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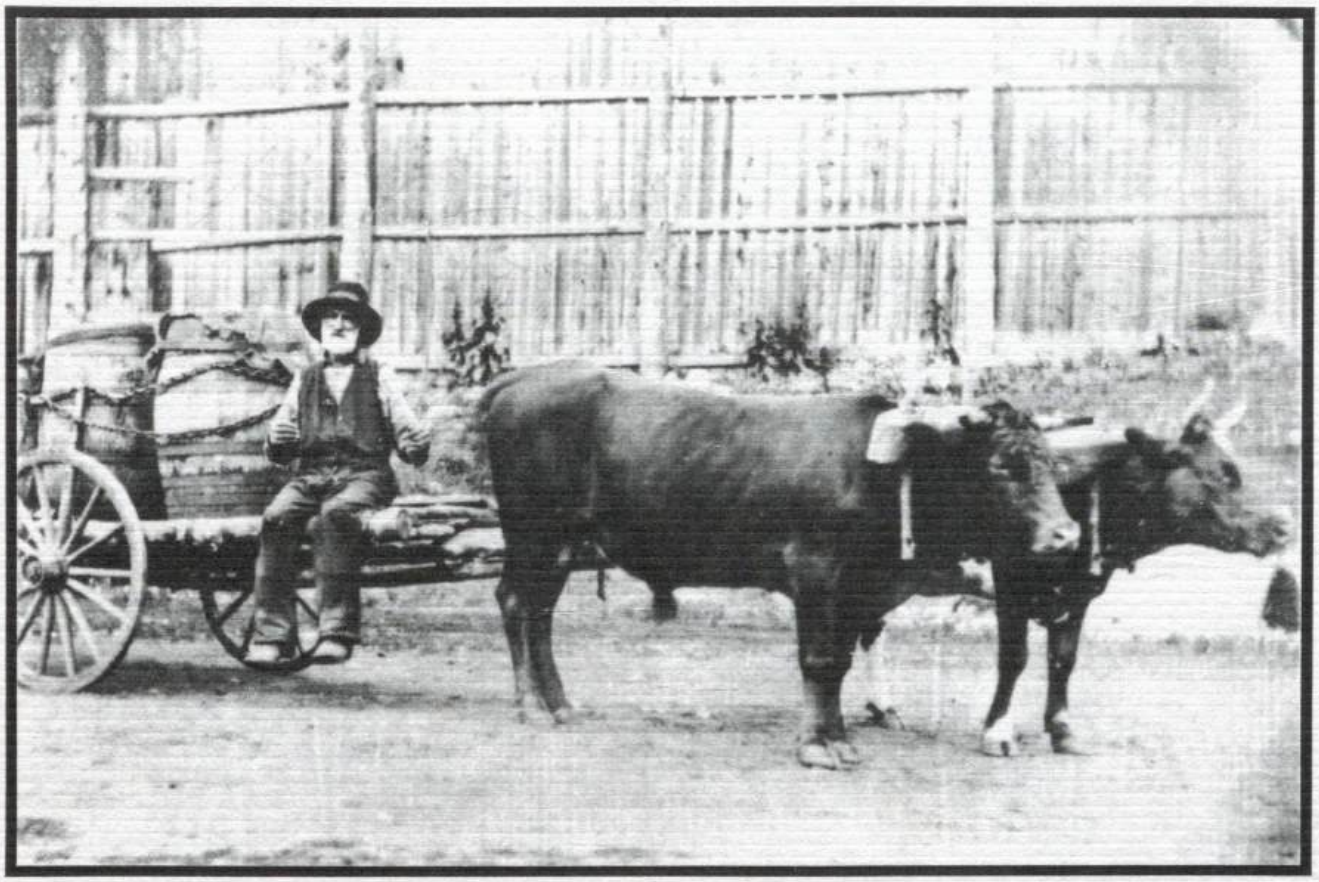

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Cover photograph: Water wagon and oxen in front of the original picket fence at Clinton Prison (Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh).

Other illustrations from Special Collections and private collections.

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AN EXPERIMENT IN ALCOHOL REHABILITATION?

The Hagey Institute of Plattsburgh, New York
by Marcia J. Moss

During the 17th century, and for most of the 18th, the assumption was that people drank and got drunk because they wanted to, and not because they "had" to. Liquor was food, medicine and social pleasure. In colonial thought, alcohol did not permanently disable the will; it was not addicting, and habitual drunkenness was not regarded as a disease (although it was criticized by the Puritan Mathers and Jonathan Edwards). At the end of the 18th century and in the early years of the 19th, some Americans began to report for the first time that they were addicted to alcohol: they said they experienced overwhelming and irresistible desires for liquor. In addition, some noted Americans (including John Adams and Benjamin Franklin) complained about excessive drinking and drunkenness. Throughout the 19th century, people associated with the Temperance Movement argued that inebriety, intemperance or habitual drunkenness was a disease, and a natural consequence of the moderate use of alcoholic beverages.

I

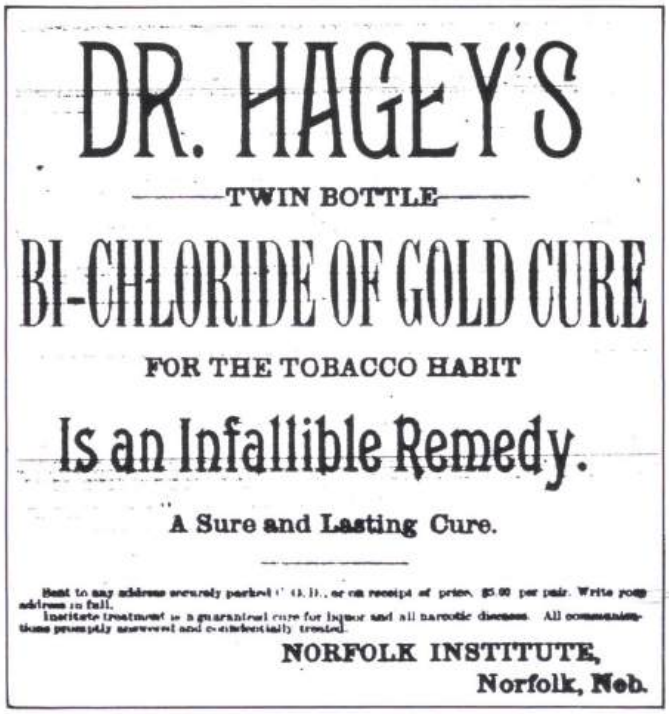
While the majority of the medical community pursued the idea of 'temperance' whether in moderation or total abstinence, the final decades of the nineteenth century also saw thousands of alcoholics proclaim the miracles wrought by Dr. Leslie Keeley and his "Keeley Cure" (sometimes called the "Gold Cure"). In 1880, Keeley announced (based upon what research, if any, is unknown) that he had discovered a specific remedy for alcoholism and drug addictions. Soon he opened the Keeley Institute at Dwight, Illinois, and began treating patients. His activities received no particular recognition until 1891, when the *Chicago Tribune* published a series of laudatory articles on the doctor and his cure. This sparked a wave of popularity for Keeley, and drunkards flocked to Dwight--and then to branch institutes, which proliferated during the 1890s. By the turn of the century, every state had a Keeley Institute (and some had as many as three).

Keeley's theory was that nerve cells were poisoned by alcohol and narcotics and became addicted, requiring repeated doses of alcohol or drugs to continue to function. Keeley insisted that precisely scheduled doses of his secret compound could break the addiction and that the most effective means of administering the cure was intravenous injection at one of his institutes (mail-order doses were clearly a second-best method). His secret was "Bichloride" or "Double Chloride of Gold". Pharmacology recognized no such substance, and Keeley never revealed his formula, but bichloride of gold was evidently a gold salt mixed with various vegetable compounds. Nor was Keeley's gold cure unique. Dr. J.L. Gray of Chicago, for example, was one of several other practitioners to offer a similar cure during the 1880s, although he freely publicized his formula: Twelve grains "chloride of gold and sodium," six grains "muriate of ammonia", one grain "nitrate of strychnia," one-quarter grain atrophine, three ounces "compound fluid extract of cinchona," and one ounce each of glycerine, "fluid extract of coca," and distilled water--a teaspoonful to be taken "every two hours when awake." "Dr. Haines' Golden Specific" was another such cure. Distributed through the mails by the Golden Specific Company, this concoction sold well at the turn of the century. The directions for use of this vegetable compound urged wives to put it secretly into their husbands' food; presumably, miraculous results would follow.

To keep a lucrative stream of addicts flowing into his establishments, Keeley and his branch managers became adept at organizing former patients (dignified with the title of "graduates") as missionaries on behalf of the cure. In the early 1890s, Keeley marshalled thousands of his patients into a "Keeley League", which held annual conventions and hired lecturers to spread the Gold Cure gospel. The League also staged a "Keeley Day" at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893; hundreds of graduates paraded in honor of their savior and his cure. There was even a league auxiliary of graduates' wives--the "Ladies' Bichloride of Gold Clubs." It was all good for business. By 1918, one inquiry estimated that some 400,000 people had taken the cure. The average number of patients treated daily at Dwight in 1891 was 700.

II

Just a year before, another doctor had joined the "Gold Cure" bandwagon, Dr. W.H. H. Hagey


DR. HAGEY'S

TWIN BOTTLE

BI-CHLORIDE OF GOLD CURE

FOR THE TOBACCO HABIT

Is an Infallible Remedy.

A Sure and Lasting Cure.

Sent to any address securely packed [illegible], on receipt of price, $5.00 per pair. Write your address in full.

Institute treatment is a guaranteed cure for liquor and all narcotic diseases. All communications promptly answered and confidentially treated.

NORFOLK INSTITUTE,
Norfolk, Neb.

The Hagey label for one of its products.

of Norfolk, Nebraska. Norfolk, with a population of 3,038 in 1890, was the site of the lab (run by W. L. Van Horne) and the first Norfolk Institute for the "guaranteed cure for liquor and all narcotic diseases." Tonic was available by mail order (advertised in one of Norfolk's four weekly newspapers) at the cost of $5.00 for two bottles. Apparently, Hagey operated in much the same manner as Keeley. The Articles of Incorporation, filed November 4, 1893 in Madison County Courthouse, recorded that:

> The general nature of the business to be transacted by this corporation shall be the treatment of Stimulants, Intoxicants and Narcotic Habits and Deseases [sic.], Neurasthene and General Debillity [sic.] and to purchase compound and sell medicines for that purpose.

On November 25, 1893, a second Articles of Confederation, which superseded the previous Articles, added to the Incorporation's role:

> The General nature of the business to be transacted by the corporation shall be to purchase, own and use what is known as the "Hagey Formula", being a secret formula adopted to the treatment and cure of alcoholic and narcotic habits...to purchase, compound and sell drugs and medicines for that purpose; to sell and convey to others the right to use said formula within any proscribed territory in the United States and the Dominion of Canada and in any foreign country...

The Institute served as a home base for expansion and, within three years (according to newspaper reports), there were 63 Institutes in 22 states claiming the treatment of more than fifteen thousand with a relapse rate of less than two percent (Keeley claimed a five percent relapse--mostly "women or young men. Women are more deceitful than men..."). Some doctors trained in Norfolk and then purchased the rights for Institutes in individual states. The Institute for Seattle, Washington, for instance, was sold in 1892 (unknown cost) to D. W. Hasson, a physician at the Norfolk Hospital for the Insane.

III

The Hagey Institute of Plattsburgh, New York, went into operation on November 4, 1893. Its purpose was even more specific--"the cure...of the liquor, opium, morphine, cocaine, tobacco and cigarette diseases or habits...". $5000 in capital stock (in shares of $25.00 each) was sold. A second Certificate of Incorporation soon followed (recorded April 20, 1894) for the New York Gold Cure Company. Each share sold for $100 for a total amount of capital stock of $125,000. Stock purchasers included many prominent members of the North Country. (The initial tally records 5 doctors, 3 lawyers, 3 bankers, 5 businessmen and several others).

For the six months between the opening of the Institute and the sale of stock in the New York Gold Cure Company the local newspapers were peppered with articles and testimonials to the success of the Institute. Reading like religious conversions, the letters "exhort all sufferers" to enter the Institute. Alexander LaFountain, without the treatment, "would have continued the 'spree', and undoubtedly pulled up in a 'pine box, six by two.' Ingraham attorney and graduate of University of North Dakota, M. H. O'Brien (described in the 1897 *Souvenir Industrial Edition* of the *Plattsburgh Daily Press* as a man "interested in all public enterprises that tend to better public morals and advance the education of our people") wrote of his successful treatment and "new lease on life."

The *Plattsburgh Sentinel* of February 9, 1894, printed words from "Uncle John", the claimant to the "championship in drunkenness... who can furnish sworn statements from everybody residing within 10 miles of Keeseville, to support his claim... he stood as a frightful example for all temperance lecturers to refer to...the good people...selected him as the one best qualified to test the merits of the treatment." Following the cure, "Uncle John" had "just begun life."

Articles describing the cure and advertisements for the Hagey Institute were also prevalent. Patients were under no restraint, could come and go at will and had only to appear for treatment (injections) 4 times a day. A reading room with magazines and newspapers was available for waiting. The treatment was described as painless and physician-prescribed. Cure of the need for alcohol required 21 days; morphine and opium cures required only 28 days. Mrs. Hannah Beeman, after 10 days' treatment, "ceased to use or care for morphine, and today, its pernicious effects are vanished."

Rules for the Institute were distributed to new patients. The charge in 1894 was $75.00. Apparently all recruitment of patients was not as

RULES AND REGULATIONS

OF THE

HAGEY INSTITUTE OF PLATTSBURGH, N. Y.

FIRST.

No patient for the Opium or Liquor Habit accepted for a less period than three weeks' course of treatment. All patients are required to manage all financial matters with the Secretary before entering treatment. Borrowing or loaning money between patients is positively prohibited. An indiscriminate spending of money is prohibited during treatment.

SECOND.

Strict regularity must be observed in the use of remedy every two hours during the waking period, and promptness at the office for Hypodermic Treatment four times a day, at the following hours: 9.00 o'clock A. M., 12.00 o'clock noon, 4.00 o'clock P. M., and 8.00 o'clock P. M.

THIRD.

The remedy for individual use is compounded to meet individual requirements, and all exchanging or loaning between patients is prohibited.

FOURTH.

Cigarette smoking or gambling is strictly prohibited.

FIFTH.

Baths must be taken at least twice a week. Tickets can be obtained by applying to the Secretary.

SIXTH.

Personal habits must be regular—going to bed, rising, eating and exercise.

SEVENTH.

All necessary medicine and stimulants will be given by the physician in charge, and patients will not be allowed to take any other. Visiting saloons during treatment is positively prohibited.

EIGHTH.

Smoking or chewing tobacco is prohibited fifteen minutes before and after Hypodermic Treatment.

NINTH.

All patients must comply with these rules in every particular.

PLATTSBURGH, N. Y., Feby 17th 189.4

For the purpose of obtaining the best results for the cure of the Morphine and Liquor Habits under the formula of Dr. W. H. H. Hagey, at the Hagey Institute, and to show good faith, I hereby agree to adhere to the above rules in every particular, or forfeit all money or monies which may have been paid by me to the said Institute.

Signed.....

Witness.....

Strict rules were spelled out for anyone undertaking the Hagey cure.

straightforward as the newspaper testimonials. Dr. David S. Kellogg in his Journal entry for December 28, 1893 told a sad story:

> There is now in town what is called "The Hagey Institute" which is for curing of drunkards. I suppose it is like the so-called Keeley cures. At any rate, it is expensive. One poor woman had saved a little money by working out before she was married. Her husband lost his position on the railroad on account of drinking, and would not try to work. A young fellow, under pretense that some rich man had offered to pay his expenses at the Hagey concern, got the husband to begin treatment and then went to the wife and told her she must pay the bill, as it was only a ruse to get him to go for treatment. So the woman, in order to help her husband, grasping at the last straw, decided to pay the bill.

The Hagey Institute operated in Plattsburgh for several years more and then advertisements ceased. The 1897 *Souvenir Industrial Edition* of the *Plattsburgh Daily Press* carried a photograph and business-paid endorsement for the Institute citing several years of service. The building on Bridge Street in which the offices were located was rented and no records of length of stay were located. The Institute was a fascinating but brief attempt at either the successful rehabilitation of alcoholics or a quick money-making scheme. From the evidence available, the verdict could go either way.

Marcia J. Moss grew up and was educated in Chazy. She has a bachelor's degree from Brockport SUC. She spent a summer at the University of Ghana, and held a teaching fellowship at the University of New Mexico. She has taught history for several years in area schools.

AN ACADIAN STORY

by Sue Ouellette

At the opening of the 17th century, the countries of western Europe were engaged in a race to explore and settle the New World. In 1605, a French team that included Samuel de Champlain, after a scouting expedition of the previous year, established a tiny settlement that they named Port Royal. This was located on the Bay of Fundy in what the French called Acadie, now known as Nova Scotia. It was the first permanent white settlement north of the Gulf of Mexico.

The colony grew slowly, beset by difficulties from the start. Rival French groups fought over it, as did the British, and later the New Englanders. The settlement changed hands numerous times before it passed under permanent British control a century later.

In the early turbulent years, the first of my immigrant ancestors arrived at Port Royal. Jacques Bourgeois was a regular in a French regiment that was sent to protect the young colony from its many enemies. He did not remain long in Acadia, but his tales of the New World inspired his young son, also named Jacques, to make the sea journey and start a new life. He sailed on the *Aulway* early in 1642, at the age of twenty-four years, and acted as the ship's surgeon. There is no evidence that he possessed any medical skill, but by the time the *Aulway* berthed in the bay off Port Royal at least a third of the passengers and crew were suffering from scurvy. The voyage had taken about three months and was completed late in June.

Jacques' first home in the New World was Port Royal. It is certain that Jacques was an ambitious and hard-working person since within a year he owned land and had begun to construct a business network that would eventually stretch from Acadia to Montreal (old Ville Marie) and down to Boston in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In 1643, he married Jeanne Trahan, a daughter of Guilliame Trahan and Francoise Charbonneau. Upon their marriage, Jacques became the owner of a flock of sheep which was the bridal gift of Jeanne's father to them. This was a valuable asset as the sheep not only provided food, but also were a source of the raw materials for their clothing as well. Jeanne had herself been born in France and had emigrated to the New World with her parents. They had been members of the Governor's entourage and when his tenure was over they accompanied him back to France. At the age of sixteen, she became a bride, and soon after when she was seventeen she became a mother. Her first child, Jeanne, who was born in 1644, died as an infant. Perhaps poor little Jeanne was a victim of the crude frontier that was her parents' home. Following soon after were Charles (1646), Germaine (1650), Marie (1652), Guilliame (1655), Marguerite (1658), Francoise (1659), Anne (1661), Marie Louise (1664) and another Jeanne (1667).

Port Royal in 1751, renamed Annapolis Royal by the British. (Courtesy Public Archives of Canada).

The daily life of the Acadians was dictated by the seasonal changes and conducted close to the land. Their lives depended on the food they grew and gathered for themselves. Apart from the labor required to sustain themselves, they socialized with their neighbors and found a fulfillment in the fellowship of their church.

As the colony expanded and the population grew at Port Royal, the need came for more farm lands to be cleared and other areas to be settled. In 1672, Jacques moved his family up the

peninsula to establish a small community called Beaubassin. He purchased a parcel of land with a fast flowing stream and built a grist mill on it, harnessing its water power for his mill. The machinery for his operation was imported from Boston since it was easier to transport by water than overland. With the help of the whole family, they had soon established themselves.

The next generation of the family began with the marriage of Charles Bourgeois and Anne Dougas, the daughter of Abraham Dougas and Marguerite Doucet. They operated the mill after Charles' father and they lived their entire lives in Beaubassin. Anne bore Charles three children; Charles (1672), Claude (1674) and Anne (1679). The ownership of the mill and the property passed to them with the death of Charles' father and the entire family seems to have stayed very close to home. This tendency to stay in large family groups living close together with multi-generational households is a trait that persisted in French Canadian family units long after the dispersion of Acadia.

By the time Claude Bourgeois married Anne Blanchard in 1703, the Acadians had developed a tightknit and self-contained society. They were primarily of French stock and entirely French speaking. Other ethnic groups such as the native Americans were absorbed into the Acadian culture, but their identity became submerged through intermarriage and assimilation. With the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Acadia passed into the possession of Great Britain. In 1749, Halifax was founded and 4,000 British colonists were sent out to settle the area and counter the French population left at Louisbourg and throughout the peninsula.

The union of Claude and Anne was blessed with six children; Marie (1704), Paul (1706), Claude (1708), Joseph (1710), Michel (1712) and Jean Baptiste (1714). Although they had been born in a French colony, they were now subjects of the British Crown. For the next three decades, Great Britain tried to extract an oath of allegiance from the stubborn and independent Acadians. Claude was expected to swear this oath, but managed to avoid doing so. He, as most of the other Acadians, felt no loyalty to their present rulers and looked to Paris rather than London for their leadership. The Acadians were now third and fourth generations from the original settlers and had strong cultural ties to each other and their lands. They cultivated their fields, raised their families and had roots that went deep into the soil of their adopted homeland. As France and England wrangled over their colonial possessions, the Acadians tried to lead their lives in their own way and leave politics to the politicians of the times.

Claude Bourgeois, Jr. married Anne Cormier in April of 1732. The tensions between the Acadian people and their British rulers were moving towards an end not yet in sight and life must have been difficult. Acadians who signed the oaths of allegiance were considered to be traitors to their own, but were allowed to keep their lands. The Acadians who refused were being loyal to their own, but were running the risk of losing their homes through government seizure. Taking his father's lead, Claude refused to sign the oath. There were deep rifts in the French community over this issue, but still they tried to keep their tradition and culture alive. Even so, time was soon to run out.

In 1755, the British government took action against its dissenting subjects. Very little has been written about the expulsion of the Acadians from their homeland. One of the most famous accounts of the Great Dispersion is a poem by Longfellow called "Evangeline". The poem was written from an oral recounting of the separation of a newly married couple on their wedding day. Its poignant story of the bride's search for her husband is an illustration of the actual hardships endured by these people. The forcible deportation of all Acadian people separated families systematically as well as deliberately. Men were separated from their wives, and children from their parents. Groups of people were herded on to ships and sent to Louisiana, Virginia, France and England. Many died on board ship and many more died of starvation when they were abandoned on the shores of places like the Mississippi River bayous.

During the time of the expulsion, the Bourgeois family gathered together and escaped to the mainland where they made their way overland to a French settlement southeast of Montreal. Arriving in Laprairie with their lives and little else, they were taken into the French community that had economic, cultural and possible blood ties to the Acadian refugees. Claude and Anne's family miraculously survived the ordeal and promptly set about re-establishing themselves.

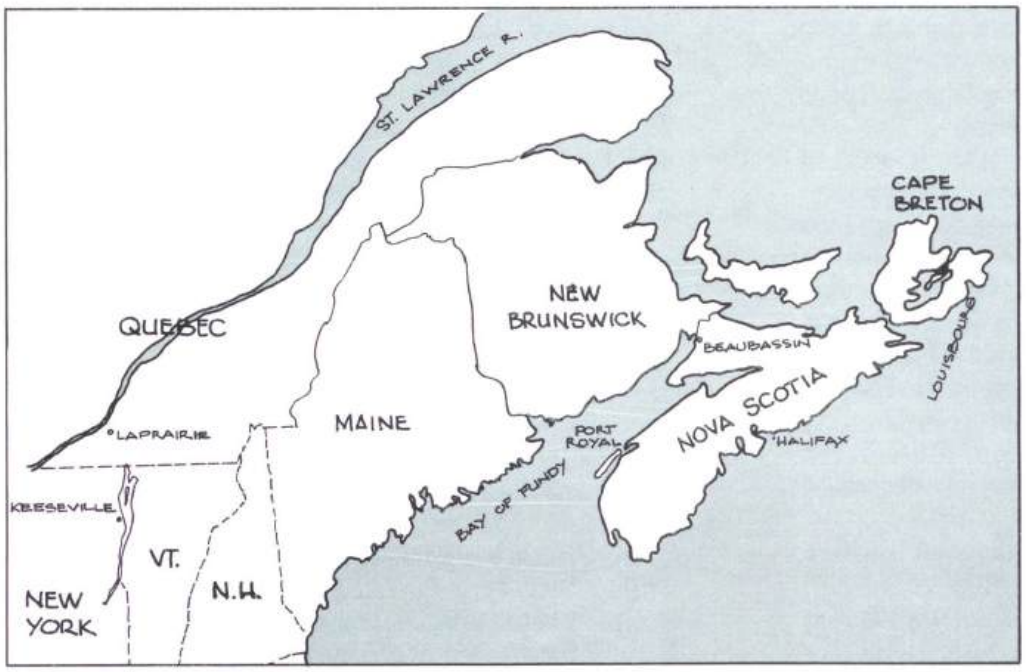
In February of 1773, Michel Bourgeois, their second son, married Natalie Comeau who was

also of an Acadian refugee family. The surviving French culture of the area of Quebec made it possible for the fugitive Acadians to blend into the landscape and the Acadian culture went underground to survive virtually intact until the late 1880s when a revival of national identity brought the Acadians back out into the open. The British pursuit of the Acadians was soon to be forgotten in the upheavals of the French and Indian War and, following close on the heels of that, the Revolution in the American Colonies. The straggling remnants of the Acadian culture paled in comparison with the seething mass of discontent that was just south of the border.

The Bourgeois, then, had little reason to love their British rulers and early in the American conflict their sympathies were clearly partisan. During the winter of 1774 and the spring of 1775, Michel made several trips to New York ostensibly for the purchase of lumber, but actually to exchange information with the American rebels.

In the autumn of 1775, the American army under Generals Schuyler and Montgomery invaded Canada from Lake Champlain via the Richelieu River valley. From Isle aux Noix, General Montgomery called for Canadian recruits and received a good response. After several short engagements, the Americans occupied Fort Chambly, Fort Saint Jean, Laprairie and Sorel. Another force commanded by Benedict Arnold invaded Quebec from Maine and pushed its way to Quebec City. The first force met the second and after the failure of a concentrated assault upon the city, the Americans dug in and laid seige to Quebec. Michel Bourgeois and his brothers were active in the assault. In the spring of 1776, the troops suffered repeated outbreaks of fever which decimated the ranks and the Americans were forced to fall back on Three Rivers. The arrival of fresh reinforcements with the spring gave the British the power to push back the Americans from Three Rivers to Sorel. Finally, the Americans were forced to retreat back across the frontier to Isle La Motte, Vermont. Having openly given aid and taken part in the American invasion, the Bourgeois were fugitives again. They retreated south with the Americans, leaving behind their home. Michel and his family found themselves on the shore of Lake Champlain near a settlement called Chazy Landing with only what could be carried. Although Michel never formally joined the Continental Army, he continued to be involved in the movement of information across the border.

There was also another separation forced on the Bourgeois family by this move. With the Quebec Act, Bishop Briand of Canada declared that all Catholic Canadians who gave aid and comfort to the enemy would be excommunicated until such time as they publicly repented. Consequently, a great many parish registers



This map shows the extent of the migrations of the Bourgeois family from Port Royal, Nova Scotia to Beaubassin, Laprairie and Keeseville.

have as a part of their entries "absent with the rebels" next to certain names. By coming south of the border, the Bourgeois and others gave up their right to practice their religion. Since the Bishop of Canada controlled the placement of priests in the upstate New York region, the people there went without benefit of clergy for quite some time. A few priests secretly disregarded the edict as borne out by their registers showing known rebels having received the sacraments in certain parishes, but it was a long and dangerous journey in to Canada to obtain the blessings of the Church for a christening or a proper marriage ceremony.

Life in an area as raw as Chazy in the 1780s must have been as challenging as Acadia in the 1640s. There were very few roads and most of the travel was accomplished by way of the water or winter ice. The Bourgeois settled in an area known as the Refugee Tract which was set aside as bounty land for participants in the war. Many neighbors were displaced French Canadians such as themselves who had become involved in the conflict. The Paulints were such a family. Antoine Paulint had been an officer in the French regiment commanded by the Marquis de Montcalm. After the outbreak of the American Revolution, Antoine had been recruited as an officer for Moses Hazen's regiment. As a result of his service in the Continental Army, he was given a land bounty near the Bourgeois' parcel. It is possible that the Paulints and the Bourgeois had known each other in Canada since Antoine's mother-in-law had been a Bourgeois. Another clue was a grandchild of Michel Bourgeois who was given the name Theotiste, possibly after Antoine's wife.

Blaise Bourgeois was Michel's only son to reach adulthood. He made his living as a mason and his work took him all through the upstate area wherever there was a job. There was a considerable amount of building during the early part of the 1800s and a lot of it was done in stone. All along the fast flowing rivers of the Adirondacks and the Champlain valley basin, mills powered by water were brought into being. These early mills were the precursors of the industrial revolution which was soon to envelop the northeastern states.

After the War of 1812, the Champlain Valley began to prosper. Iron ore was discovered and mines were opened from Lyon Mountain in the north to Port Henry in the south. Along with the mining operations, there were smelting processes that produced pig iron, the charcoal industry which fueled the early forges and the manufacture of iron products such as horse nails. The construction of one of these horse nail factories is what brought the Bourgeois family to the Keeseville area. Blaise brought his two sons with him and when the work was complete, young Michel stayed behind.

Interestingly enough, at the same time Michel decided to make Keeseville his home, Antoine Paulint (the grandson of the Revolutionary soldier) moved to the Keeseville area as well. It is entirely possible that the moves were connected, but impossible to document now. When Michel, Jr. was twenty-three years old, he married Emilie Chamberland. They traveled all the way to L'Acadie, P.Q. to be married since there was no permanent priest in their own parish. It was a journey of seventy-five miles by horse and sleigh through the January snow drifts. After their marriage, they made their home on the Shun Pike Road in Keeseville.

Antoine Paulint married Ursule Dagenais a short time after the Bourgeois' marriage and settled just across the mountain in the Port Douglas region. Michel drew his living from his land and the lake that bordered it. In the summer there were fish and in the winter there were pelts to harvest.

The move to Keeseville not only separated Michel and Emilie Bourgeois from their families, but it also produced another change. It is not clear why the Bourgeois family changed their name except that it seems to have happened to many of the French Canadian families generally. From the generation of Michel and Emilie down, the Bourgeois family now used the surname of Blaise. Similarly, the Paulints now became the Poulins (often Poland).

Michel Bourgeois was a rather colorful character in the small community of Keeseville. In the winter he sported a full length beaver coat that was the envy of all who knew him. It is a family tradition that the pelts were his own and his wife was the maker of the coat. The coat, alas, was also the cause of his death when, in 1893, at the age of 88, he was crossing the lake in a cutter when his horse broke through the ice. A grandson who was with him managed to get to solid ice and when he tried to help his grandfather out, he found that the coat had become soaked with water and consequently

Michel drowned.

Joseph Bougeois was one of the nine children born to Michel and Emilie. He married a native American named Genivieve L'Ecuyer. Both Joseph and Genivieve had a reputation for hard work and scrupulous honesty. Joseph made his living as a teamster and his team, among others, hauled the dressed stone from the train station at Port Kent to build the French Catholic church that graced the top of Main Street hill. It was in this same church that the succeeding generations of the Blaises and the Poulins were baptised, married and committed back to the soil.

Antoine Poulin's son, David, and his grandson, Moses, lived and raised their families on the same piece of land that he had first come to live on in Port Douglas. Around 1880, two of Moses' sons were operating a still on a nearby mountain and supplying Irish immigrant railroad workers with their homemade liquor. The Irish laborers were brought to the area by the New York-Montreal Railroad construction. Shortly after the railroad proper was finished, a small spur line from Port Kent to Keeseville was built. This tiny line that connected Keeseville to the main line station was evidence of the prosperity that was being enjoyed by the village.

John took his father's place as a local freight mover and by 1900 when he married Edith Charbonneau, he was well established. He and his wife moved to a house in the southern end of the town and proceeded to fill it with children. Their first daughter was born in 1909 and her generation was the first to be literate for almost two centuries. She and her brothers and sisters attended a tiny schoolhouse down the road from their home. John's mother lived with them after the death of her husband in 1912 and so was a strong influence on her grandchildren in their growing years.

Several events of the 1920s helped to shape the lives of the people who were to become my grandparents. At midnight on the 16th of January in 1920, Prohibition came into effect. As young men, the Poulin boys had knowledge of the distilling of liquor. It has been said that they made use of this knowledge to get into the trade. With Prohibition, the production, sale and transport of bootleg whiskey became a highly lucrative albeit illegal means of making a living. Consequently, the Poulin boys' children spent their teens in close proximity to the business of supplying bootleg whiskey to those who could afford to pay for the service.

The Twenties certainly "roared" in the Adirondacks. The High Peaks region reverberated with the sound of the engines of the bootleggers pursuing their calling and the customs officers in pursuit of them. Outlying farms became the gathering places and makeshift garages for the young men whose mechanical expertise kept them one jump ahead of the law. The sheer excitement of the chase and the lure of "easy" money seduced many into the game.

The 1930s had a sobering effect both literally and figuratively. The stockmarket crash laid waste the American economy and plunged it into an era of suffering and deprivation. The economic base of the Champlain Valley had been eroding for some time. Prior to the 1850s, the primary industries had been lumbering and iron ore. In the boom years after the Civil War, several industrial concerns had located within the river valleys in the basin. Paper, textiles and iron products were among the different manufacturing businesses. With the turn of the century, however, new energy resources were being discovered and replacing the need for hydro power. These factors coupled with the railroads replacing the lake traffic as the main transportation dimmed the area's viability as a commercial or an industrial hub and took the employment with it.

Through sheer hard work and perseverance, my grandparents managed to survive the hardships of the Depression Era and raise their seven children to adulthood. As the product of this last generation, I know an admiration and gratitude for the traditions my family has bequeathed to me, and hope to give to my own children. Across the centuries, strong family traditions have been cherished and remembered by these people. The women as well as the men were, of a necessity, strong and enduring. The mutual bonds of kinship and support coupled with their religious commitments created family units that have held together under the most adverse of situations and maintained a solid base from which they conducted their lives.

Susan Poland Ouellette and her family live near Keeseville, NY. She is a student at SUNY Plattsburgh and is a partner in an antique shop in Keeseville. This paper was originally written for a class at the college.

CLINTON PRISON AT DANNEMORA

by Betty Baldwin

During the humanitarian movements of the early 1830s concern grew for better health care, educational facilities, temperance, abolition of slavery, and religious tolerance. As older Calvinistic belief in the depravity of man was displaced by enlightened views of redemption, it appeared that reforms could also be accomplished through the penitence of criminals. It is not surprising that the word "penitentiary" came into usage during those years. The rapid growth of cities along the eastern seaboard brought an increase in crime, but where should these offenders be kept? There had been small need for places of long imprisonment when felonies had been avenged by immediate whipping, mutilation, banishment or hanging. Philadelphia and Boston had long maintained prison societies working to redeem sinners (prisoners) through religion and strict discipline. The growing population of New York necessitated state action, and a law passed in 1816 provided for two prisons.

Auburn prison was originally designed to hold inmates in the older congregate system, and the tiny individual cells had been added after construction began. Sing Sing, also called Mt. Pleasant prison, was constructed some ten years later as a much larger institution intended to house 1,000 inmates. Both prisons were meant to be self-supporting, and were for a few years. Auburn maintained a number of small workshops, and the marble quarries near Sing Sing furnished material for New York City's growing industries. Shackled prisoners from Auburn had formed the main labor force for the construction of Sing Sing in 1825, a pattern that was repeated in 1845 for the building of New York's third prison.

The need for this third prison was evident by the late 1830s. In order to satisfy sparring political demands, create a new prison, restrict the variety of prison occupations and limit their competition with private enterprise, the state legislature specified in 1842 that mining and smelting of metal ore by convict labor would be permitted.

In that same year Ransom Cook of Saratoga Springs was appointed commissioner to evaluate a site and lay plans for the undertaking. Iron was already being produced in and around the Saranac River near the places that Cook investigated, and a number of prominent state politicians were listed as proponents of both the prison and iron production. A prison in the vicinity might prove an answer for all the concerns, if built with specific restriction on the type of manufacturing. Downstate officials would welcome the removal of prisoners from their environs and North Country people would gladly absorb a new enterprise.

Forges had been built in the Adirondacks and along the Saranac for some time. Over the years much of the land on which the new prison would be built ended up in the hands of St. John B. L. Skinner, F.L.C. Sailly, and Charles W. Averill.

Ransom Cook had already made a tentative site selection and in the autumn of 1844 Governor William C. Bouck and State Comptroller Azariah Flagg headed a group which came to Clinton County to lend support for the project. The intense local interest was recorded in a letter from Elizabeth Ketchum Swetland to her son-in-law, Henry Livingston Webb, written on October 27, 1844:

> I have a chance to send this by Mr. Flagg who I have not seen. Had I been well Mr. Swetland would have asked him and some of the other gents here and the Gov. too. I presume the Locos have not invited him to their houses...I understand their steam machine answers all expectations at the Skinner and Averill ore bed, and the Forge. Whether they will now settle the question as to the place where the State Prison is to be I much doubt, but it would be a fine thing for our place if they settled it at the Skinner bed--but the Keeseville people are striving hard.

Azariah Flagg, formerly editor of the Plattsburgh *Republican*, had also been an Assemblyman and Secretary of State. His influence, along with intensive lobbying and support from many respected North Country politicians such as Silas Wright and Julius Hubbell, led the Legislature to pass an act in 1844 to establish a prison

> for the purpose of employing...State prison convicts in mining, and the manufacture of iron; together with the manufacture of such articles from iron as are principally imported from foreign countries. Such prison shall be...called by the name of the county in which it may be located.

There was no question as to where that would be. The first appropriation was passed on May 1 setting forth $30,000 for the prison, with $17,500 to be paid for the mine, 200 acres of land, and water rights on the Saranac. Most of the land was then owned by Skinner who was said to have given the name Dannemora to the area after a mining region near Uppsala in Sweden. For a short time, political feuds were set aside as the new venture was hailed as one which would spread prosperity over the land. The *Republican* proclaimed: "Farmers join with mechanics in their rejoicing at the passage of the new bill."

When construction was started at Clinton, there were some 1600 men and women confined in New York state institutions of all types. Their expense to the state was about $65,000. In hard times, with a slow economy, it was still expected that the new prison would be self-supporting and even show a profit. The structures were to be built in a modified T configuration around a hollow square. The isolated location was thought to be a deterrent to escape; wooden pickets were erected rather than more permanent and costly yard enclosures, with provisions to include the mine entrance. There are many accounts of the hazardous weather during the snowy months when Cook and his small work crew managed to erect temporary shelter for the incoming prisoners who were to do the actual prison construction. Mr. Cook personally selected fifty of the strongest-appearing prisoners from Sing Sing for the long trip north. After delivering the first contingent, Cook then went to Auburn for forty-five more able-bodied men to join the work force at Clinton.

The hardships encountered during the first years of constructing the prison cannot be exaggerated. By the spring of 1845, shortly before the first prisoners arrived, a rough barracks had been built and there were only twelve guards along with one cannon (to be used in emergency to signal escapes). Cook had figured that between 300 and 500 prisoners would be the most efficient number the institution could house, and 504 cells were originally planned. It was soon apparent that there would be no more

Ransom Cook of Saratoga Springs, the key figure in locating and constructing Clinton Prison, which he served as its first warden.

room in the current facility. By June of 1845 the papers reported that the new village of Dannemora growing around the prison was booming, with some twenty new buildings, two hotels, and a storekeeper attracting customers by advertising merchandise for sale on a cash basis, not "store pay."

Cook was a visionary, concerned about the well-being of the inmates, but not practical or efficient in the daily bureaucracy of a large institution. Employing the men on Sundays and giving them tobacco rations nettled the religious leaders of the community; he was accused of mismanagement and nepotism. In an economy move, the Legislature cut funds which limited the already small efforts in the mine. When the Whigs came to power in 1847-48, Cook was replaced as Agent and Warden by George Throop, setting a precedent that would be followed for many years as the prison grew into a political fiefdom. In Albany there were rumblings that the entire prison project should be abandoned before any more money was poured into what was sure to be a financial disaster.

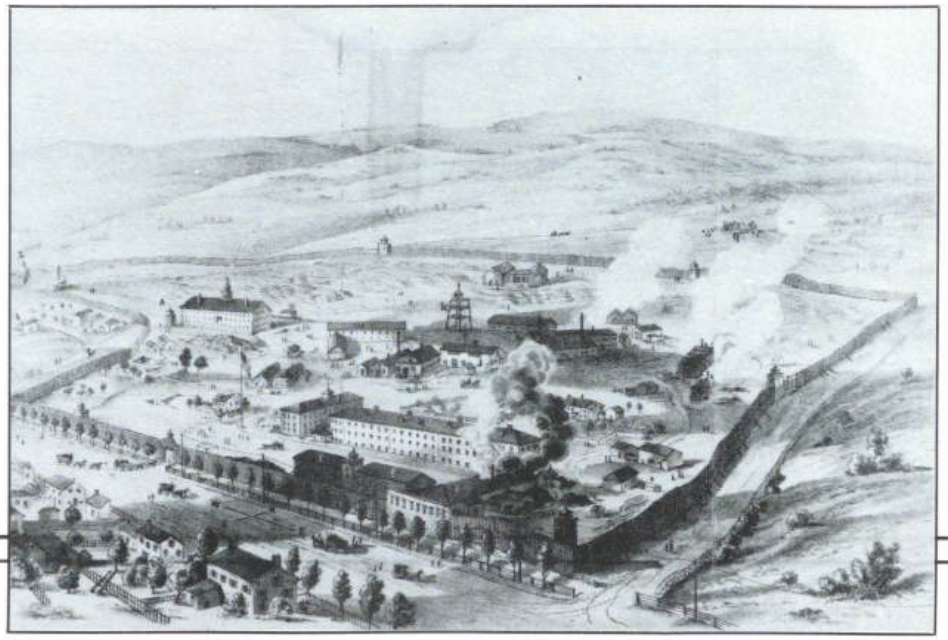
The Whig party controlled the governor's office from 1847 through 1852, but subsequent years brought frequent changes of political affiliation and fiscal policy. As early as 1849, an attempt to close the prison had failed in the Legislature, and succeeding governors faced a continuing problem of putting the prison on a paying basis. Despite early predictions, iron products were not manufactured at the prison during the first two decades, and the ore mined was sold on an already depressed market. Attempts to bring in private operators led to years of dissatisfaction, debts, and litigation on all sides. The number of convicts and the types of work see-sawed back and forth under different legislative mandates. In 1852 Governor Hunt sought more prisoners to replace those transferred in earlier economy moves. Convicts were returned from Auburn the following year when Governor Horatio Seymour advocated setting up small workshops that could then be established for a few new trades, mostly coopering, tailoring, and shoemaking done under a limited contract system.

It was difficult to convince many officials that iron could not be made to pay. In 1862 Governor Edwin D. Morgan appointed Amos Pilsbury to investigate every facet of the industry and make recommendations for the future. Pilsbury found the ironmaking activities unsuitable from a penological viewpoint, difficult both for prisoners and officials. He was particularly concerned about night work and the large unguarded areas. He found the occupation of prisoners in this work totally without value, and recommended that nail-making be stopped.

There were also many complaints about the poor quality of some of the materials produced at the prison, particularly the nails, generally called "Empire nails." This product was sold in competition with a nearby rival. A local newspaper commented:

> Take a twenty penny or a twelve-penny nail, manufactured at Clinton Prison, and an equal number of nails of same size manufactured by J. & J. Rogers; drive them into an oak plank and watch the result...The other nails will not split--the prison nails will...By attending more to the...(nail production) and less to politics and speculations...this prison can be made to pay the State a profit.

Apparently the advice was never taken and certainly the prediction never came to pass.



A bird's-eye view of Clinton Prison in 1869, showing the original wooden pickets used to enclose the extensive area.

Attempts to find products that could be made under various state restrictions continued for about eight years more. By 1877, ironmaking was totally abandoned at Clinton Prison, a failure both economically and sociologically, an era entitled by one prison historian, "Fiasco in the Adirondacks."

Attention again turned to the expansion of small shops for various trades. As the prison population continued to grow, it was imperative to keep the men busy. By learning the rudiments of various trades while behind bars, the men would have a better chance of obtaining a job when they were released. New York had passed its first contract labor law pertaining to prisons in 1817. In general, labor systems evolved into contract and piece-price leasing of the convicts, work on public projects, and public account or state use. By 1894 prison industries operated under the state-use system permitting sale of goods only to institutions of the state and its political subdivisions.

Industries within Clinton Prison produced a wide variety of goods by the turn of the century. In one shop, fifteen convicts made straw door mats. The printing office turned out paper boxes as well as routine commercial office forms. More than 100 men were employed in the large knitting shop, and forty more were engaged in making all types of cans, pails, and cups in the tin workshop. From the basket-making area came many types of straw and lathe products, and forty more men were busy in the carpenter shop. In a nearby shed many cut stone for the new hospital.

All the activities resulted in products either used at Clinton Prison or sold to other state institutions. The particular industries varied from prison to prison depending on what was mandated by the Legislature, how much equipment was available at each institution, and the types of prisoners available. By 1904, the largest industry at Clinton was towel-making using hand looms, work in which 124 convicts were then engaged. Some forty-eight prisoners that year were cutting stone for the new wing of the Dannemora State Hospital and fifty-seven were employed on the water and sewage system. In the annual report for that year, only seven prisoners were listed as idle; this did not include the 230-250 men classed an invalids in the hospital.

Prisoners had been used for years for road work near the prison. They had built the long-needed plank road from the prison to the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain railroad. Again there were complaints that they were doing work for private enterprises that should employ local people. Prisoners were used so extensively that the Legislature passed a law limiting the number of convicts who could be employed in road work and also restricting such work to a thirty-mile radius of the prison. In later years the prison maintained work camps at Altona, Ellenburg Depot, Schuyler Falls, Chateaugay Lake, and one just north of the prison. In times when the prison was badly overcrowded and the lack of industrial activities had idled most of the prisoners, the men apparently welcomed the chance to be outside.

One of the most welcome events of these years began in June 1878 with sixty inmates working on the new railroad from Dannemora to Plattsburgh, a distance of some seventeen miles. The narrow-gauge railroad had three rails on the section between Plattsburgh and Cadyville; it was not changed to standard gauge until 1902. In the beginning, the train took six hours to travel the distance to Plattsburgh; the track was said to be the steepest incline on a branch line east of the Rockies. The state soon decided it could not properly maintain the line and in 1881 transferred it to the Chateaugay Railroad.

The prison doctor and the chaplain were undoubtedly closer to the inmates than were the officials. If they possessed strong personalities, they could also influence higher authorities or at least make them constantly aware of convicts' needs. It should be remembered that during the 19th century neither position carried quite the same respect and weight that it acquired in later years. Most ministers barely eked out a living and depended upon whatever small income their followers might offer. Physicians at times fared little better, although by the end of the 1800s formal education and licensing requirements had weeded out many of the lesser qualified. Even so, appointment as official chaplain or physician was accompanied by a level of respect and the assurance of somewhat more financial stability.

Dr. Jabez Fitch, who had lived and practised near Mooers for many years, moved to Dannemora in 1855 when he was appointed prison physician for Warden and Agent Andrew Hull, serving more than nine years during his first

tenure and a few months during the early 1870s. Dr. Frank Hopkins of Keeseville was appointed in January 1873 until the same month in 1876, forced out by political change. Dr. J.V. Lansing held the post for a number of years in the 1870s, and Dr. David S. Kellogg, a well-known and respected local doctor, was prison physician in the 1880s. These doctors also visited the ill and infirm of surrounding communities, frequently being the only doctor within miles. Both Dr. Kellogg and Dr. Hopkins kept journals and exchanged numerous letters with family and colleagues. Through them some of the hardships of daily life as well as the uncertainties of their appointments can be seen. Dr. Hopkins had left his family in Keeseville while he temporarily resided at the prison. In supporting two residences, he was concerned over constant rumors that his job might be in jeopardy.

On January 16, 1874 he wrote his family: "I think some move has been made by certain parties to have me removed...but so far with very little prospect of success." This proved to be only gossip, and a week later he reported: "The inspectors have come and gone and I have received no intimation of being discharged." Apparently Dr. Hopkins' appointment had been with the understanding that his services would be available at all times. When he left to visit his family, he was responsible for securing a standby doctor's promise to be on call, and in his correspondence often mentioned the "fear I would be in trouble" if an emergency arose in his absence.

During the early years of the prison's operation, the strong bodies of the convicts originally selected by Ransom Cook had posed few problems for the prison doctors. However, the years of working in the mines produced ailments and breakdowns among the prisoners. Additionally, what became known as "consumptive cases" were transferred to Clinton from Auburn and Sing Sing. Medical science recognized that the poor diet and lack of cell ventilation were contributing causes, and the annual reports of the prison doctors always reminded higher officials of these needs. The physicians were frequently in disagreement with guards and keepers over what constituted just punishment. Their constant complaints about the "shower bath" treatment led to the official banning of it by the Legislature in 1868. The "dark cell" supposedly remained the most severe form of punishment allowed. The prison doctor was required to examine each convict held in that form of isolation cell daily, to ensure his safe survival. Dr. Hopkins cited one inmate under his care who had finally been released from that type of cell after twenty-two days.

Dr. J.B. Ransom had the distinction of being the prison physician for some thirty years. Under his able administration, the medical facilities grew to be the most respected in state institutions. He trained two or three convicts as assistant nurses in manning the operating room, a surgery ward, and another ward for the elderly infirm. Before the construction of the main hospital, a pulmonary ward was also established in another section of the existing building.

By 1894 there was growing concern over the high incidence of tuberculosis. Local people feared it was in some way caused by the prison or brought in by "outsiders." A letter printed in the *Republican* on March 24 of that year complained that deaths from tuberculosis at the prison had been 80% of all fatalities there. In defending those figures, Dr. Ransom proved statistically that compared with the outside population the prison deaths were not unusual. In fact, the rate at Clinton Prison was the lowest of the three state institutions: 2.57% at Sing Sing, 4.5% at Auburn, and 1.72% at Clinton. Again he asked for improvement in ventilation and the systematic early isolation of tuberculosis patients. Three years later, the annual report of the medical department showed that five out of the six convicts who had died the past year at Clinton were transfers from other prisons, housed there less than a year. The next year, 1898, the prison death rate was 3.65 per 1,000 inmates, the lowest of any type of state institution.

The prison doctor was also in charge of the dental and optical care of the inmates. In 1897, four steel isolation cells were constructed to hold convicts for mental observation. A State Mental Hospital had been approved for adjacent land, but funding delayed its completion for many years.

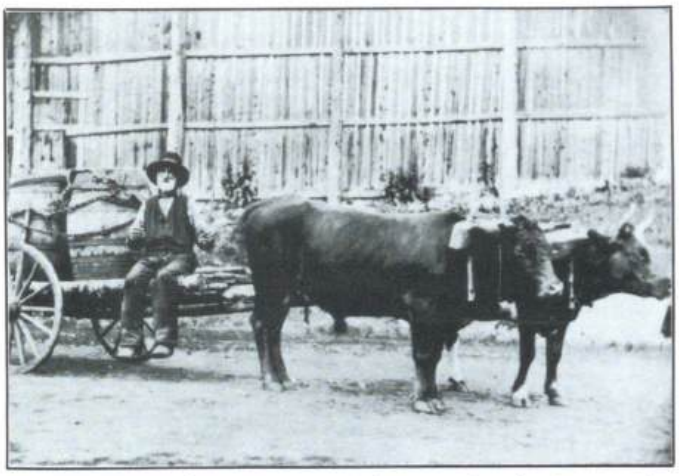
Religious instruction and Bible study had been considered mandatory for the possible redemption of the convicts. Bibles and religious tracts were often distributed in the prisons even though a large percentage of the men were illiterate. It was part of the duties of the chaplain to assure that the inmates received solace to

better their souls if not their bodies. Many of the early chaplains were of the Congregational, Episcopal, and Presbyterian faiths, and their duties carried them to a number of communities. With prisoners hard at work most of their waking hours, there was little need for the presence of a chaplain. Ashabel Parmalee, a Congregational minister for a number of years at Malone, told of serving as chaplain for "3 years and 11 weeks." The Rev. Roswell Pettibone was official chaplain from 1852 to 1860, and the Rev. J.W. McIlwaine was still serving when Duane Hurd compiled his history in 1880.

According to village and prison records, Catholic mass was started in 1854, usually conducted by the priest at Dannemora or from a nearby village--sometimes Father Chauvin, Father Claude Sallaz or one of his assistants. For many years, both village and prison responded to the care of Father Belanger, who had come to the area about 1883. A Catholic mass and later a Jewish service were held one weekend monthly with Protestant services on three Sundays. The chaplain was in charge of regular services, Sabbath School, the choir when one was formed, and most forms of entertainment, recreation, or education.

In the ever-crowded prison, there was little room for a chapel or school rooms. Each available space usually served multiple purposes. As early as 1847, Ransom Cook attempted to start a rudimentary night school when a lack of funds had left prisoners with idle time. When mining was resumed full-time, all able-bodied inmates worked shifts which kept regular school attendance out of the question. The only instruction attempted was rudimentary English, writing, and possibly "figuring" in rare instances. A library had been established by legislative act in 1846 with an appropriation of $300. Among the titles selected were *Ancient and Modern Egypt, Abercombie on the Intellectual Powers, Animal Mechanism,* Combe's *Principles of Physiology.* It was hoped that such material would provide a valuable outlet for prisoners. According to the optimistic Ransom Cook: "when he rises from the perusal of an interesting book, he comes from his cell with a cheerful countenance, and resumes his labors with alacrity." Not only was the content of these books undoubtedly incomprehensible to the prisoners, but the lighting in their cells ranged from poor to nonexistent.

For the first decades, the chaplain visited each man in his individual cell, a system which allowed a bare few minutes with each person. It was not until 1889 that a regular night school was organized with competent teachers. At times when rooms were available, the men were marched at night, some fifty at a time, to makeshift school rooms. According to the official report of 1897, there were 150 men then enrolled in the night school, but again instruction was given within each cell. Stenography, typing, and rudimentary forms of office work were added in the later years.

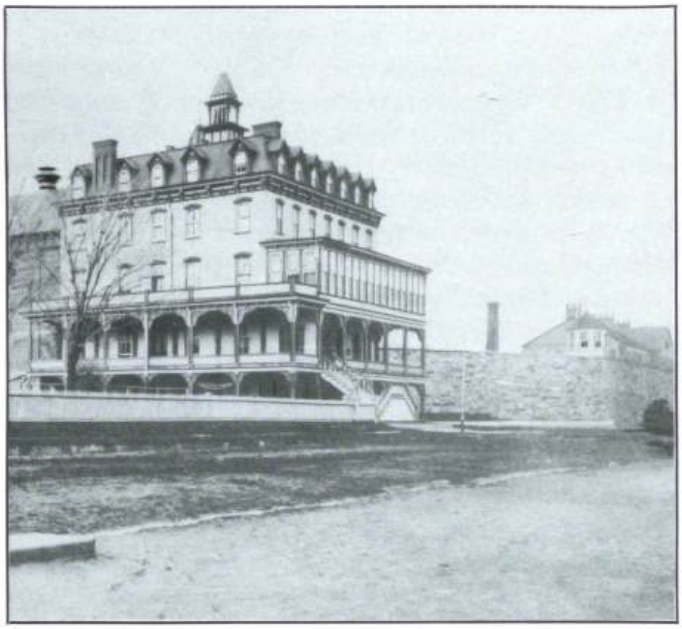


Water wagon and oxen in front of the original picket fence at the prison.

In the 1890s, a Plattsburgh newspaper printed a series of articles about daily life at the prison and described the routine followed when new prisoners arrived. They were taken to the guard room and the convicts thoroughly searched, with all money and personal articles put in safekeeping before they were marched to the hall keeper and given a number. Until uniforms changed after October 1904, new prisoners were taken to the state shop and issued their striped suit and to the laundry to be provided with underwear and outside shirt. At the main bathroom they were administered a sound scrubbing, apparently a new experience for many of them. Next they were taken to a clerk where each number and name were entered on the prison books. For some of the men, this might be the last time to hear their given names spoken; from now on, each became simply a number.

The prison physician then questioned each man about his medical history and determined his fitness for work. The chaplain met each prisoner, asked a few questions, learned if he

could read and write or if he had any particular trade or training. At the Correspondence Department each name and number appeared again, along with the next-of-kin. The convict was read a paper permitting authorities to open and read any mail received and he was warned that any mail containing material or language considered inflammatory or inciting would be confiscated. He was not forced to sign this waiver but would receive no mail at all if he declined. Any letter he wrote would also be open for inspection and he was not allowed to correspond with ex-convicts. Until 1874, prisoners were allowed to write only one letter every three months; the chaplain often assisted those who could not write. Letters received were distributed to the men in the cells each Saturday night, then collected again on Monday morning and kept in the chaplain's office until the convict was discharged.



Warden's house and the new stone wall which replaced wooden pickets.

After the mail station the new men were taken to the Bertillon department where each was stripped, weighed, measured and carefully examined for distinguishing marks or scars before being photographed front and side. It was generally believed that there were "criminal types." As one local newspaper explained: "Craniology is now of importance...Criminals have primitive skulls and are undeveloped in intellect." His hair was cut in the fashion of all prisoners, head partially shaved. Each inmate was issued a slice of yellow soap, a small square of towelling, toothbrush and powder, a box of matches and a twist of state tobacco--considered by many outsiders to be an unnecessary indulgence but which Ransom Cook had called "better than many lashes."

In winter, prisoners were allowed to let their hair grow, but from April until November it must be clipped close to the head. For efficiency a shaving brigade of four convicts went from building to building carrying all necessary equipment and accomplished the business on the spot. There was no running water in the cells, but there was a separate bath house with facilities for fifty men at a time. Each prisoner was required to take a bath every two weeks. The large open bathroom had no stalls or partitions. In annual reports, inspectors asked repeatedly that doors or screens be installed to give the men some measure of privacy.

First-time prisoners had to adjust to the notorious lock-step started at Auburn years before to move groups of shackled convicts through a large area. In a row, right hand on the shoulder of the man in front, never looking up, the convict moved one foot ahead and then dragged the other to meet it. This system was continued until the turn of the century.

For convicts who were able to work, and during the times that some type of employment was available, days were divided into segments ordered by the various bells and whistles. They were wakened at 6 a.m. by three long whistle blasts (at which every dog in Dannemora was said to howl). Breakfast consisted of bread, coffee and hash, no butter, milk, or sugar. They were then marched to various shops for several hours' work. Again they marched back to their cells before the main meal, known as dinner, which ordinarily contained some type of vegetable stew with meat and bread. On Sundays, rice pudding was often added. Weekdays there was more work until 4 p.m., when the march back to the cells began. On the return, they were handed as much bread as they wanted along with a cup of tea. This was their supper which they ate alone in their cells and where they remained until the next morning whistle.

During the first forty-five years of prison operation, the prisoners had eaten together in the mess hall for their main meal. Total silence had earlier been the rule but in later years

conversation was allowed. The mess hall was destroyed during the disastrous fire in 1890; as a result, food had to be taken to individual cells for all meals. Sundays became particularly unpleasant for the men. Convicts had always been locked in at Sing Sing from 4:30 Saturday afternoon until Monday morning, and a similar pattern was followed at Clinton. As a result, Monday mornings often saw short tempers and outbreaks of violence. After a number of years, the Commissioners recommended that hot tea or coffee be distributed to convicts on Sunday afternoon. A new dining hall was opened in 1906 but it was not until 1913 that regular Sunday dinner was served there to prisoners.

The first recorded escape occurred during the days that Ransom Cook travelled to Auburn to bring back a group of convicts. The newspapers often carried ads for their return. In August of 1845 this notice appeared:

> A convict by the name of Samuel Judd escaped from Clinton prison on the 2nd inst. A reward of $50 is offered for his apprehension. The scamp was a fool for going, his term of service having nearly expired; the ungrateful fellow abused confidence (as other folks have done on a large scale) and sneaked off...He ought to be ashamed of himself.

In a large prison area, with prisoners working at night and for many years only a picket to scale, attempts were not unexpected. Although the men were usually caught within a short time, the 1869 annual report showed that thirteen prisoners had escaped during that year, ten of them during the month of August. For a few minutes or hours of freedom, there were usually eight to ten years added to the convicts' original sentences.

Guards, keepers, and civilian workers also suffered violence at the hands of the prisoners. The kitchen and hospital wards were often scenes of sudden and unprovoked assaults; prisoners at times helped there and the many utensils and instruments easily became weapons. Guards supervising outside work crews were sometimes attacked with shovels or boards.

It was next to impossible to control the crimes of prisoner against prisoner or to identify the offender in many cases. If discipline had to be maintained, there had to be reprisals and punishment. Solitary confinement with only bread and water was the usual retaliation for minor rule infractions. However, this also took away the needed labor of the convict in the early days when there was work to be done. Physical punishment was usually inflicted for all serious offenses long after many of the practices had been officially banned, either by the warden or by state law.

Wooden watch tower from which disturbances and escapes could hopefully be detected.

Punishments reported to be in frequent use at Clinton were the water cure, the humming bird (electric shocks), the paddle, wooden horse, and the dark or isolation cells sometimes called the Klondike. Penology texts print horrible and graphic descriptions of what too often became torture; their existence was usually denied by officials. Clinton Prison from the beginning held more than its share of hardened and incorrigible prisoners. Many of the complaints came from convicts who had been transferred there from other institutions.

Prominent citizens of the area as well as state officials were frequently invited to the prison for holiday celebrations. The *Republican* printed a recollection of Christmas dinner in 1891. Each prisoner had been given a bright red neckerchief provided by the Deputy Warden. The chapel held only about 500 men, which meant that some of the total of 904 prisoners remained locked in their cells during the occasion. A lengthy program was given under the direction of the chaplain with music by the prison orchestra and choir. That year the orchestra consisted of eleven instruments and there were twenty-two men in the choir (no third-term inmates were

allowed to join). The music was frequently interrupted by applause by the inmate-audience, who also booed when they thought the occasion warranted. As they left the hall, each convict was given "a milk oyster stew in a two-quart basin." Before being locked in their cells for the rest of the holiday, they also received rations of gingerbread cake, bread, butter, apples and three cigars each. The paper commented on the fine management of the prison and its colorful Christmas decorations, but pointed out of the need for a larger chapel.

The first electrocution under New York state law occurred at Auburn Prison on August 6, 1890. This new system of capital punishment was advocated as a more humane method of final disposal of the criminal, although there was wide disagreement by expert technicians as to how quickly death seized the condemned. The Utica *Globe* reported the grisly scene in anger:

> Manufactured lightning to take the place of the hangman's rope for dispatching of condemned murderers cannot be said to be satisfactory...The men who witnessed the horrible scene...in the death chamber...never wish to be present at another such exhibition.

The first person sentenced to die at Clinton Prison was a local man whose sentence was commuted. The first convict executed was from Warren County. From the autumn of 1892 until the last use of the chair at Clinton in 1913, a total of twenty-six men suffered the same fate. From then on, all electrocutions were held at Sing Sing.

The state issued guidelines concerning the number and type of witnesses who must be present at the execution and the procedures to be followed after the death. At Clinton the electrocutions were at first scheduled for Tuesday mornings shortly before noon, since other power consumption was low at this time. Other prisoners, particularly those working in the power house, strongly objected; executions were changed to early morning hours before the main body of prisoners was awake. In the village large crowds gathered outside the prison on such days. Eating places reported a heavy increase in business. Many people, including officials and prominent citizens, deplored the entire process, secretly or openly, a debate continuing today.

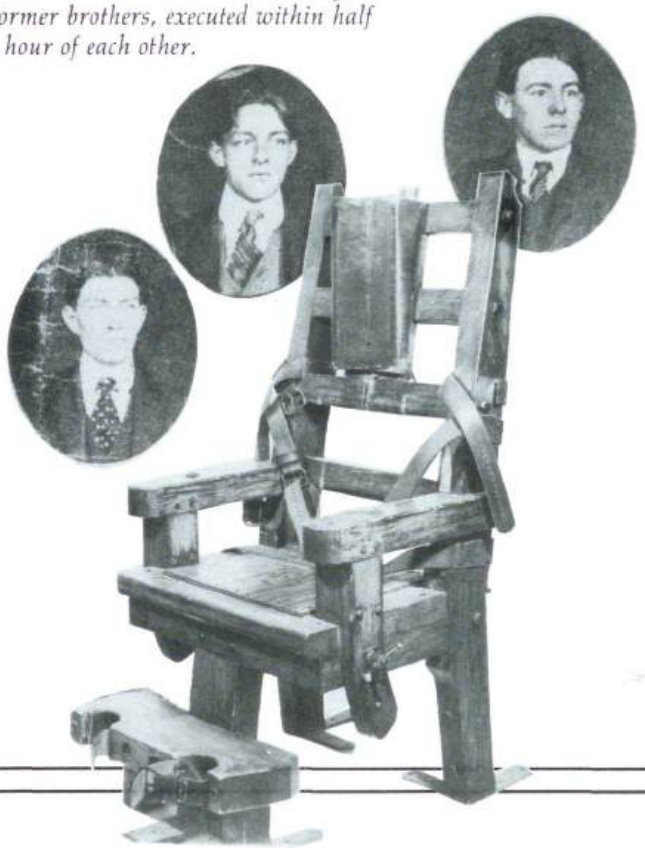
In the years before the first World War, Clinton Prison was known as the "control" of the state prison system. The most hardened criminals from all the other New York prisons were "excursioned" to Clinton, which was called the "bleakest spot in the north country." According to an official from Sing Sing:

> When I call a man into my office...and say: if you do that again you'll go to Clinton--it does more to control not only him but others...than anything else I can do.

A proposal had been made to house all the first-term men at Sing Sing, the second-termers at Auburn, and all the third-term convicts would go to Clinton. By 1899 there were 973 prisoners at Clinton, of whom 475 were first-termers, 92 were serving their second prison terms, 387 were third-term men. There were also nineteen convicts who were classed as incorrigible. New cell blocks had been built over the years, and the prison could then legally accommodate 1200 men. If the staff could be kept at full strength, there would be one guard and one keeper for each twenty-eight convicts.

From the time the prison was first planned, the selection of Warden and Agent became the right of the party in power. As time passed there were years when it assumed a semi-honorary position. One local paper complained that despite three recent Republican state governors

The electric chair used at Clinton Prison to electrocute 26 men between 1892 and 1913. Among them were the three Van Wormer brothers, executed within half an hour of each other.



in the 1800s there had not been a Republican appointed head of the prison. Albany was accused of favoring "cronies rather than local people." In 1876 the Malone *Palladium* voiced similar sentiments after a man from that village was an unsuccessful candidate for Warden.

The warden was often too busy to know or perhaps care to know the details of how the prison was run. The warden's first assistant became known as the principal keeper and he was actually in charge of day-to-day operation of the prison. As the place grew larger, enforcement of rules was often uneven, which led a local paper to declare:

> The same old war: Loose methods continue to prevail at Dannemora. A guard dismissed for drunkenness was related to the chief clerk in the Superintendent's office in Albany and allowed to return to duty...This was a bold and brazen violation of the civil service law and the superintendent's order to uphold Rule 9.

The first state civil service law was introduced by then Assemblyman Theodore Roosevelt and signed by Governor Grover Cleveland on May 16, 1883. It provided for open and competitive examinations of applicants, probation periods and merit promotion. However, from 1885 to 1898 the law was not strictly applied or enforced. New York had mandated a training program for prison guards, but those men who had already served a number of years were exempt from enrolling.

Before June 1, 1904 men classed as keepers received $900 yearly while those known as guards were paid $780 for duties said to be identical. A new salary scale was introduced in an effort to attract a better type of man who would remain longer by gaining compensation based on length of service. The new scale was $660 the first year, $740 the second, $820 the third, and $900 per annum for the remainder of service.

Females are rarely mentioned in early prison literature. According to the *Republican* in 1845, all females would be confined at Sing Sing, with a new prison later added for them at Auburn. In 1884 Lizzie Halliday from Sullivan County, a convicted murderess, was sent to Clinton to await scheduled execution that August. She was a small women but described as "very disorderly," creating many disturbances while held in the Plattsburgh jail. Space had to be created for her and matrons assigned to guard her at Clinton by temporarily converting a school room. In July her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment by Governor Flower and she was removed to Mattewan State Hospital.

No federal penal institutions were established until 1891. Violaters of federal laws were sent to the individual states. Even after the enactment of the law establishing three federal prisons, no money was appropriated to erect them. It was not until 1895 that the Department of Justice assumed operation of the military prison at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

By 1900 many forms of corporal punishment had been outlawed. The Eighth Amendment prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment was rarely invoked during the 19th century but in later years many of the barbaric practices earlier considered as routine had been ended in the northeast. The notorious strip cell at Clinton was ruled "to destroy completely the spirit and undermine the sanity of the prisoners." If the re-telling of stories from the early years brings unpleasant memories, one must be aware of changing attitudes about the value of human life and rights.

The lives of citizens of Dannemora have long been overshadowed by the prison walls. Particularly in the early years, all who lived there had ties to the prison. There are many instances of close cooperation between prison officials and town groups. Warden Walter Thayer may be best remembered for spurring the formation of the fire department following a number of disastrous fires. Baseball games at the prison are still remembered by older residents. The prison band was a welcome sight at many holiday occasions. Some ex-convicts remained in the general area upon their release, possibly for lack of a place to go. Some failed to make the adjustment to society and ended back "inside;" others became useful citizens. With stone walls replacing the pickets, the prisoners became more isolated from the world outside. By the end of the 19th century, there was little doubt that Clinton Prison had won its struggle to survive.

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A. MASON AND SONS, INC. A FAMILY LUMBER COMPANY 1883-1972

by
Virginia Mason Burdick
Albert L. Mason

In the 1880s Peru, Clinton County, New York was a thriving village of about three hundred inhabitants. It was pleasantly situated on the Little Ausable River which meandered down from the foothills of the Adirondack mountains through the village, under a three-arch stone bridge and over a dam on its way to Lake Champlain.

Peru had two churches, a school, post office, hotel, tannery, cheese factory, starch factory, sawmill, gristmill, a town pump surrounded by several stores, elm-shaded houses and a recently built railroad depot. The hamlet also had a new lumber company founded by Albert Mason. It would remain in his family for nearly a century.

Albert Mason was born in 1844 on his family's farm about three miles from the village. In 1867 he married Elizabeth Moore of Peru. Twelve years later, with their young sons George and Nathan, they moved into the village, where they had bought land, and built a house. Albert was a carpenter and at his sawmill at Goshen on the Little Ausable River just west of Peru he made beehives. He must have been a familiar sight as he drove his horse and wagon about the countryside peddling his wares.

About 1883 Albert Mason decided to move his beehive equipment to Peru village and start a lumber business. He leased a sawmill opposite the dam on the river near the north end of the bridge. About a quarter of a mile down the river he leased a stone starch factory built in 1836, a shop for his millwork, and land for lumber yards along the river.

The young carpenter's decision to progress from beehives to lumber mill took courage and foresight. He would have stiff competition nearby from Baker Brothers' lumber company of Plattsburgh, established in 1868. Baker's plant was located at the foot of Bridge Street beside the railroad and docks. Their yards covered more than six acres. They employed about fifty men. Albert also risked competition from sawmills on rivers nearby. This was the heyday of sawmills and they were active at Redford, Cadyville, Schuyler Falls and Lapham's Mills.

However, there were three factors in Albert's favor: the location of his plant, an abundance of manpower, and his plan to specialize in interior woodwork.

The infant lumber company was ideally located for the harvesting of native timber. It was within twenty miles of woodlots owned by farmers anxious for winter work. Teamsters clad in red and black plaid wool jackets and caps brought their own logs and Mason's on horse-drawn sleds to the north bank of the Little Ausable River in Peru just above Mason's sawmill. As the logs were unloaded, they rolled down the bank to the millpond. Here they remained on the ice until spring thaw when they were floated under the bridge to the sawmill. This proximity of logs to mill saved Albert Mason the cost and hazard of floating his logs down many miles of public waterways. Log jams in the spring were dangerous for the log drivers, and theft was common.

The company did not have the advantage of Lake Champlain docks nearby. However, it was

situated close to the Delaware and Hudson tracks and had the use of a siding for freight cars. By 1870 the Delaware and Hudson had put a line through from Plattsburgh and built a station at Peru.

As for labor, Albert Mason had no problem hiring capable men. He knew many of them and their families. During the ensuing years some of the early employees worked for second and third generation Masons. The most important factor in Albert's favor was his specialty in interior woodwork. It is possible that this area of his business helped him through his first rough years.

The year 1895 was a banner year for the Mason family. Twelve years after starting his lumber business on leased property, Albert Mason, with his sons George and Nathan, purchased the sawmill and land from Jehiel and Abbie White for $2,500. Their deed is dated January 1, 1895. The year Masons took possession of the sawmill Albert was fifty-one years old. George was twenty-eight and married. Nate was twenty-four and would soon take his bride, Eliza Signor, to spend the winter at the company's lumber camp and sawmill in the wilderness of Franklin County.

At the Mason home and destined to join their father's firm in due time were four more sons: Charles, age eleven, Edward, age nine, William, age six and Herbert, age four. Mrs. Albert Mason was surely a busy mother and housewife. In the 1892 census Albert Mason is listed as a manufacturer and Nathan as a carpenter. George's name was overlooked. Like the housewives of her time, Elizabeth Mason is listed as having no occupation.

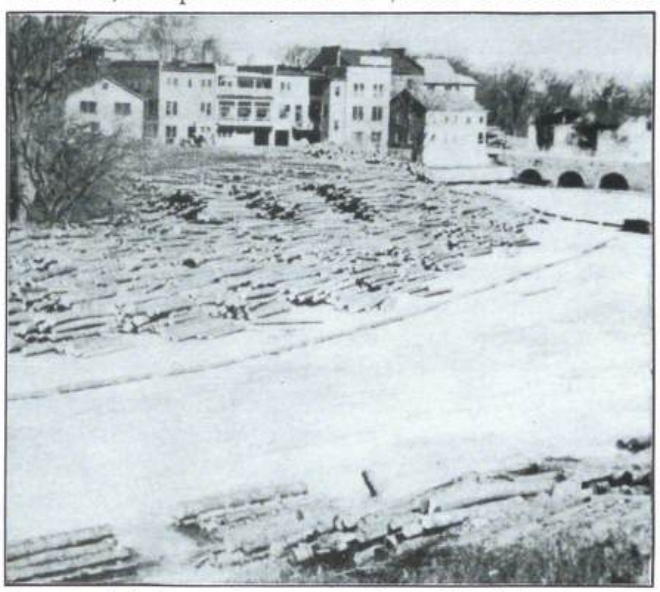
On February 7, 1903, Albert, George and Nathan purchased the remainder of the property they had leased. They paid George and Addie Heyworth $3,150 for the stone building, shop and land on both sides of the Little Ausable River. For twenty years Albert Mason had worked with his employees six days a week from seven o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night on leased property. Now he had the satisfaction of knowing that the firm he founded was entirely his and his sons'.

The earliest picture of Mason's, about 1890, shows a relatively modest mill. A horse and cart were used to transport sawdust from the sawmill to the shop's boiler room for fuel. Since sawdust was never dumped in the river, there was no pollution from the mill. The roof showed skylights, as well as barrels of water for fire protection.

A customer's bill from January 1897 through November 1899 reveals some interesting facts about Mason's products and prices. The bill heading states that A. Mason and Sons are "woodworkers and builders, manufacturers and dealers in rough and dressed lumber, sash, doors, blinds, mouldings, builder's hardware, glass, inside finish, stair work, columns, rails, balusters, brackets, frames." The following is a partial list of materials and prices on Mason's bill to Eugene Cart:

312 board feet hemlock	$4.36
2 hrs. planing and sawing	.80
6 hrs. Mr. Nash on lathe	1.80
37 ft. stair rail @12¢	4.44
21 ash balusters @12¢	2.52
making 1 sash	.75
3 doors 2'-8" x 6'-8" 1½"	6.75
1 inside lock set	.50
1 light of glass 24" x 40"	1.35
turning 5 posts	1.88
15 bundles of lathe	3.60
15 porcelain door knobs	1.50
3 cupboard catches	.12

On July 11, 1908 Mason's lumber company celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, with an article about its progress and a picture of the shop on the front page of the *Plattsburgh Republican*. When the account was written, the sawmill, shops and lumber yards covered more



Logs stacked during the winter on the millpond above Mason's mill. Peru's business district is in the background.

Mason's about 1908, when it celebrated its 25th anniversary. It had been enlarged and now showed some concrete walls for fire protection.

than nine acres. The shop had been enlarged, occupying 11,500 square feet of floor space. The storerooms covered 15,500 square feet of floor space.

The machines produced everything from building materials to china closets and bookcases. Masons had their own steam power, electricity and fire protection. The steam sawmills at Peru, Jay in Essex County and Duane in Franklin County yearly produced about "three million feet of sawed lumber, besides quantities of lath and shingles." They also imported southern and western woods for their finish work.

The firm employed "eighty-five men in the summer and two hundred men and fifty teams in the winter, the average monthly payroll being $3,500." The reporter attributed the firm's success to the fact that "every operation from the rough log to the finished product is all performed in its own mills...under the supervision of some member of the firm."

In March 1911 Charles Mason wrote to his wife on company stationery. The heading indicated that Charles and Ed were now partners in the firm. The following excerpts from Charles' letter provide insight into family and business affairs:

> Father and his two teams have been drawing logs from the Weston wood lot. They try to make two trips some days and it makes them late. He is also drawing wood from the Tanner lot [five miles west of Peru]. The millpond [Little Ausable River] is covered with logs from the bridge to Muskrat Bay [about a quarter of a mile].
>
> Will is not yet back at school [Albany Business College]. This week he has been up at our sawmill at Ausable Forks shipping lumber...When he gets out of school we will take him in the office for shipping clerk.
>
> Father went to Chazy yesterday and went all over the Miner farm. Mr. Miner ordered a lot of mahogany and quartered oak doors. I feel a little safer about holding their business.
>
> I think father also stopped and bought a monument that we have talked of. He is very well and so is Mother.

In January 1912 Albert Mason became seriously ill and died in April at the age of sixty-eight. He was buried in God's Acre Cemetery in Peru in front of the monument he and his son Charles had "talked of." Seven years later Charles was buried beside his father. While in Buffalo to speak before a lumberman's convention, he contracted influenza and died at his home shortly after his thirty-fifth birthday.

Albert Mason's will directed that funds in his estate provide for the education of his sons, Will

and Herbert. George, the oldest son, succeeded his father as president of A. Mason and Sons. As soon as Will graduated from Albany Business College and Herbert from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, they became partners in the firm.

In 1916 the Mason brothers opened an outlet in Plattsburgh, a store, warehouse and lumber yard, under Herbert's supervision. Herbert and his bride, Bess Clark of Peru, started housekeeping in an apartment above Mason's store on Pine Street.

As the Christmas season of 1916 approached, Mason's made plans to present its employees with a bonus. The company's estimate sheets list the names of fifty-six employees, their weekly wage and bonus. Listed below are nine employees whose work represents typical jobs at the plant. Henry Hebert, an employee of Mason's for forty-two years, provided the job descriptions.

Employee	Type of Work	Weekly Wage	Bonus
Frank Meigs	draftsman	$18.00	$36.00
Cyril Sharron	supervised sash, screens, doors	17.50	35.00
Alphonse Hebert	stair maker	16.50	33.00
Edward Hart	moulder operator	13.50	27.00
Fred Russell	yard foreman	12.00	24.00
John McCann	glazier	12.00	24.00
Francis McGee	cut rough lumber	8.00	16.00
Hazel Parsons	stenographer	8.00	16.00
Earl Bosley	made cabinets	5.00	10.00

An index of Mason's special millwork from 1908 to 1926 records their customers' names and orders. The few items listed below reflect the variety of their millwork and the activities and interests of north country people.

Customer	Millwork
Homeowners	colonnades, mantles, stairwork, beam ceilings, china closets, bookcases, kitchen cabinets, breakfast room set, buffet, dining room trim, paneled wainscot, porchwork with columns, doors, sash, triplet windows, shutters, gable brackets
Stores	store front, counters, showcases, shelves, sashes, doors
R. C. churches at Coopersville, Cadyville, Westport	altar rails, Gothic windows and doors
Witherill Hotel and Westport Inn	hat rack, mantle, sign board beams, columns
W. H. Miner, Chazy	school bench, mantle powerhouse, pumphouse, birdhouse, dairy and ice machine building, sideboard, veneered door
Lozier Motor Car Company	sawtooth roof
Miscellaneous	greenhouse, stormhouse, schoolhouse, bungalows, cottages, garages, silo doors, roof trusses, fire escapes, auto trunk racks, flour bins, feed hoppers for the Fox Farm at Schuyler Falls

By the 1920s Albert Mason's grandchildren were a familiar sight at the plant. When quite young, Charles' daughter and Ed's daughters and son liked to go to the boiler room and pull the cord for the whistle to blow at noon and five o'clock. As they grew older, they played hide and seek in the storage rooms of the old stone building. In the winter they raced their sleds down Mason's hill by the old Town Hall. Much swifter and quite scary were their rides on the first bobsleds made at Mason's for the 1932 Olympic races on the Mount Van Hoevenberg bobrun at Lake Placid.

When the grandchildren were teenagers, they would often stop to watch Mason's men at work converting logs to lumber and woodwork. At the sawmill the foreman, their uncle Nate, made sure his nieces and nephew stood at a safe distance from the machines. First they watched the men with pike poles guide the logs from the millpond to a ramp at the entrance to the mill. Then the logs were pulled by chains up the ramps to a log carriage, a machine on tracks that carried a log to and from a huge circular steel saw. It was exciting to hear and see that shiny saw bite into a log and cut it into boards.

The grandchildren admired the skill of the sawer, the key man. With a lever he adjusted the position of the log on the carriage. With another lever he made the carriage move to and from the saw. After the slab wood and bark were cut off, the remaining piece was then sliced through into various thicknesses of lumber.

The next employee the grandchildren watched was the edger man. He sorted pieces of slab wood on a conveyor belt. Some pieces went to the boiler room for fuel. Others that had saleable lumber he passed through the edger machine to remove bark. Then the trimmer man put the edged lumber on his machine to trim the boards to the longest possible length. After passing through the machine, the lumber was sorted for

length and thickness. It was then loaded on to carts according to grade and dimension.

Most of the lumber hauled to the yards was white pine from company tracts. Pine was used for doors, sash, trim and cabinets. The native hardwoods–oak, birch, maple and ash–were used for interior woodwork and flooring. After Nate finished explaining the work at the sawmill, his family visitors climbed up on the carts for a ride past a yellow mound of pungent-smelling sawdust, down the hill and over a bridge to the shop.

When they first entered the shop, they disliked the whine and clatter of the machines and ceaseless activity of approximately thirty men. However, there seemed to be less confusion when Ed Mason explained the job areas: cutting, moulding, nailing, glueing, sanding, planing and assembling. The girls approved of the housecleaning devices which left the floor and air comparatively clean. Fans drew air through pipes which sucked up shavings and sawdust from the floor and machines and deposited them in a bin near the boiler room for fuel.

Some of the employees were pushing the carts of lumber about the room. Wood that had dried in the intense heat of the kiln was wheeled to the men and their machines. There were also deliveries to the stone building across the roadway: window frames to the glazing room and woodwork to the paint room on the first floor. Stock pieces such as columns were stored on the second and third floors.

When the grandchildren tiptoed into the glazing room, the glazier glared at them. He ordered them to march on into their uncle George's office before they cracked a pane of glass. He was not going to take a loud reprimand from a Mason boss if a Mason offspring accidentally smashed the huge pane of expensive glass leaning against the wall.

The next stop on the tour was the drafting room. The draftsman working at a large slant-top table gave them a warm welcome. He pointed to his blueprint of a cabinet drawn to

This picture of the Mason men on the Peru bridge was taken sometime between 1907 and 1911. At the left is the youngest son, Herbert, with the family dog. Next is Will, then Ed, Charles, Nate, George and their father.

scale according to the customer's orders. These plans would go to the shop to Ed Mason. He would assign a workman to the job of creating a cabinet from the drawing and some hard wood.

The grandchildren had now completed a tour of their family's plant. From sawmill, shop and drafting room they had followed the route of logs to lumber to finished millwork.

The 1940s saw several changes in the Mason firm. During World War II the manufacture of apple crates for local orchards was suspended to make ammunition boxes for the government. The company was also under government contract to manufacture prefabricated houses for defense workers in Maryland and Virginia.

Upon the death of George Mason in 1944 his brother Will became the head of the firm. About this time some of the employees joined a labor union. They held their meetings in the Peru Tavern which the company built and owned. At holiday time the hotel was the scene of Masons' annual party for their employees.

The second generation of Masons retired from the company about 1958. Although the sons of Albert and Elizabeth Mason had many heated arguments concerning the business, they always managed to settle their differences and work together. The third generation elected Albert L. Mason, president; Donald R. Greene, vice president; John M. Mason, treasurer, and Philip C. Mason, secretary.

By the 1970s consumer demands for prefabricated and plastic materials had increased and orders for Mason's custom-made millwork declined. This trend led to a loss of their main business and consequently the closing of the company's plant in 1972. Eventually their property was sold for a housing complex.

Although the sawmill and shop are gone, the old stone building is still there and the Little Ausable River still winds its way past land once owned by an enterprising lumberman and his descendants.

This article was jointly written by two cousins, grandchildren of the original A. Mason. Virginia Mason Burdick has published in Antiques Magazine *and is a regular contributor to the* Kent-Delord Quarterly. *She is a recognized authority on the itinerant portrait painters in this area. Albert L. Mason has a degree in architecture from RPI. He worked in the family business until World War II, when he became a navigator and served as Captain in the Eighth Air Force. He returned to the Peru firm and was president from 1958 until his retirement in 1977. This article could not have been written without the family documents and records that Albert has saved.*

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