it. But remember, he had two full-time jobs!

Larry, as Grandpa's shadow, remembers going to the cattle auctions. Once, Grandpa spent \$1800 for nine cows, just freshened. The farm needed only two, but Gramp said, "We'll buy them all, fatten them up and sell seven." Grandma was so mad she wouldn't let them go to another auction that year.

Dad was as ambitious as his father. Of course, the milk check had to be split, and with six of us, he felt the need to find additional ways to make money. An electrician by trade, he wired houses part time and drove

school bus for Canton Central School. Mom had her cake decorating business and worked in the school cafeteria for several years, until David was born. I was 23 by the time my baby brother was born and had been married three years!

Dad soon realized that he could sell milk right out of the milk house. The milk inspector came regularly and said ours was the cleanest stable in the North Country. The barn was swept and limed daily, and grit was put down so the cows wouldn't slip. The men wore clean coveralls every night. At one time Dad had about twenty milk customers. We'd be finishing supper, when they'd drive in. The stable became the gathering place of many folks: George Hudson, Bill Denhoff, Bob Ames, Bill Paul, Dick Laraby, Willard Besaw, Bill Parisian, and Frank Thorbahn. All came for milk; most stayed to talk. Dad sold two quarts for a quarter, the price escalating to thirty cents by the time the dairy was sold in 1966. Dad began work as an electrician at Potsdam College Jan. 17, 1967.

Our house was usually a center of activity. My friends at the Grammar School loved to come out to play, because there was so much to do. We played in the haymow, skated in the field by the Evergreens, and had sleepovers in the bunkhouse. Dad built our playhouse of used lumber as the Cooke house across the road was torn down. As soon as school was out, Larry and Dan moved out to the bunkhouse for the summer. They recall Dad waking them up at 6:00 to get a load of hay, if there was no dew.

In summer, the cows were driven across the railroad tracks to the upper pasture. When I was little, I remember following the cows, and gleefully walking barefoot in the fresh cow pies. Of course, I was scolded for that. Often, after the cows were secured in the other pasture, we would wait for the train, so we could wave to the engineer. If we timed it right, we could wave to all of the people on the Beeliner, too. Once, Larry opened both gates at the same time. As the first whistle blew, the cows scattered on the tracks. Luckily, not one was hit. For awhile, Mom went after the cows at

night, but was afraid of the bull. Dad told her he was harmless and to "just swear at him". One evening, the bull became belligerent. She swore, but he bellowed, tearing up the ground. Mom panicked and ran with the bull in pursuit. Dad heard her screams, grabbed a pitch fork, and rescued her. As can be imagined that was the last day our mother went out to get the cows alone. Another time, we were playing in the pasture. The boys began taunting Mr. Bull, and he chased us into the tool house. That bull kept us in the tool house for several hours, snorting and circling. Finally, he got tired of the game, and we escaped.

As 4Hers, we often hosted the ice cream socials in our front yard. Larry remembers hand-cranking the old ice cream maker, so we'd offer the best ice cream. Once, we had a wedding and reception at the homestead. Grandma's brother, Uncle Harlie brought the wedding cake in the trunk of his car. You guessed it! The jack fell on the wedding cake, and cake was handed to Mom to fix. (As if she didn't have enough to do, getting the house, children and food ready for HIS wedding.) That was her first wedding cake to decorate. She soon became well-known for making cakes for every occasion and had more customers than she could keep up with. (We loved baking day, because we would come home from school to the extra cake crumbs and frosting.) One day, a call came from the White House. It was Vice President Mondale ordering a birthday cake for his daughter Eleanor, a student at SLU.

I remember the after-prom parties at our house. It seems everyone from the prom came for at least a little while. Alcohol drinking wasn't an issue for most of us, but once, I remember Grandpa coming to the door with an empty bottle found in the driveway. Mom assured him that there had been no drinking, but she usually didn't argue with the patriarch. Only one time do we remember Mom standing her ground to him. It was a couple of days before my wedding. Grandpa and Dad always opened up the manure pile right after the haying was finished in August.



Aerial view of Thompson Farm

That way, they could spread it on the fields at the other farm. Mom did NOT let them open the pile until the next week!

When Larry and Rick were teens, their hobby was racing cars around the field where the P&C is. At first, Dave Thorbahn, Marshall Weeks, and Larry would race their cars thirty to forty miles an hour around the bumpy track, with a couple friends on the running boards, until a rear spring broke, and Larry rolled his '49 Dodge over and over. Once, two Ford V-8s were driven into the stable, where the mufflers were taken off. You can only imagine how scared the cows were! Later, my brothers had a "fix it" shop in the old chicken coop out back of the barn, and often accommodated their friends. Once, Al Romoda raced down Gypsy Lane in his father's

station wagon, hit the tracks, and bottomed out. Friends towed him to the fixit shop and Larry used body filler to stop the leak in the radiator. Mom woke up as twelve to fifteen cars drove in the yard! When Reggie drove past their window, taking me home, he would coast from the hospital into the driveway, so my parents wouldn't hear the "Hollywoods".

Grandpa had moved the old barn out back and in 1929 built the barn that still stands behind the house. Other farmers laughed at his design but later agreed that it is one fine structure. The elm for the rafters was hauled from the other farm, three miles away. Grandpa bought the additional 200 acres on the Brewer and Cowan-Mansion Roads for a song. The farm had been abandoned for awhile, so there was much brush

and rock to be removed before it could be hayed. Four of us built homes on this property, and Larry and David still own most of this land.

It was great fun riding up the other farm for a load of hay. Mom always drove the hay truck through the winrows, while Dad and Grandpa used the pitchforks to secure the load. The truck was large and held a good size load of hay. Mike Barkley, a blacksmith on Miner Street, built the bracing for the rack. One time, on our return trip to the barn, as we were all perched up on top of the large load, the wind took a handful of hay, and blew it through the open window of a State Trooper's car. Of course, the young trooper stopped us and tried to give the men a hard time, charging that we were overloaded. Grandpa asserted, "Well, Chummy, you'd better get yer tape measure out, 'cause we're legal! Furthermore, if you find we're over, I'll eat every inch!" Sheepishly, the officer got back in his car and left. After the hay was unloaded, Grandma always had a pitcher of lemonade ready for us. Sometimes, we'd have a swim at the Old Sandbanks after the last load, and stop for an ice cream cone at Johnnie Bushaw's.

Grandpa T. loved to reminisce. In his twilight years, when the emphysema was getting the best of him, his greatest passion was sitting under his favorite pine tree in the yard, telling stories. My husband Reg and brother Larry recall many "Grandpa Tales". Reg loves to recite Grandpa T.'s stories of summertime work at Cowan Mansion, probably about 1906. Grandpa's job was to hand mow the acres of lawn at the mansion. As told to Reg, he would begin on Monday, mow all week with a non-gas push mower, and just get all of the lawns finished on Saturday night in time for his day off. Then, of course, he had to start again on Monday! Until he became ill, Grandpa smoked a pipe. Once, when we were all at the little house for Sunday dinner, a few sparks flew out of the bow. Grandma scolded, "Elmeron! Elmeron! Stamp out those sparks on the rug!" Gramp answered, "Yup, I

will, as soon as they flare up enough so I can see 'em!"

Grandpa was a champion at "turning". This was a competition of strength, similar to arm wrestling only using a broom handle or a pitch fork. According to Larry, men often challenged our grandfather, but he always finished a winner. That is until one day in his seventies; he was beaten for the first time. Apparently, Jim Reichart walked into the stable, picked up a broom handle and challenged Grandpa. The two men faced each other; the younger man easily "turned" the elder. Grandpa remarked, "Ya know, you're the first man ever to do that!"

There are many more stories that could be told, but another time. As you can imagine, nostalgia is healthy. We were proud farmers; not wealthy by any means. Nonetheless, we had plenty to eat, a loving household, and always felt secure. That was the good life, as my brothers and I all agree. Grandma and Grandpa, and Mom and Dad are all gone now. However, we have many fond memories to carry us long after the homestead is gone.

Rensselaer Falls, “the other village in town”

By Sally White Hartman

The Falls

*This ballad was written for the Sesquicentennial Celebration in 1989
by Barbara Heller Rogers in honor of the founding of our village in 1839.*

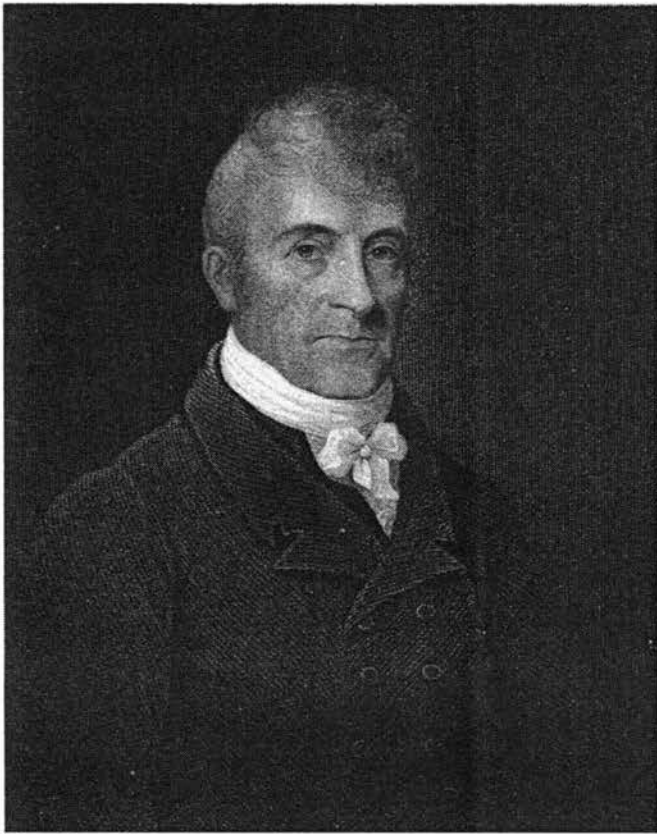
My Great-Grandpa was a Methodist
And a man who always did his best -
He helped to build a church here.
The Christmas after he was gone, my Grandpa spoke at length
About his dad - the great foundation of strength.
And how the Falls would tower - the country like a steeple if only
We had more people...like him.

My Grandpa's name was William
But he always went by Bill / he worked his lifetime at the mill.
And when we laid him in his grave.
The eulogy his foreman gave said he was a steady lot - always gave more than he got;
We could've used a few more....like him.

The summer brought us baseball
And our games out on the island / were the best of all.
People came from everywhere, and the uniforms we used to wear looked like the pros -
they're in the attic somewhere.
The Falls team was the best around-
You know it sure would mean.
A lot to see the old....home team.

The bridges and the baseball games,
The faces and the names / they all have changed.
After 150 years there's a lot to talk about.
I don't know where to start - along with memories in our hearts,
There's still so much undone;
We all must leave our mark - make this the place to start.

@Aardvark Records 1989



Stephen Van Rensselaer

Today, in 2005, Rensselaer Falls is an emerging community, still under village government and ranking as “the other village” in the Town of Canton. The village has a consistent population, around 350 more or less, or as the locals say, “there is one resident for every day of the year” Our Fire and Rescue Department is highly respected and the Firemen’s Auxiliary, in addition to all the volunteer work they do, has the “best Turkey Dinner” on the last Saturday of September every year. The village has several unique businesses and the surrounding area is a Mecca for all of those who love nature.

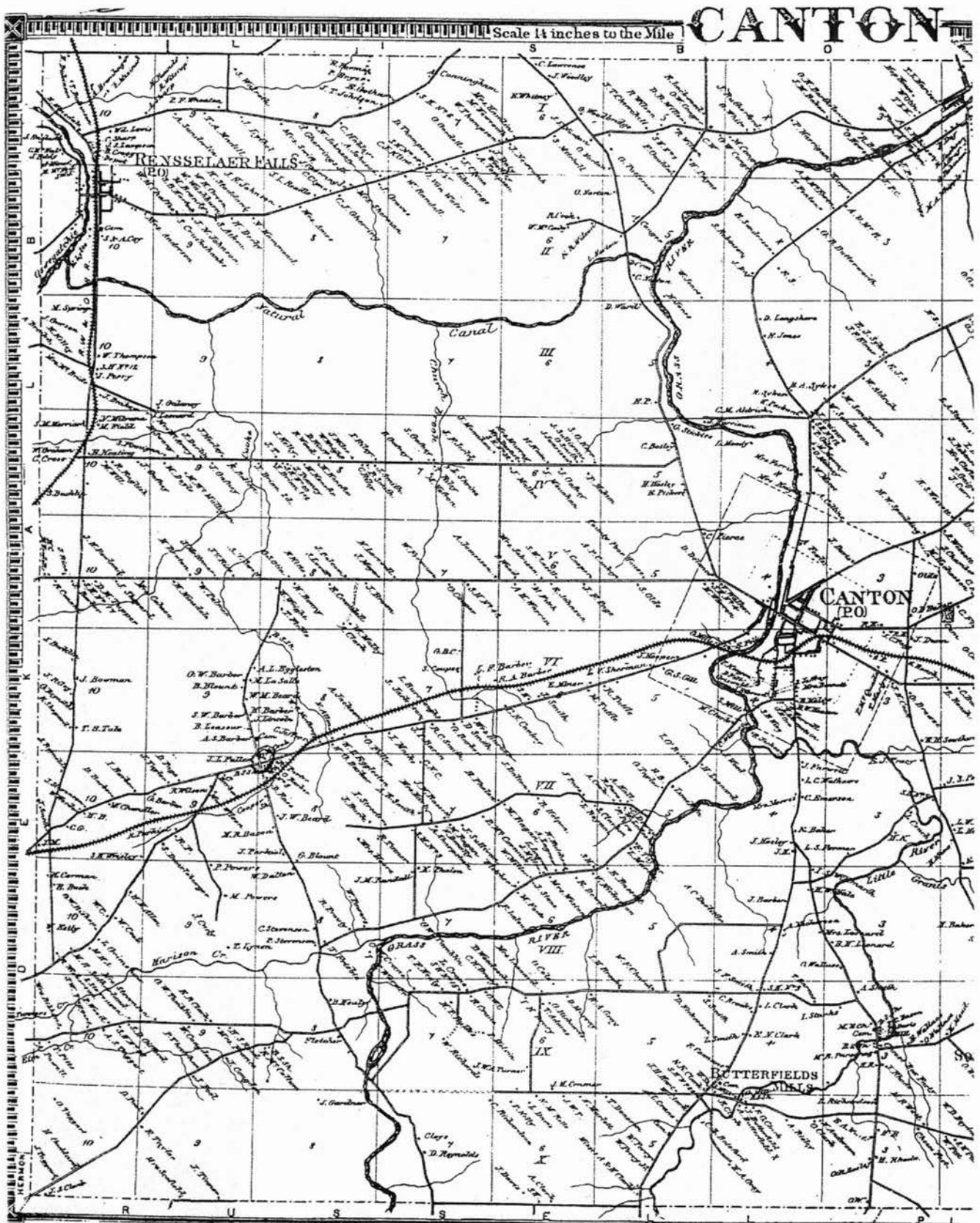
Indian Creek Nature Center within the Upper & Lower Lakes Wildlife Refuge is just out of town, and there are fishing and hunting spots within minutes. The Oswegatchie River is the lifeblood of the community. The river flows through the village and is really where our story begins in 1839.

Let’s go back to February 8th, 1802, when a petition was received by the New York State Assembly, which made reference to the

hardship of traveling to Plattsburgh, the then County Seat of Clinton County, within which the ten townships were included. The “petitioners humbly pray, that a county may be set off upon the aforesaid river.”¹ The river being the St. Lawrence River, hence St. Lawrence County.

The ten original towns and numbers included Cambray – changed to Louisville(#1), Stockholm(#2), Potsdam(#3), Madrid(#4), Lisbon(#5), Canton(#6), DeKalb (#7), Oswegatchie (#8), Hague – changed to Morristown (#9), and Gouverneur (#10) all as part of the Macomb purchase circa 1787. Due to property transfer, in 1795, areas of the Canton and Lisbon township were sold to Stephen Van Rensselaer, Josiah Ogden Hoffman, and Richard Harrison, and on January 21, 1805, Hoffman, by deed, released to Van Rensselaer his interest in the two towns(of Lisbon and Canton)². On September 13, 1836 Stephen Van Rensselaer “conveyed all his estate in these towns to his son Henry Van Rensselaer.”³ The land was described as “mile square of the 2nd range in the Town of Canton.”⁴ This was the birth of the future village of Rensselaer Falls.

Near the Village is a natural canal, which forms so striking a feature of the country,⁵ joining the Oswegatchie and the Grasse rivers. Navigable for small boats, the canal joined the mighty Oswegatchie and and enchanting Grasse Rivers. It became a highway to mills by the pioneers. This channel is six miles long, and from 5-10 and even 25 rods wide, with a descent of three feet towards the Oswegatchie. It runs through an alluvial flat, of about 4500 acres, covered by a forest of black ash and soft maple, which has hitherto been too wet to cultivate, but is now in the process of reclaiming.⁶ The outlet on the Oswegatchie had been closed, and Henry Van Rensselaer directed that a canal be cut along the bank to below the dam, by which water is expected to be lowered about four feet, the purpose being to drain the flats just north of the settlement. It cost about \$6000. The outlet on Grasse river has long since been closed.⁷



A St. Lawrence County map of Rensselaer Falls, ca.



View of the Oswegatchie River near Rensselaer Falls

“Grasse River (Ni-kent-si-ake) full of large fishes or where the fishes live--In former times this name was peculiarly applicable. Before dams and saw mills were erected, salmon and other fish were taken in the greatest abundance, as far up as Russell. In English the name was suggested by the grass meadows near its mouth.”⁸

Oswegatchie (Oswegatchee) (Swe-kat-si), is supposed to be a corrupted Huron word meaning “black water”.⁹

Near the north-west corner of the town, on the Oswegatchie River, and 11 miles distant from Ogdensburg, with which place it communicates by plank road, is the Village of Rensselaer Falls, which began in 1839, by the erection of a forge, by Tate, Chaffee & Co.¹⁰ Until the establishment of the Post Office in 1851, the hamlet was called Tateville after Robert Tate and then Canton Falls followed

by Rensselaer Falls and finally the Village of Rensselaer Falls. The village was established in 1912, with incorporation and the first elected official called President was Clarence Sunderland.

They first built the forge on the west bank of the river followed by a saw mill built by John Shull Jr., an agent of Henry Van Rensselaer. There was abundant waterpower from the river due to “a fall of six feet”¹¹. Forges and the accompanying facilities were built by 1839, the firm Tate, Chaffee & Co. started the fires to smelt iron by the “direct from the ore” method using the Adirondack Bloomery process. Imagine the activity about the forge, the waterwheel turning, bellows blowing air to make the fires burn hot, smoke pouring forth, men sweating, scurrying about loading the forge with ore and flux, tapping the pots for white hot molten iron, wagons coming and going. It must have been a bustling scene.¹²

The ore from the Tate mine in Hermon had to be hauled to Cooper's Falls, across the bridge and then down the west side of the Oswegatchie River, a distance of at least 15 miles, over very poor roads (if any). Bog ore was hauled from Lisbon Township and probably the limestone for flux from De Kalb. Wood could be obtained locally, but if charcoal was used, earthen kilns were employed. Bar iron that was produced could be sold to blacksmiths and foundries in neighboring communities, such as Heuvelton, Ogdensburg, Canton, and Cooper's Falls.¹³ In 1845, the Tates lost the Hermon mine at a Sheriff's sale. Henry van Rensselaer was the highest bidder. That same year the forges were leased to J.W. Browne for three years. Solon and Ransom Dexter purchased land in 1848, just upstream from the forge for their sawmill.

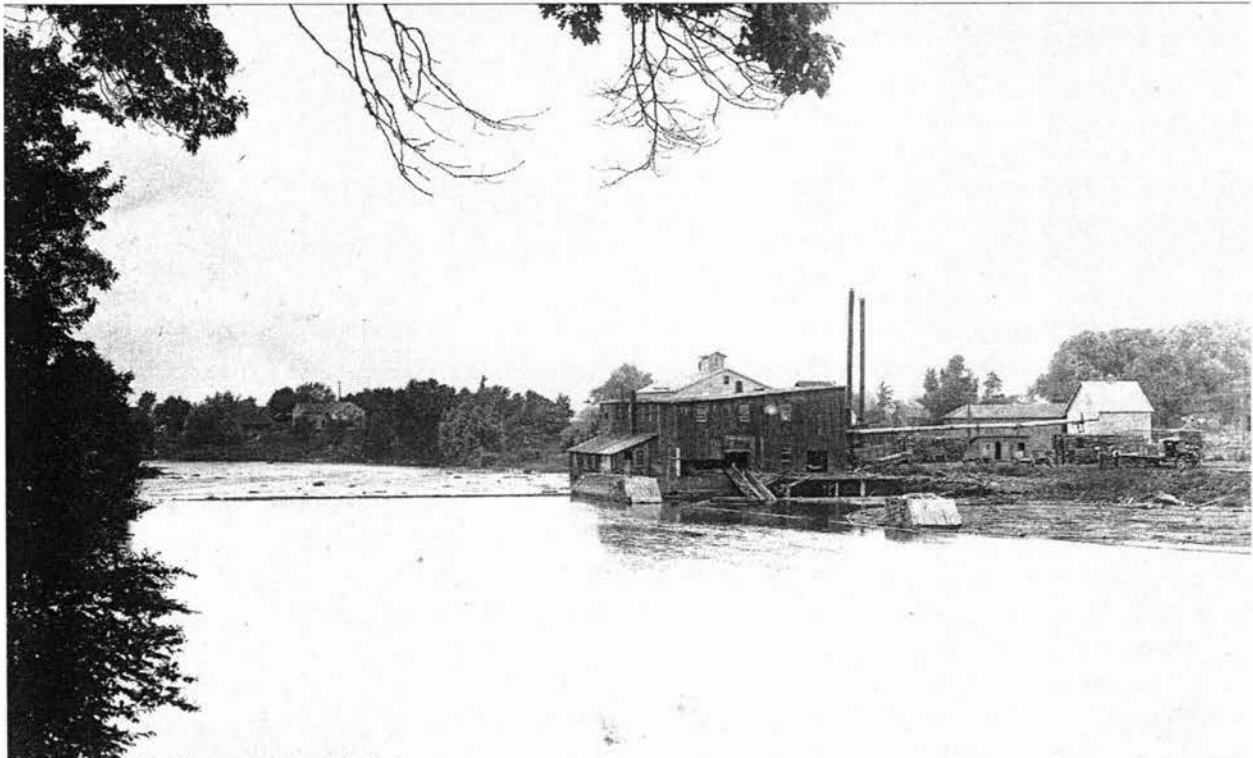
Early settlers in the vicinity include the family surnames of Ghering, Godell, Hammond, Hanna, Herring, Johnson, Randall, Sanderlin, Sharp, Shull, and Walroth.

Once the basic needs were taken care of, other needs followed like churches, schools,

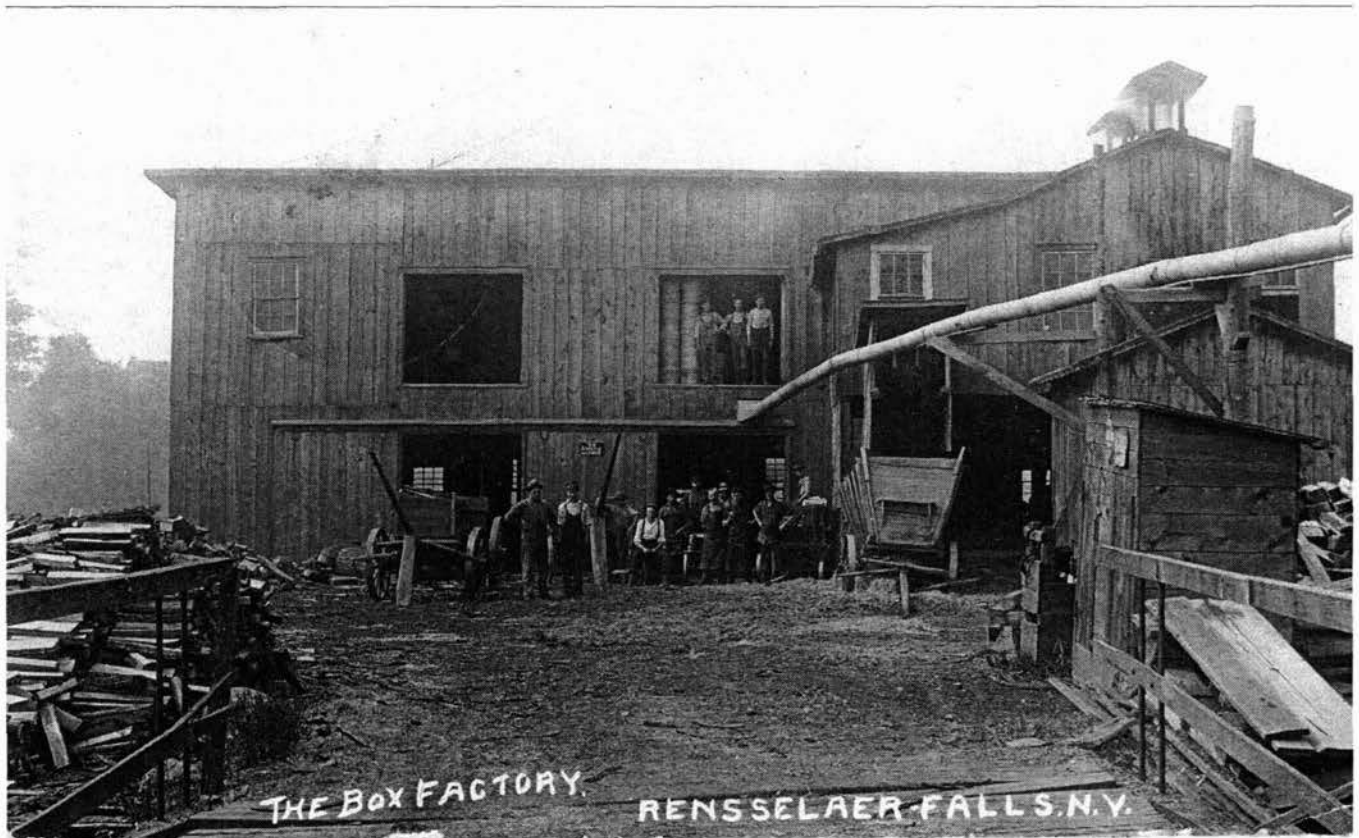
social organizations, business, and commerce. The community was growing.

Of the firsts, the first stone gristmill was built for Henry Van Rensselaer in 1842. It burned and was rebuilt in 1875 by Rose & Sons. The stone mill burned again in 1913. The two sons of Benjamin Morrison rebuilt the mill on the original foundation. Prior to building, Morrisons hired a wrecking firm from Ogdensburg to bring their equipment in by rail to level the mill to its original stone foundation. The structure was constructed from beech and hemlock trees from a woodlot owned by Morrison outside the village. The mill cost \$10,000 to build and they paid the carpenters a dollar a day. It was completely electrified. The structure was covered with tin siding and still remains to this day. Morrison expanded the operation to include selling coal. On the grounds is a Buffalo scale and a series of coal sheds. The mill is now owned by Kyle David Hartman

Jesse Brunnell was the first miller, F.F. Rathbone was the first shoemaker. Caleb Johnson was the first blacksmith, with his



Early mill in Rensselaer Falls



shop being just above the bridge on the east side of the river. The first tavern was built for Van Rensselaer and kept by John Shull Jr., and the first store was kept by Thomas Leonard, and then J.W. Browne at the site of River House. Dr. T Murdock was the first physician and remained in the Village for 30 years.

The first hotel was built for Henry Van Rensselaer on the corner of Front and Rensselaer Streets in 1852 and burned in 1903 along with the first store. It was rebuilt, the house first, and then the brick building, which is now a rental apartment house. The Rensselaer Falls Burying Ground Association was incorporated in April 15th 1852 and was reorganized and incorporated as the Rensselaer Falls Cemetery Association in 1875.¹⁴ The first depot was constructed in 1862 boasting in its heyday eight-passenger trains and several freight cars per day. Unfortunately the railroad station closed in 1954 and passenger service was reduced. The tracks were taken up in 1986.

The School dates back to 1842 when Robert Tate gave land for a school to be built. The land was located on Rensselaer Street across from Veteran's Memorial Park. The first story of the school appeared in a 1930 edition of the first school newspaper called "The Chatterbox" in which it was learned that early tools were Towne's Reader, Baker's Speller, a slate and a notebook made from foolscap paper, cut and tied with a string. They also had a lead pencil. The affectionately called "Little Red Schoolhouse" was built in 1859 on land given by Van Rensselaer on the corner of State and Rensselaer Streets.¹⁶ In 1863 there was a need for more room, so a two-room school was erected. In 1882 a two-story frame building was constructed with two classrooms on the first floor and a large room on the second floor. The school was completely destroyed by fire on February 2, 1903. It is interesting to note here that there were several private schools in the Village, and after the fire, but before the new school was rebuilt, some of the students would meet in these select

schools. The beginning of the 20th century found the village bustling with a new school being designed by architects S.D.P. Williams and J.P. Johnston of Ogdensburg. The new school was built with fire escapes; the building measured 40 x 60 feet annexed with a 15-foot square making an L shape. It was two stories high and included five rooms, library and halls. The walls were painted plaster with Georgia pine wainscoting and tin ceilings. Bonnie St. Denny tells me that fire drills often became playtime when students would line up to slide down the tube fire escape. They would run up the stairs and ride down again, often to amusement of their teachers. The students really soared when they took the wax paper, which wrapped their lunch sandwich and, slipped it underneath before they slid. "It was the best ride ever," shares Bonnie.

"I (Glenn Streeter) started school in the Falls in 1903 in a little house next to Claude Palmer's (Author's note: School was held in homes until the new school was completed.) We sat on little wooden benches, a kindergarten, you might say. That fall I went to school

in the new school in the first grade. Amy Norton was the teacher, I remember that. I can see her writing. She had a big Waterman fountain pen, and I was charmed by the pen going so fast. I wished I could write fast like that."¹⁷

The Rensselaer Falls Union School was used until 1968 as a K-4 school and then a community center. The structure was razed in 1972 and is now replaced by the Rensselaer Falls Fire Hall. Due to centralization with the Canton School District, the last Rensselaer Falls High School commencement was June 1945. The Union School became a Grammar School with grades K-8 and students remained there from 1947-1968 with 7th and 8th grade students transferred to the Canton building in 1954. The school census averaged from 90-100 students. The first graduating class held its commencement exercises on June 17, 1886. In 1968 a 5-acre parcel was purchased on Congress Street from Morrison Dowe and Carl St. Denny and on the same spot that a log cabin school had stood in the 1800's. On this par-







cel a new modern school was built for grades K-4. In 1976 a vote was taken, with a very small margin, and the school was closed. The property was eventually sold to United Helpers and is currently an Intermediate Care Facility.

The Churches

In 1842 a Congregational church was formed followed by a society in 1847, the Reverends Parsons and Goreham Cross having been the founding clergy. The first church building was the Congregational Church, built in 1848. The church was dedicated January 11, 1849. A rededication ceremony was held on February 16, 1876. In 1879, after repairs were made, a parsonage was constructed. The building is now owned by the Rensselaer Falls Historical Society, Inc., and is the future home of a local museum.

The Methodist Church organized in 1853 and was incorporated November 11, 1858. The first Methodist Church building was situated on Pioneer Park (now Veteran's Me-

morial Park), in 1858. The church was later sold. The current brick church was built and dedicated September 16, 1868. The Methodist Congregation combined with the Congregational congregation in 1954. The union dissolved in 2003-2004 and the Congo's gave back their charter and the Methodists continued to make improvements, which had begun in the 1980's when a Methodist restoration committee became active. Members of the committee were Schuyler & Fern Alverson, Carmen Dowe, John & Vera Hanna, Kyle & Sally Hartman, Mildred Mayhew, Ruth Moore, Connie Palmer, Clifford and Ruth Poor, Bonnie St. Denny, Jessie Wainwright, Charles Palmer, Claude Palmer, and Ben Childs.

Methodist Church improvements have included work on the basement, landscaping donated by Mrs. Irene Alverson, renovation of the backroom by Wayne & Connie Parow, and a large cross over the altar made from black walnut wood donated by Kyle

David Hartman and placed in loving memory of Sandie Rickard by her family.

Businesses

In 1908 there was one public telephone in the drug store owned by Hollis Doty. Later a telephone was installed in the McBride Store. A home telephone service was supplied and operated by Webster Wainwright and his telephone office was in what was later to be known as the Sands Hotel, then the Riverside Hotel. The same year as incorporation of the Village of Rensselaer Falls circa 1912, the Women's Improvement Society, under the direction of Mrs. Grant Crysler, began establishing sidewalks throughout the Village. Recently the Village Board has continued this work with the restoration of several new sidewalks by a grant procured with the help of Senator Wright.

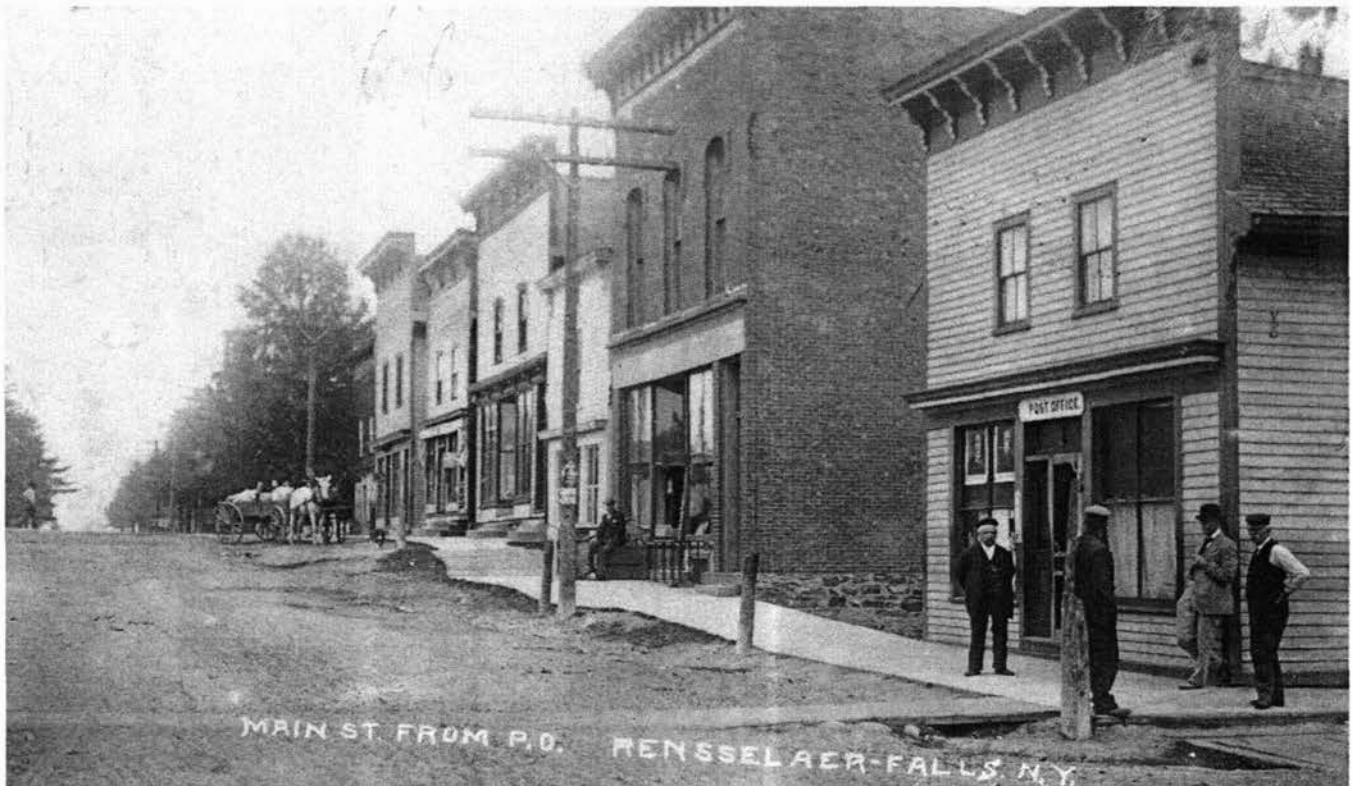
I encourage you to get a copy of "The Falls" sesquicentennial booklet to read first hand the tour of "Rensselaer Falls Business Establishments circa 1915", an oral history by Glenn Streeter documented by Steve

Childs. Here is a shortened version of that tour starting with the site now occupied by McAdoo's Market.

The business district starting at State Street and Rensselaer Street on the Canton side includes Creighton's Hall, complete with a pool hall, and a blacksmith shop in the rear, the Congregational Church; Merrill Craig's Grocery Store; Doty's Drugs; McBride's; Simpson's, with a milliner upstairs; Parson's including a shoe cobbler's shop afterward which followed "Bood" Jenkin's barber shop; and it eventually became a jewelry shop owned by McKee; J.J. Doty's clothing store and upstairs the Masonic Hall; and the Post Office with Tom McKelvy as postmaster.

Back up the street across from the Congregational Church on the Heuvelton side was Chris McCoy's undertaking parlors; a shoe cobbler's; and then George Hinsdale's store featuring overalls, shoes, and groceries.

Starting at the intersection of Rensselaer and Front Streets, towards the Heuvelton side, the business district included a brick building rebuilt by Charlie and Elmer



McBride after the wood frame hotel burned in 1903. The house to the left of the brick structure was rebuilt prior to the brick building after the fire and became a store "Burt Perry's Meat Shop" and residence. Next there was a dance hall and later a movie theater called U-No-Us Hall built by Bockus. Other shops which were located down the street were Chet Wainwright's Store; Freddie Heptonstall's little meat shop; and the Nell Bockus home. Crossing King Street you would find Sam Orr's livery shop. Further down on the triangular property was the site of the original Rensselaer Falls Train Depot. The railroad tracks were pulled up in 1986.

Across the street, just beyond the old gristmill (Morrison Mill) was a wagon shop owned by Tom Madill and then back toward

the bridge was the N.A. Bockus Hardware & Furniture Store currently the 'railroad station replica' built by Kyle David Hartman in 1985 known as River House Wares & Restoration.

Sports

There is a long tradition of Sport in the Falls. The late Sam McAdoo wrote in *The Falls*, 1989 that "sports and athletic endeavors have always played a major role in local history." Sam continued, "Interest in baseball peaked during the 30's. A County league was formed with teams as far away as Gouverneur, Russell, and Morristown. The Falls won its share of games. During this era, home games were played on the "Island", an ideal place, complete with bleachers, and even



Inside one of Rensselaer Falls' stores

a concession stand. A volunteer with a boat would retrieve balls hit into the river."¹⁸

DATELINE RENSSELAER FALLS: March 18, 1878 The Red Stockings B.B. Club of this place held their meeting Saturday night, as per adjournment of last meeting. Dr. J. M. McMonagle was elected chairman and A.W. Dexter recording secretary. At that meeting, a constitution was drawn up and the Red Stockings were "determined to have a club that will be second to none in St. Lawrence County."

DATELINE RENSSELAER FALLS: September 12, 1882 The Red Stockings go to Philadelphia today to play the Watertown club for the Championship of St. Lawrence & Jefferson Counties.

Rensselaer Falls had some good baseball teams in its history but old timers will swear on a stack of Bibles that there never was a team turned out by the village as good as that team which copped the northern New York championship 50 years ago. [Harold Murphy Ogdensburg Newspaper]¹⁹ You should read all about it in *The Falls Revisited* published in 1995. The article ends with a description of the sizzling hot game of the 1880's and how the Rensselaer Falls boys won the northern New York championship 14-13 and earned the silver ball and bat trophy which remained in a jewelry store in Canton because no one had the money to pay the jeweler's inscription fee. In 1930, according to the article it was still there in the jeweler's window. Wonder where it is now!

Around the turn of the century, a new high school opened the door for many successful teams, both in baseball and a new sport, basketball. In the 1920's, girls basketball was introduced, and championship teams resulted.²⁰

In more recent years on June 5, 1936-Akins Wainwright, 18-year-old Rensselaer Falls High School pitcher completed 18 innings of scoreless hurling when the Rensselaer Falls team swamped the Edwards nine 14-0 at Rensselaer Falls in an Adirondack League contest.

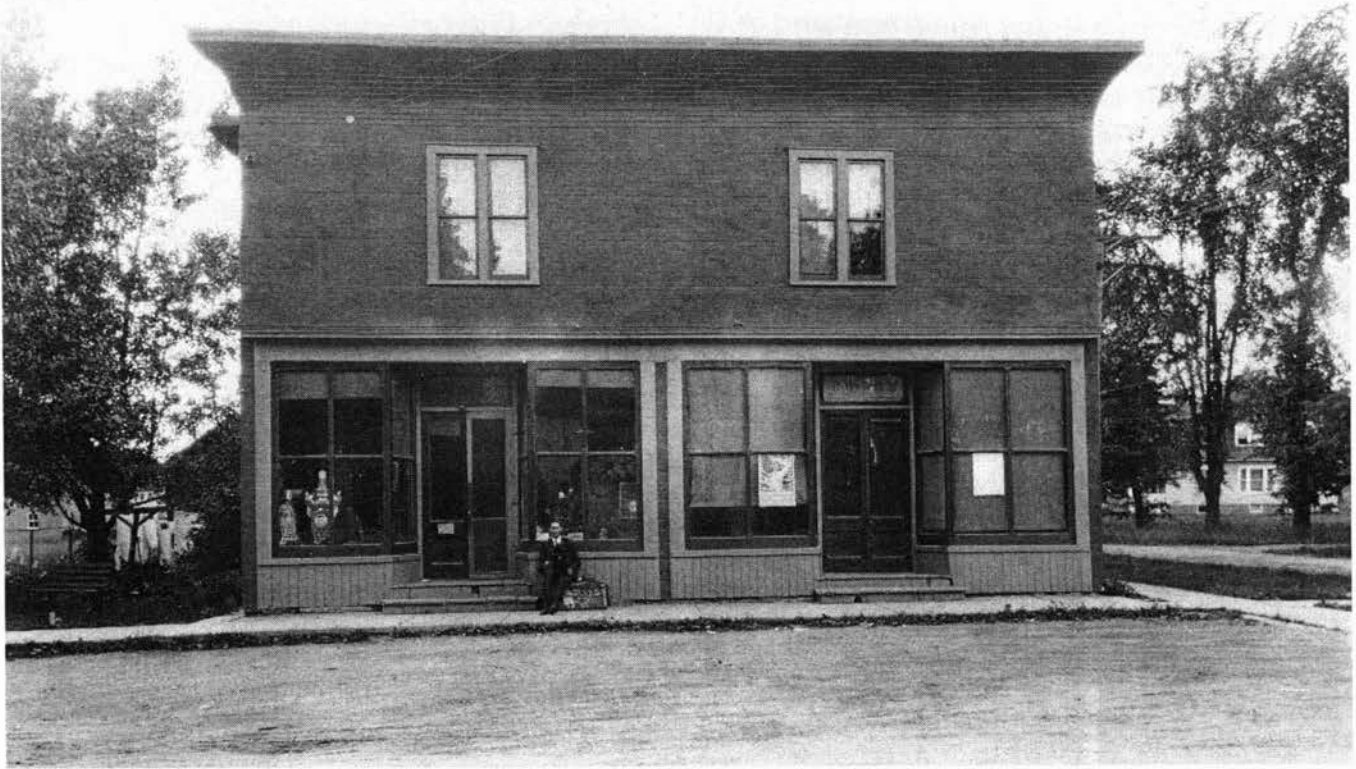
Finally in 1945 at the Falls Sports Banquet Father Harold J. Martin told a large crowd,

"Athletics is one of the best ways I know to approach the supernatural."²¹ The crowd was there to honor the Rensselaer Falls High School basketball team, St. Lawrence Valley League Champions for 1944-45. Rensselaer Falls had a perfect season, and individual scoring statistics showed Paul Stiles was high scorer with 134 points, followed by Keith Stiles with 120 points.

The Fire Department

The first meeting of the Fire Department took place March 31, 1925 with 32 Charter Members.

In 1925 a small building and new home for the Fire Department was constructed from a cement stone blocks made from a mold borrowed from Heuvelton by Charles McBride, a stone mason. The site was originally Hinsdale's Store and now is the home of DG's Country Kitchen. That same year the road was paved to Heuvelton. On April 29, 1930 Sam Dexter donated a windmill frame for the first bell. Originally it was placed behind the fire hall and then in 1959 on top of the brick building on the corner of Rensselaer and Front Streets. The first Annual Firemen's Ball was held in 1932 in the Grange Hall when it was in the former U-No-Us Theatre. Blair's Island was used for the first Field Day Ball Game. In 1936 the Grange and the Fire Department co-sponsored a Field Day including a parade, dinner, games, and an evening dance. There was also a Youth Community Center canteen which was cosponsored by the RFFD, Grange and Church. In 1947 an addition was made to the fire hall for meetings, and on May 15, 1947 an International Pumper was delivered to the Fire Station, purchased by the Village taxpayers through bonding. In 1955 a radio was installed in the Fire Station to assist in Mutual Aid. In 1958 all firemen voted to begin Fire School, and the department incorporated in 1959. Caroline McBride gave the department the use of the brick building, and they remained there thirteen years. The Firemen's Auxiliary was organized in 1961. In 1962 Edna Morrison



deeded the island by the falls to the Firemen. Bingo games began in 1970 and weekly games were played using the Grange Hall building. In 1972 the Union School property was purchased by the Fire Department and the school was razed in 1972 and a 50 x 120' Atlantic steel structure was built on the site with the breaking of ground on August 29, 1972. On June 30, 1979 the Fire Department burned the mortgage at a ceremony to celebrate paying off \$57,000 in 7 years.

Over the past few years, the department has developed to be one of the finest examples of volunteer services in both fire fighting, and rescue. Recently the department has added a dive team.

The Grange

Following the Civil War the national agricultural organization called the Grange

was formed to improve social and economic status of the American farmer. Sometimes known as a fraternal order of patrons of husbandry, the "P of H" was the organization's logo.

The Rensselaer Falls Grange #1038 organized in 1905. The meetings were held on the third floor of the Charles McBride building on the corner of Rensselaer and Front Streets. Here they had suppers and dances and some remember George Streeter, the blind fiddler, Marion Jenkins - piano, and "Bood" Jenkins-banjo or drums. The Grange also had a store on the second floor for their members. It was difficult for the members to climb the two flights of stairs and so the Trustees started looking for another hall around 1932. They bought the U-No-Us Hall from William Perry. Then around 1943 a fire began in a restaurant beside the hall and both build-

ings burned down. In 1944 they purchased Thomas Hardware and moved. This Grange Hall burned down in 1945. After a year or so of meeting in homes the Grange purchased a large two-story building from Everest Stiles and the Grange remained there until the Grange received permission to sell the hall in 1981 to Peter Longshore. This hall is still standing across from the Post Office, and is owned by Richard Fitzgerald. During its day, the Grange hosted dances, bullhead suppers, roller skating and allowed the Union School to use its upper floor for athletic events. The Grange under the direction of Clifford Poor erected street signs around the village.

The Masons

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest and largest fraternal organizations. The word "Mason" means "Builder," and Freema-

sonry, as we know it today came into being some 800 years ago. The Fellowship Lodge # 794 was chartered in 1874 in Rensselaer Falls. From 1874 until 1876 the Fellowship Lodge met in the Chapin Hotel. The Lura Chapter #324 Order of the Eastern Star received its charter. In 1909 the Fellowship Lodge purchased a building from Lowell Hill. The Lura Chapter Order of the Eastern Star returned its charter to the Grand Chapter in 1980. Fellowship Lodge #479 gave up its charter in 1986. The building is currently owned by Kevin Reynolds.

Rensselaer Falls at War--Military Service

In recent years Schuyler Alverson and Don Hammond have worked on documenting veterans' records of those from Rensselaer Falls who have served our country. Of the 127 men and boys from Rensselaer Falls area



Parade in Rensselaer Falls

who served in the Civil War, 29 did survive the war.²² The boys and girls from Rensselaer Falls served in all theaters of action, yet of the 151 veterans in WWII, only Karl Farley was killed in action and Roderic Roca died in a truck accident.²³ Two men served in both WW I and WW II; Harold Bagley, now buried in Kendrew Cemetery, and George Kinney, buried in the Rensselaer Falls Cemetery.²⁴

All veterans are honored in our Veterans' Memorial Park. The park hosts a gazebo and in the winter Santa Claus visits for a month or so.

In reflection, there have been many obstacles to the growth of the Village of Rensselaer Falls over the years that followed that first settlement. Fire was one of the major natural foes, the river was yet another.

As far back as 1894 on August 24th at 7:30 p.m. a fire began in Dr. Bayley's Drug Store and swept through midtown on Rensselaer Street; the great fire of 1903 took the first hotel and the first store; and you recall the aforementioned gristmill fire in 1913. The library burned in 1925 and many early historical documents were lost. The Riverside Hotel, which burned in 1984, was one of the most recent fires.

The river is relentless. The earliest mill was taken by the river during a flood in the 1840's. Even today the Morrison Mill has to be constantly maintained due to spring flooding where the river rises nearly 20 feet higher than the summer river level. Homes on outer West Front Street have been flooded and residents awoken at night with ice chunks hitting their house.

In 1962 The Conservation Department acquired land on the Lost Nation Road, called the South Road, chunking large areas off of some of the grand farms belonging to original settlers like the Nelson Hammond estate dating back to 1839. Much of the farmland that Van Rensselaer sought to drain in the 1830's is now a New York State Wetlands.

In 1966 Corning Glass Works bought more farms at \$300 per acre. These farms were on the DeKalb Junction side of the Canton Township and the Village of Rensselaer

Falls. The 2,800 acres displaced around twenty farms, ranging from the 600-acre farm of Theron Stacy to the 125-acre farm of Loren McAdoo on which he had 30 cows. This caused the landscape surrounding the Village to change drastically.

We currently have a Girl Scout Troop and there were Boy Scouts in the 1980's; in 1981 David G.A. Hance became an Eagle Scout. In the 1990's the boys went on a trip to the Herkimer Diamond Mine, Howe Caverns, and visited the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

Our Canton Free Library Branch is a point of pride. A cement building was built in 1955 for the library. Our library has been part of the Canton Free Library ever since 1947.

Amish families moved in 1982 and continue to be active on farms around our village.

Priscilla Amidon Tyler Hartman (1817-2001), with the help of Kyle and Sally Hartman, opened her home in the Morrison Mill to local residents to begin the Rensselaer Falls Historical Society in 1985. The organizing group included Schuyler Alverson - Vice President, Eunice Sheppard - Secretary, Fern Alverson - Treasurer, Trustees: Carolyn Rounsaville, Carmen Dowe, Don Hammond. Over the first few years, as founding President, Priscilla brought the group together to support several local initiatives. She helped the group to incorporate in 1988 and she was instrumental in organizing the Sesquicentennial Celebration for the Falls including the publication "The Falls" in 1989.

The Sesquicentennial Celebration began on June 23rd, 1989 with a greeting by Mayor Margaret Hance, a ceremony and historical display. June 27th there was an open house at the Oswegatchie River House Museum and Art School with a pottery demonstration by Arnie Roberts. June 29th there was a demonstration of rocketry by the Boy Scouts. June 30th Schuyler Alverson gave a review of the events and Merlin Childs and the Good Timers provided music for a street square dance. July 1st there was a parade and craft sales, with an ice cream social in

the afternoon with Barb Heller, folksinger. Gone are the days of the community band, but there was music that day. On Sunday July 2nd there was a dedication of the plaque and an afternoon performance by the Hammond Kitchen Band.

The Bridge

The story of our bridge reflects the history of the Falls.

The original bridge was a covered wooden bridge.

The wooden bridge was replaced by iron in 1895.

The iron bridge was replaced with a cement base in 1930.

The cement was refurbished with a wood base in 1988.

And so it goes on, in a cycle of ups and downs. The bridge is again on the list to be replaced. Will the bridge remain as it is, a 1930's steel arch bridge, or be redesigned into a low guard rail bridge like the one in the Village of Canton, and hamlet of Morley?

Notes

¹ Hough, Franklin B. A.M., M.D. History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties, New York, 1853 reprinted Regional Publishing Company, Baltimore 1970, 205

² Hough, 245

³ Hough, 245

⁴ Hartman, Sally White, Ed. The Falls, Rensselaer Falls Historical Society, Inc, Rensselaer Falls, NY 13680, 1989, 14

⁵ Hough, 281

⁶ Hough, 281

⁷ Hough, 281

⁸ Hough, 179-180

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¹⁰ Hough, 281

¹¹ Hartman, 4

¹² Hartman, 4,5

¹³ Hartman, 5

¹⁴ Hartman, 8

¹⁵ Hartman, Sally White, Ed. *The Falls Revisited*, Rensselaer Falls Historical Society, Rensselaer Falls, NY 13680, 1995, 2

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¹⁷ Hartman, 23

¹⁸ Hartman *The Falls Revisited* 34

¹⁹ Hartman, 45,46

²⁰ Hartman, *The Falls Revisited*, 41

²¹ Hartman, *The Falls Revisited* , 16

²² Hartman, *The Falls Revisited* , 23

²³ Hartman, *The Falls Revisited* , 23

²⁴ Hartman, *The Falls Revisited*, 25

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Building the replacement bridge, Rensselaer Falls

Jerusalem Corners: Bypassed By Route 11 and History

By Ashley Elliott
(Canton High School -- May 7, 2004)

[Editor's Note: This was a winning essay in the 2004 contest sponsored by the Canton Unitarian-Universalist Church]

Often times, we do not question change because it does not directly affect us. However, when we do not challenge and investigate these alterations, we fail to recognize important aspects of our history, for they become buried by recent events. This is evident when studying the reconstruction of US Highway 11, in the 1930's, and how it forever changed Jerusalem Corners (Eddy).

Jerusalem Corners, located six miles south of Canton, was a charitable close knit community. Staple and Fancy Groceries served as its grocery store, post office, gas station, dance hall, and community center all in one location. It was located on what used to be old Route 11, but is now the Old State Road. It was run by Lawrence and Ester Elliot, my great grandparents. They had eight kids running around to help with the upkeep! Having eight children in one home is an altogether different concern about how the times have changed.

Staple and Fancy Groceries greatly varied in comparison to any grocery store we have today, but was common in its day. Today the idea of only having to travel to one building for all your needs and not make ten sojourns all over town is ridiculous. However, I imagine you are beginning to think that the old way of doing things was convenient and logical.

Like clockwork, the milk train would be rolling in and the egg train would be rolling out. The milk train provided milk for the store to sell to the community. Also, Ester raised chickens and sent eggs off to New York City to be purchased. Boxes and barrels of

your favorite goods were scattered throughout the store. In the 1930's, you could buy an ample loaf of bread for 9 cents, cheese for 38, ivory soap for 5, candy for 5, stamps for 2, and shoes anywhere from 4 to 6 dollars.¹ However, one would not find any alcohol lining the shelves, due to prohibition. The floors were wooden and the lighting was dim, but the structure still provided a lively atmosphere for the town people. Having over one hundred regular customers for whom they kept personal records in a ledger, they were familiar with the community and its people. It is more than likely that most of those one hundred regular customers knew each other well. For it is said, there was also a social aspect to the store. My Grandfather vividly recalls men gathering at the store as they waited to go across the street to the one-room schoolhouse on voting day. Staple and Fancy Groceries was clearly more than a store, for it created a fellowship among community members.

A primary source of social interaction within the community stemmed from the dance hall. The dance hall was located across the length of the upper level. The shed in the back yard provided accommodations for the dancers' horses. For the most part, dances were attended with the same intent as they are today. Basically, dances served as a gathering place for young people to get together and enjoy themselves. However, the music of choice was different from what you might find at a local dance today. Local citizens would stage live music for the entertainment of all. My Grandfather specified, "My Grandma would come over to play the fiddle."²

May aspects of the time period may be held accountable for the store's success. But geography alone played a strong role in cre-

ating a lucrative business. US Highway 11 ran across the railroad tracks and past the store, causing a tremendous amount of traffic. Travelers of all sorts would stop in for gas and a bite to eat, not to mention "bootleggers continuing their run from Canada to New York City."³ This provided numerous customers to go along with their regular one hundred or so. Some things never change; the importance of location is one of them.

However, State Highway was rerouted in sections and finally completed in 1931⁴. The new highway would no longer meander, nor would it run across the railroad tracks. Although the detour was trivial in regards to the flow of traffic, it was detrimental to Staple and Fancy Groceries, for no longer would anyone outside the remote community take advantage of the store's facilities. They were losing an enormous amount of business.

Also, there were national issues responsible for the decline of Staple and Fancy Groceries. In 1929 the stock market crashed, leading to the Great Depression. "The Depression severely tested the idea that individuals were in control of their own futures."⁵ This quotation is exemplary because the aftermath of depression was inevitable for Lawrence and Ester. They did all they could, but people were simply not spending money. To make their financial status worse, they continued to keep personal bills in the ledger; money they knew would never be returned.

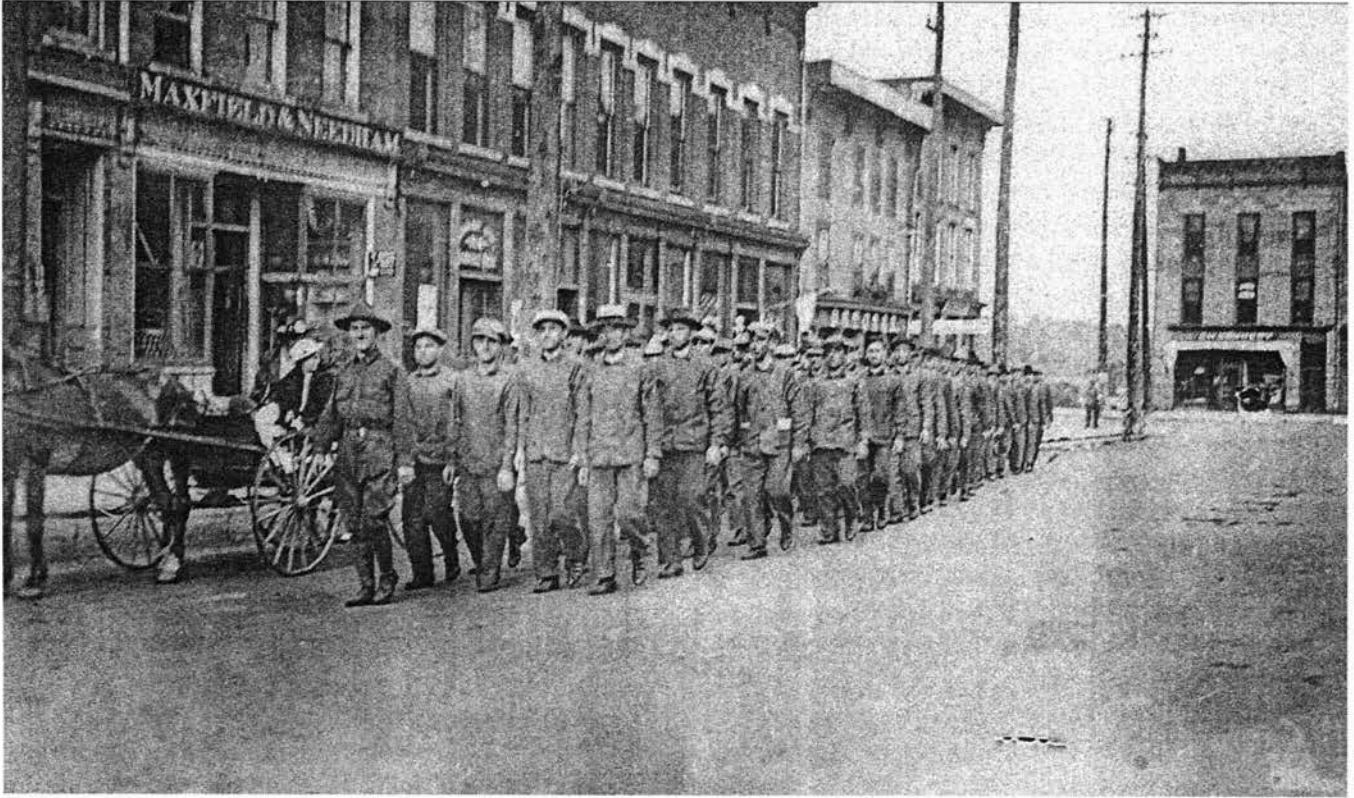
Although several other local businesses were struck by the "trickle down effect" of the stock market crash, Staple and Fancy Groceries was also defeated by Route 11's new location. These circumstances would put any store out of business, no matter the quality. Unfortunately, Staple and Fancy Groceries did fall to these roadblocks. Sadly, the store and its community have not been a prominent aspect of history. The details surrounding small communities become lost. However, these small communities should be recognized. For collectively, these small territories are what make up the big picture in the end.

The end to Staple and Fancy Groceries symbolizes an end of an era. This would be an end to a time when communities were interwoven with the same purpose. No longer would townships gather at one sole location for their every need. Some people say small town values have been pushed aside by technology. We have become industrialized, and in most cases, efficient. The world is certainly a different place, but are we any better off?

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- ¹ A preserved store ledger kept by Lawrence Elliott
- ² David R. Elliott
- ³ Mary Elliott
- ⁴ Pat Whitney, State DOT, Ogdensburg
- ⁵ *A History of the United States: American voices.* Scott Foresman, c1995.

Mystery Photo



This is a post card from the collection of the Potsdam Public Museum. The Museum has no information on it and would to know the identity of the group being marched down Main Street and when this might have occurred.

Last Mystery Photo Identified

The photo is a house at 1007 Buck Road, Madrid. Bill Day and his son Robert live there now. Four Fisher brothers came from Scotland in 1819-20 and built log cabins, then stone houses made of limestone from Brandy Brook. The four houses still stand and are lived in.

This info came from Reg Chester, Wayne Day, Floyd Beswick, and Ruth Walker.

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