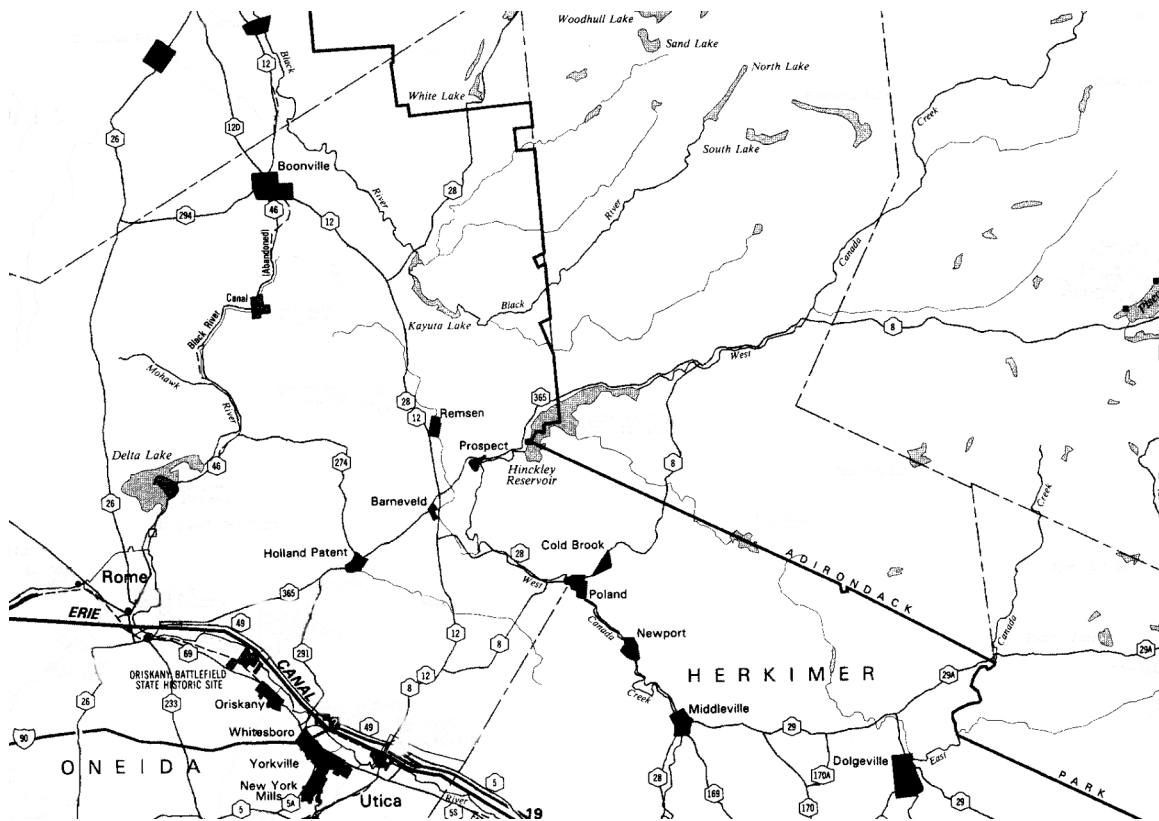
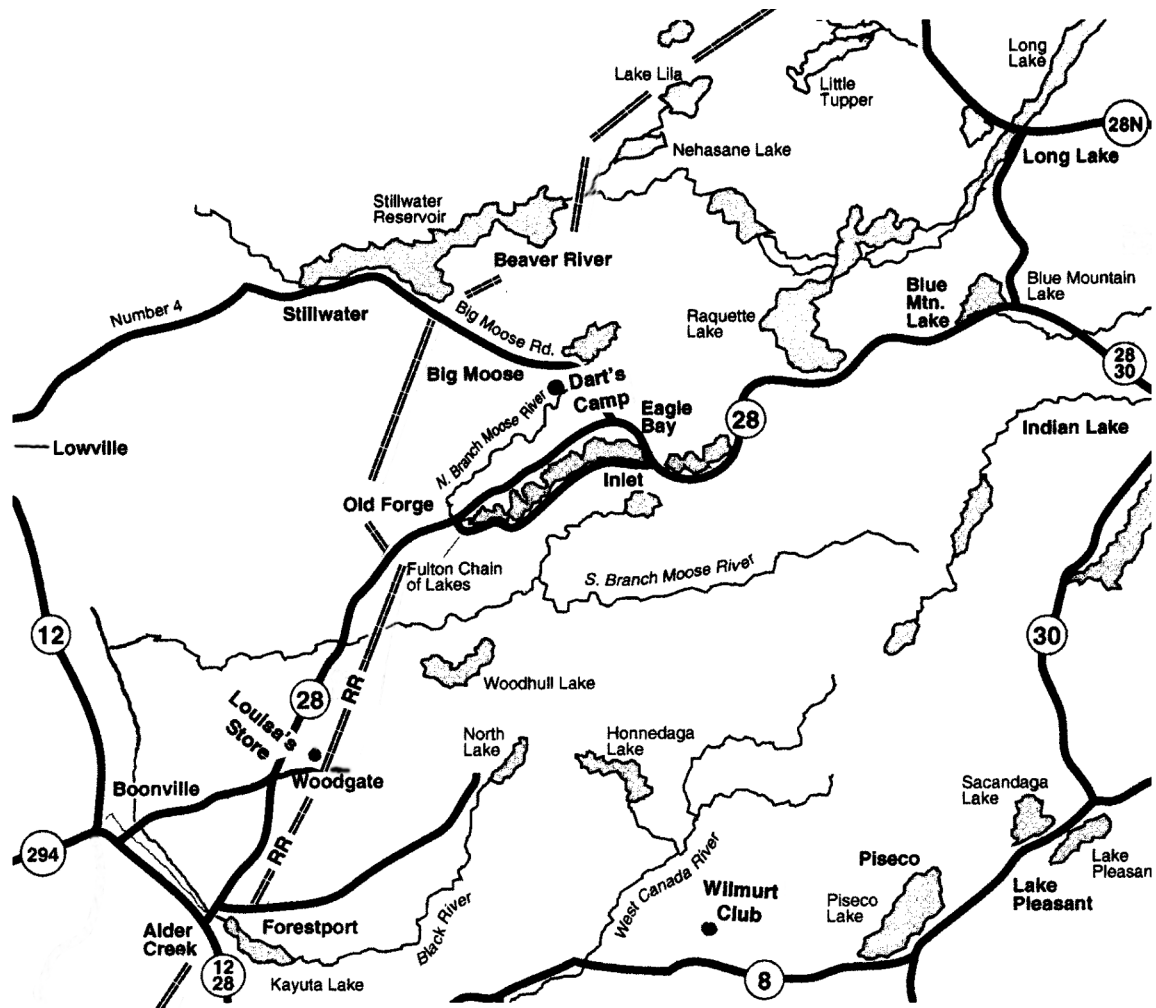


THE ERIE CANAL'S LONG REACH

INTO THE ADIRONDACKS



John Huther



West central region of Adirondack Park showing some of the waters channeled to canals. The Black River supplies water through a feeder canal between Forestport and Boonville.

The North Branch Moose River joins the Middle Branch at Old Forge and the Middle Branch joins the South Branch Moose River, which flows to the Black River north of Boonville, as does the Beaver River from the Stillwater Reservoir.

Also shown are the approximate locations of the Wilmurt Club, Louisa's Store, and Dart's Camp that are described in this book.

Part of a map from the *Central Adirondack Guide*, modified by J. Huther

THE ERIE CANAL'S LONG REACH

INTO THE ADIRONDACKS

John Huther

Springfield, Illinois

2004

A Very Limited Edition
(20 copies—First Printing)

1 – Erie Canal. 2 – Black River Canal and Forestport Feeder Canal. 3 – Adirondack Division of N. Y. Central R.R. 4 – Adirondack Forest Preserve and Adirondack Park. 5 – Maps and photographs.

Printed & Bound by Office Depot
Springfield, Illinois

CONTENTS

Maps and Photographs . . . v

Acknowledgements . . . vii

Preface . . . ix

1. The Erie Canal . . . 1
2. The Black River Canal and Forestport Feeder Canal . . . 9
3. John Davidson – a Settler . . . 21
4. Charles Kronmiller – a Settler . . . 37
5. Louisa Kronmiller and a Boatman . . . 55
6. Mary Kronmiller in the Bark Woods . . . 69
7. Settlers and Natives Unsettled . . . 77
8. A “Big Thing” for White Lake . . . 93
9. Canals and the Adirondack Park . . . 111
10. Postscript . . . 119
- Sources . . . 125

For

All the Descendants of those

Who first Settled

In the White Lake area

In the mid 1800s

MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Map of Adirondack Drainage Area for the Erie Canal– cover

Map of Southwest Adirondacks – inside front cover

Map of Oneida County Canals in 1850s – p. x

Erie Canal Profile – p. 7

Map of Route of Black River Canal – p. 8

Black River Canal Profile – p. 15

Adirondack Lakes for the Erie Canal – p. 16

Lift of Black River Canal Locks – p. 17

Building 5 locks & Downhill over a lock – p. 18

Forestport Feeder Canal 1st Lock & Aqueduct – p. 19

Forestport Dam and Old Locks Today – p. 20

Map of Earliest Frame Houses & 1858 Map – p. 33

John and Jane Edgar Davidson – p. 34

John Davidson's Book of Accounts – p. 35

Map of White Lake area in 1874 – p. 36

Charles Kronmiller's Memoranda Books 1874-1880 – p. 53

Charles Kronmiller in 1883 & Dry House – p. 54

Louisa's Kronmiller's Diary – p. 66

John G. Clarke's Letter – p. 67

Louisa and Mary Kronmiller in 1883 – p. 68

The Kronmiller Family in 1883 – p. 86

Presbyterian Church – p. 88

Verplanck Colvin's Postcard – p. 89

Dart's Camp Boathouses – p. 90

Wilmurt Club House – p. 91

Fish Hatchery at Old Forge – p. 92

Cash Store and Letterhead – p. 102

White Lake RR Station – p. 103

Louisa and Alvah Corliss – p. 104

Charles and Frances Kronmiller & sons – p. 105

George Davidson and Frances Putney – p. 106

G. Davidson's Hotel & Glenmore Hotel – p. 107

Camp Adirondack – p. 108

Louisa's Branch Store at White Lake & Charles' Log Cabin – p. 109

Sixth Lake Dam & Old Forge Dam – p. 110

The Old House in 2003 and Marker for Davidsons – p. 126

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'm indebted to Jane Bellinger for opening New York State history to me. She traced my mother's family back to Melchoir Folts who was among Palatine Germans who settled in the Herkimer-Little Falls area in the early 1700s. Near the end of the century, the area became the site for a canal around the falls and in the next century became part of the route for the Erie Canal itself.

Frank Lesure, a grandson of Mary Kronmiller Dart, provided much of the background material on the Kronmiller and Dart families. Virginia Davidson Burr, the last surviving granddaughter of John and Jane Davidson, was helpful in recalling details about her family. And Ann Steele, a summer resident at Woodgate and descendant of early settlers there, provided many details about the area in the 1800s. I hope I have fully and accurately identified their many contributions to this book.

Woodgate Free Library's collection of works on the Adirondacks, its annual publication of articles on area history, and its annual programs on area genealogy were sources of encouragement to write this book. Eleanor Moon and Marilyn Thomas of the library were always sources of cheerful help.

Charles Miller, Bea White, and other volunteers in the Oneida County Historical Library have always been helpful and were especially so in digging out the engineering drawing of the Black River Canal. At the Erwin Library in Boonville, Donna Ripp was most helpful in steering me to old photographs of the Black River Canal and allowing me to scan them into my computer. And I'm indebted to Gail Murray and the Town of Webb Historical Association for also allowing me to scan material from its collection.

The University of Rochester's website with historical publications on the Erie and Black River canals was very helpful, and I'm grateful to the Erie Canal Museum for permission to use one of its photographs. John E. Zmarthie, Canal Division Engineer of the NYS Thruway Authority and NYS Canal Corporation provided useful information about the current status of reservoirs and water being fed to the Erie Canal via Lake Delta.

John Todd who provided background material and photographs, and Jerome Wagner, who spent an evening talking with me about his research on the Black River Canal, were other sources of encouragement for writing this book.

Finally, I'm most indebted to Catherine (Katie) Kronmiller Huther without whom Woodgate would never have been a place in my life and this book would never have happened.

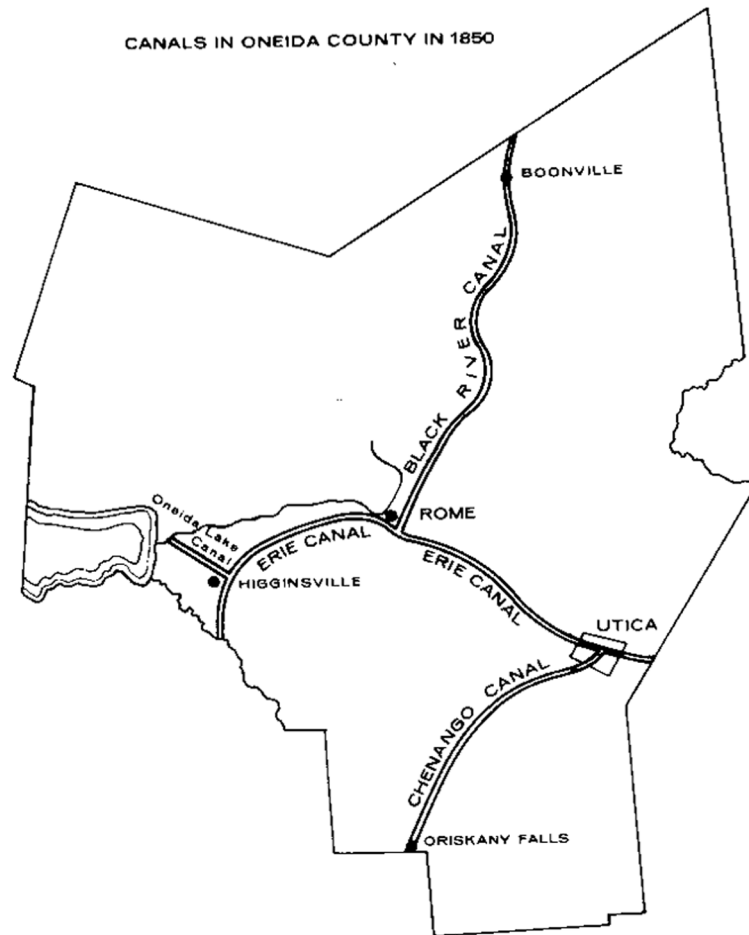
J. H.

PREFACE

This book contains many of the details in my earlier book *Adirondack Borderland: A Woodgate N.Y. Legacy From the 1800s* (self- published, 2001). But since then I have been able to uncover some additional details and in this book, I hope, link earlier and new details more clearly to the larger history of the Erie Canal.

The Erie Canal would not have worked without water from the Black River Canal and from the little canal that fed water to the Black River and Erie canals starting at Forestport and running to Boonville. Further, our Woodgate legacy would not exist for my family to enjoy today without the canals that drew ancestors to the area in the first place.

John Huther



Source: *The History of Oneida County*, 1977, p. 33

1 – THE ERIE CANAL

When the entire Erie opened in 1825 it was the longest canal in the country—363 miles. Second longest was 27 miles. The Erie's length alone impressed Americans, most of whom knew little or nothing of the Chinese Imperial Canal built over 500 years earlier and said to be nearly a thousand miles long.

More important than the Erie's length, though, was its route right across New York State from Albany on the Hudson River to Buffalo on Lake Erie. It cut through the biggest opening in a ridge of mountains stretching north and south along the nation's eastern seaboard. Because it did so, in just a few decades it carried hundreds of thousands of new settlers to the western part of the state and beyond to other states and territories. It opened the mid-west to the benefit of a young nation by carrying goods and products back from there to New York City thus boosting it into the great port and business center it is today. In doing all that, the Erie also made money for the state. It deserves its fame.

But the Erie might have become little more than a troublesome ditch—a low water ditch in dry spells—if it hadn't been for the Black River Canal. That canal joined the Erie at Rome just west of Utica where it carried water down to the Erie and carried settlers up to a heavily wooded part of New York State.

In 1855 John Davidson, one of the settlers, may have taken both canals to get to his new land in the woods north of Utica. By then railroads that also crossed the state and reached north to Alder Creek could have carried him there. But he had good reason to go by canals as the cheapest way because when he moved there, he went with his parents, pregnant wife, three children, household goods, and tools from his farm in Albany.

John Davidson left many written notes about his life but none about his move or travel on the Erie. One man who did write about such a trip and published it in 1829 didn't tell his name. Another in 1835 published an account of his trip and said his name was Nathaniel Hawthorne. Of the two, Hawthorne wrote more to entertain than inform and claimed that the Erie Canal was “an interminable mud puddle.” It was, he wrote, “as dark and turbid as if every kennel in the land paid contribution to it.”

The unknown traveler took a steamboat up the Hudson from New York City to Albany and from there a stagecoach to Schenectady. He wrote, “I had contemplated taking my passage at Albany, on board a canal boat; but was dissuaded therefrom in consequence of the tediousness of the passage, to Schenectady, having to surmount an elevation of forty locks, in a distance of twenty-eight miles, and occupying twenty-four hours. I therefore took my seat in the stage for Schenectady, distance fifteen miles by turnpike, fare sixty-two cents.”

Most likely, John Davidson had more time and goods than money and took the slow boat with his family from Albany to Schenectady. The boat he and

his family traveled on would have carried both freight and passengers, as did the one our unknown traveler boarded in Schenectady. His carried 30 passengers and he noted, "The cabins are furnished in good style. The Captain actually engaged to take us to Utica, a distance of 89 miles, for one cent and a quarter per mile! a York shilling for each meal extra, and to make no charge for berths, which are a very necessary accommodation, as the boats run day and night."

He claimed the boat to be "of a superior class for freight boats." It was about 80 feet long and "divided into three apartments—the two end ones for the accommodation of passengers, the stern to eat in, and the bow to sleep and sit in, each about 23 feet long, and sufficiently high for a six-footer to stand erect with his hat on." The center section of the boat held freight. But the center section of a "packet boat," he said, carried only passengers and may have been better furnished. The freight boat traveled at the rate of 3 and 1/4 miles per hour with two horses, and packet boats hurried along with three horses at 4 miles per hour, top speed as set by law in 1822.

For the seven Davidsons, the trip from Albany to Rome could have taken as little as two days and nights or as many as three or four, if they were held up with other boats at any of the locks or if they had to wait while freight was loaded and offloaded along the way. And three children—7, 5, and 3 years old—may have made the trip seem longer. Watching that they didn't fall overboard, keeping them from squabbling with one another or other kids on board, getting them to eat whatever was put before them, and getting them to sleep at night with a room full of talking strangers—all may have made their parents wish for the quickest trip possible.

Hawthorne said that at night a "crimson curtain" was drawn between the "ladies and gentlemen" and they went to bed "on shelves, one above another." He and the others were kept awake by five or six "snorers." But the man who was still to dream up *The Scarlet Letter* found even more to keep him awake. "My head was close to the crimson curtain—the sexual division of the boat—behind which I continually heard whispers and stealthy footsteps; the noise of a comb laid on the table, or a slipper drops on the floor; the twang, like a broken harp-string, caused by loosening a tight belt; the rustling of a gown in its descent; and the unlacing of a pair of stays. My ear seemed to have the properties of an eye; a visible image pestered my fancy in the darkness; the curtain was withdrawn between me and the western lady, who yet disrobed herself without a blush."

With this much to listen to, Hawthorne finally admitted, "Forgetting that my berth was hardly so wide as a coffin, I turned suddenly over, and fell like an avalanche on the floor, to the disturbance of the whole community of sleepers."

Our unknown traveler liked his trip. "We really live well in our little house, and have an obliging captain and steward, with every convenience, but short necks, that we could ask or desire. It takes 5 hands to manage a boat of this size: they are the steward, the helmsman, and two drivers, who relieve each

other as occasion may require: we have relays of horses every 20 miles, and thus we are gliding to the West.” It was a boat that changed horses ashore unlike many that changed with an extra team carried on the boat.

Our unknown traveler also explained his wish for a short neck: “The locks and bridges are very numerous, and it requires great attention and care in passing them, or you may be knocked down, and rise up without your head on your shoulders, which, before you can say ‘look out,’ may be in possession of the canal fishes. The bridges being low—the highest of them not more than 10 feet above the water, and some not even over 8 feet, while the boat is full seven, we have occasionally only one foot between the two objects, which hardly admit a boy to pass under them.”

John Davidson and his family would have been well advised to stay below decks for their trip. On Hawthorne’s boat a Virginia schoolmaster did not heed the warning of a bridge and “was saluted by the said bridge on his knowledge-box.” The bridges were built low to save money and it’s no wonder “Low bridge everybody down / Low bridge for we’re coming to a town” later became the refrain for a famous song about the Erie Canal. As he ducked, our unknown traveler noted, “The bridges are cheap structures, being nothing more than two stone abutments, having sleepers thrown across the canal covered with planks, and a handrail on each side.”

Bridges crossed the canal in towns and between towns where country roads needed to cross or farmers with fields on both sides needed to get to the other side. But bridges beyond number are only a whisper of problems with building the canal and keeping it flowing. For all its success and acclaim, the Erie was a flood of repair and building problems from beginning to end.

Some might have come at the very start from not learning enough about earlier English canals as published in an 1816 critique. Or maybe had the builders learned more about English canals, they never would have started the Erie. For design, they settled on a ditch to be 4 feet deep and 40 feet wide, a ditch to be stepped up from the Hudson River to Lake Erie through 83 locks along the 363-mile route—a climb of 565 feet.

Digging by hand and horse started on July 4th 1817 with a day of ceremonies at Rome, which because it was near the middle and on one of the longest flat sections of the route was one of the easiest places to start. Canal builders dug east and west at the same time, not knowing fully how they were going to solve all the problems at either end and not knowing how the “experiment,” as it was called, would turn out. But on October 22, 1819 the first boat was pulled from Rome to Utica to officially open the canal and claim the experiment a success.

In the years to follow, they dug through ground that turned out to be swamp in some places and rock in others. They toppled trees, pulled up stumps, and chopped out roots. They dug across small streams for which they had to build culverts to carry the streams under the canal bed—nearly as many culverts

as miles in the canal. At Irondequoit Creek near Rochester, they mounded up a wall 70 feet high to carry the canal. For other big rivers and ravines, they built bridges or aqueducts to get the canal across. The longest was 1,137 feet.

In the case of Schoharie Creek they cut right through the flow. As our unknown traveler of 1829 noted, "This is the first place of danger I have yet observed. The creek is about 30 yards wide at this place, and is crossed by means of ropes stretched across the stream, which ropes are your only security; should they give way, you must inevitably go down the current and pass over a dam immediately below, of several feet perpendicular descent. In times of a freshet it is very dangerous." By 1845 an aqueduct 624 feet long carried boats over the creek—the same creek that only a few years ago was strong enough to wash out a high Thruway bridge over it.

In 1825 when the whole canal opened, about 2,000 boats, 8,000 men, and 9,000 horses and mules were at work and new problems were arising. One was the size of barges. The earliest ones could carry 30 tons and sat 3 1/2 feet in the water, leaving a half-foot of clearance over the bottom, and they were 7 feet wide, leaving plenty of room for two to pass one another. But barge builders soon broadened their boats to carry 70 tons—nearly 15 feet wide, the width of the locks.

Bigger barges, though, were slower. Something known from English canals was learned all over again. The less clearance a boat has on the bottom and sides the more it pushes water ahead of it, which soon reverses and pushes back against the boat itself. Bigger barges were slowed even more when two met pushing a wave of water ahead of them. On average, smaller barges made a roundtrip in 16 days, but larger ones took 22. To overcome this problem Erie Canal commissioners started planning in 1832 to make the canal bigger. When the enlargement was finished 30 years later, the canal was 7 feet deep, 70 feet wide, and had 72 locks wider and longer than the first ones.

A bigger canal needed more water, as the planners knew it would. But even when the canal first opened it clearly needed more water because water leaked out through the sides and bottom, and sometimes it drained out through holes or breaks in the walls. In the beginning, the Erie had 12 main sources of water, including Lake Erie, but they were never enough, especially in dry times. New sources were added throughout the life of the Erie to keep its water flowing.

One of those sources became the Black River Canal, which was needed not only for the general shortage of water in the canal and its planned enlargement but for one unusual feature of the ditch. Even though Lake Erie was 565 feet higher than the Hudson River, the canal did not drop down from the one to the other in a steady flow. It stepped down about 200 feet to a point west of Rome. But there it stepped up about 50 feet for a flat stretch that ran to the east of Rome before continuing to drop down to the Hudson.

As early as 1810, DeWitt Clinton himself noted this feature of the route when he visited the area in July. "Rome is on the highest land between Lake

Ontario and the Hudson, at Troy. It is 390 feet above the latter; sixteen miles by land and twenty-one by water from Utica, and 106 miles by water from Schenectady.”

The flat stretch came to be known as the “Rome summit” but might better have been called the “high drain” because water flowed off from it at both ends. Boats stepping up to it from the west or east took water from the summit to fill the locks. Boats stepping down either way also took water from the summit with them. Without water to replace what was lost each time, the Erie Canal would have been high and dry on its summit.

The Chenango Canal between Utica and the Susquehanna River opened in 1837 with reservoirs meant to feed only that canal, not the Rome summit. But in the driest years those reservoirs were tapped a few times for the Erie and when the Chenango closed in 1878, they were kept in operation for the Erie if needed. The task of supplying the Rome summit was left mainly to the Black River Canal and the little feeder canal with all its water from the foothills of the southwestern Adirondacks.

The Black River Canal and feeder canal also became a way for the Davidson family and others to get to their new lands in the North Woods. Most likely, though, they never would have gone there, if the Black River and feeder canals had never been built.

Notes

*Nobel E. Whitford, *History of the Canal System of the State of New York*, 1906, describes other canals in the world in the Introduction. It is available at www.history.rochester.edu/canal. Chapter 2 is about building the Erie and contains figures on the rise and fall along the route, legal speed, and date of opening the Rome-Utica section.

*Ronald E. Shaw, *Erie Water West: A History of the Erie Canal 1792-1854*, Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1966, states that many of 1.5 million emigrants who entered the port of New York between 1820 and 1850 moved west on the Erie Canal (p. 274), that the beginning section was an “experiment” (p. 101), that the Irondequoit embankment was 70 feet high (p. 126), and the Schoharie Creek aqueduct was “supported by fourteen majestic Romanesque arches” (p. 279).

*By 1855 John Davidson and others could easily have traveled by train from Albany to Alder Creek but they would have had to change trains at Utica. Because of this and cost, I have guessed they went by canal boat.

*“Notes on a Tour through the Western Part of the State of New York” was published in a Philadelphia periodical, *The Ariel*, in 1829-30. It is available at www.history.rochester.edu/canal.

*Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Canal Boat,” *New England Magazine*, No. 9, December 1835, pp. 398-409, is available at www.history.rochester.edu/canal. Hawthorne describes the Rome summit as “a dead flat between Utica and Syracuse, where the canal [does] not rise or fall

enough to require a lock for nearly seventy miles. There can hardly be a more dismal tract of country.”

*W. B. Langbein, *Hydrology and Environmental Aspects of Erie Canal (1817-99)*, Geological Survey Water-Supply Paper 2038, Washington: United States Printing Office, 1976. It is available at www.history.rochester.edu/canal. Langbein describes technical problems in supplying water to the Erie and time for boats to make a round trip, and he attributes the study of English canals to Sutcliffe (1816).

*Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress 1817-1862*, NY: Hill and Wang, 1996. “Before work began on the Erie Canal, only three canals in the United States were more than two miles long. The longest extended a mere twenty-seven miles” (p. 17). “Oddly enough, in some ways the Erie Canal also looked quite unremarkable. A mere four feet deep and forty feet wide, the artificial river could indeed resemble a big ditch” (p. 29).

*Ralph K. Andrist, *The Erie Canal*, NY: American Heritage Publishing Co, Inc., 1964, states that Rome was the easiest place to start digging (p. 30).

*F. Daniel Larkin, *New York State Canals: A Short History*, Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 1998, states the longest aqueduct was 1,137 feet (p. 21) and writes about the Chenango Canal (pp. 60-62).

*Shaw provides the numbers of boats, men, and horses working on the Erie when the entire canal opened (p. 182).

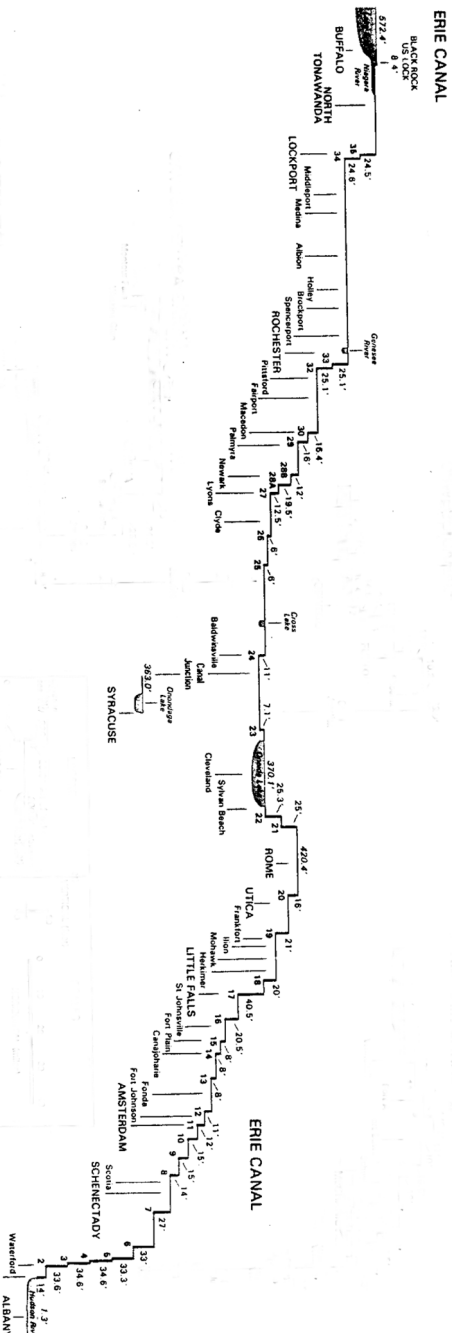
*Richard Garrity, *Canal Boatman: My Life on Upstate Waterways*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984. The original Erie Canal was 363 miles long and had 83 locks that were 90 feet long. The “enlarged” Erie Canal was 350.5 miles long and had 72 locks that were 110 feet long (p. vi).

*Numbers differ among authors. Sheriff puts Lake Erie’s elevation at 573 feet (p. 30), Langbein at 572 feet, and Larkin (p. 17) and Shaw (p. 87) at 565 feet. Shaw also states the longest aqueduct was 1,188 feet (p. 135) versus 1,137 feet as claimed by Larkin. The differences, I think, are not as important as the scale the numbers are meant to convey. I like to use numbers when they are available to describe the size or scale of things.

**Early Histories and Descriptions of Oneida County New York*, compiled and edited by G. Martin Sleeman, Utica: North Country Books, 1990, (p. 67), contains the “Journal of DeWitt Clinton for 1810” [From *The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton* by William W. Campbell, NY: Baker and Scribner, 1849].

*Whitford writes about the Chenango Canal in Chapters 17, 18, and 23.

Profile of the Erie Canal



This is the Erie Canal today with only 36 locks. As the canal was improved, locks were made bigger and the numbers of them were reduced from the original 83. But even on the map today, you can see how the canal dropped down from Lake Erie to the Hudson River and how it stepped up to the flat stretch around Rome. Source: *New York State Canals: Recreational Map and Guide*, 1987.

2 – THE BLACK RIVER CANAL and FORESTPORT FEEDER CANAL

The Erie Canal was “the major water project of the 19th century” and the Black River Canal had a large part in it—but not without overcoming problems as great or greater than those on the Erie. One historian declares the Black River Canal “a miracle of engineering skill” and another writes of it overcoming “topographical obstacles that seemed to defy engineering solutions.” A profile map of the canal shows it climbing what looks like a small mountain before dropping down the other side—a feat worthy of being called one more marvel of the Erie Canal system.

The Black River itself starts well north of the Erie in the southwestern quarter of what is now the Adirondack Park—6,000,000 acres or 9,325 square miles of public and private lands. The river drains low mountains, woods, and waterways of the western side of the region. Waters from nearly 2,000 square miles of the Adirondack Park trickle, tumble, and flow down into the Black River. But at the time the Erie was being dug, most of this area north of the canal was little known and was called simply “wilderness” or “North Woods.”

Before the American Revolution, native and white hunter-trappers had been through it many times, but maps of that time only showed the area as blank space without features of any kind. Maps started to change after the Revolution when the region was marked up with tract lines by a few people scheming for title to as many acres as possible—nearly 4,000,000 acres in the biggest case, the Macomb Purchase on the northwestern side of the region. Even so, no map before 1800 accurately traced the Black River.

The North Woods were late in being explored. The name Adirondack was not used until after 1837 when Professor Ebenezer Emmons climbed the highest peak with a small group, the first whites to do so. He named the peak Marcy after the governor and proposed all peaks in the area be called the “Adirondack Group.”

South of the region, though, Erie Canal planners knew just enough about it to eye the Black River as a source of help for the big canal. In part, they knew because settlers in the Black River Valley—an area with dairy farms and access to lumber that had opened up during the War of 1812—also wanted a canal to get to Erie Canal markets and had been lobbying for their own canal for several years. In 1836 a law finally authorized “a navigable feeder from the Black river” and named the whole thing “The Black River Canal and Erie Canal Feeder.” So the whole had two parts and its name signaled a dual use—a way to market and water for the Erie.

Perhaps more remarkable at the time than finding the Black River and waters draining into it was the planners’ belief that the river actually could help the Erie. The Black River was running the wrong way for the Erie, “a geographical freak.” It flows south toward the canal, it’s true, but then it turns to

flow north along the western side of the Adirondack Park and empties into Lake Ontario at Watertown. The closest point for tapping its waters turned out to be Boonville—25 miles north of Rome and the Erie Canal.

Given the length of the entire Erie, the Black River must have seemed close at hand and a short stretch away for experienced canal builders. After all, they had cut through two miles of solid rock near Lockport and built five sets of double locks in a line there and another 27 locks in 30 miles between Albany and Schenectady, and they had built long aqueducts over the Genesee and Mohawk Rivers. Against all that, the Black River Canal must have looked easy enough and would have been—except for one thing. Boonville was 693 feet higher than Rome and the law called for a canal, not a pipeline shooting water down to the Erie.

The route was studied many times to find the best way to step boats up and down through a canal. One idea was to use “planes” in the steepest places rather than locks to raise and lower boats. Planes, which were in use in New Jersey and closely studied, actually dragged boats up out of the water and lowered them into it by floating them onto a car on a track and winching car and boat up or down. They worked in New Jersey but not well enough to convince Black River Canal builders that planes should be used instead of locks.

Like the Erie, the Black River Canal in some places was built along hillsides where dirt and stone were piled and packed down to make a bank for the canal above a stream or river below. Aqueducts were built over streams. Bridges were built over the canal. And the Black River Canal, like the main one, had its own set of five locks (but single not double) combined one after the other.

Like the Erie, the Black River Canal was built without bulldozers and other machines of today. Men toppled trees with winches or chopped them down with axes, one blow at a time, and they pulled out the stumps with horses or oxen. They blasted through stone and shoveled away rubble by hand. They dug the ditch for the water and built up canal banks, one shovel full at a time. They found stones to line locks, chiseled them square and smooth, dragged them to the locks with horses, and piled them on top of one another with booms that lifted the stones and dropped them in place on the walls of the locks. The walls still stand as monuments to hard work and skill in the days before machines.

In the end, the Black River Canal had 70 locks up over the 25 miles from Rome to Boonville at the summit and another 39 down over the 10 miles north of Boonville. There the canal flowed into the river. By 1851, farmers and others in the country north of the Erie had a way to ship goods to cities through 109 locks—“more locks than any other canal in the world,” by one claim.

But the Black River Canal with all its locks was only one part of the project. The other—and perhaps greater part—was the section called the Erie Canal Feeder in law and the Black River Canal Feeder in other places. I think Forestport Feeder Canal is the best name because Forestport is at its start and the name clearly separates it from the Black River Canal. The Forestport Feeder

Canal was a little ditch with a big role in “the major water project” of the century. It was only 10 miles long running from the settlement to be named Forestport on the Black River to the village of Boonville, which is a couple of miles to the west of the river and west and slightly north of Forestport. Strictly speaking, the little ditch supplied water to the summits of both the Black River and Erie canals. Strictly speaking, too, the ditch was little in length only. It was 6 feet wider than the Erie, all the better to carry water to the big ditch.

Building the Black River Canal actually started in 1837 and by the beginning of 1841, when 71 percent of nearly 1.7 million dollars under contract was spent, canal commissioners ordered the feeder canal to be finished first, by September 1842. The Erie needed water on the Rome summit. But in 1842 work on all canals was stopped because the state did not have the funds or credit to borrow and political will to go on. Work on the feeder canal did not start again until 1847 with June 15, 1848 set as the finish date. In December that year the first boat traveled the feeder from Boonville to Forestport. The first boats traveled up from Rome to Boonville in May 1850 and traveled beyond Boonville the next year.

More likely than not, John Davidson and his father knew about work on the canal and the feeder. In 1849, his father paid \$200 for 100 acres in the woods about 10 miles north of Forestport, and two years later John bought the land from his father for the same amount. They were farmers and to them the canals must have looked like a way to something better, even though the land they bought was shown on maps of the time as wilderness and should have looked less promising than richer farming lands to the west reached by the Erie Canal. The Forestport Feeder Canal was the water route to their land. At Forestport, a dam was built to hold back water for the feeder that actually started behind a gate. The gate was opened to send water along the feeder when it was needed on the Black River and Erie canals.

It also was opened to let boats in from the feeder to the river and out again starting in the 1850s. Trees were soon chopped down around the village and made into lumber and shingles that could be shipped to cities. In the 1860s and 70s tall spruce trees were chopped down and logs 50 to 80 feet long were dragged to the river at Forestport. They were called “spars and spiles”—spars to be used on ships to hold up sails and spiles to be used for pilings along the shore in Albany and New York City and other ports. Such logs were pounded into the soft mud of a harbor until they were firmly in place and boards were nailed to them to make piers for canal boats to load and unload cargo. From Forestport they were floated down to the cities, lashed together as large rafts rather than loaded on boats. The rafts, called “cribs,” held as many as three layers of logs, and as many as five or six cribs were towed at a time.

The feeder canal also opened the area to the tanning industry. The Proctor & Hill Tannery was near Forestport and the Anderson Tannery was in Hawkinsville. They needed to be close to the hemlock bark used to treat animal

hides. Proctor & Hill used as many as 5,000 cords of bark to treat 25,000 hides each year. Hides came from as far away as Central and South America to meet the bark. Their water route to the north woods after an ocean trip to New York City was the Hudson River, Erie Canal, Black River Canal, and finally the feeder canal to either Hawkinsville or Forestport. Finished leather for shoes and other goods, reddish in color from the hemlock bark, found its way out of the woods by the same route to cities along the way.

Hides were soaked in tannic acid from the bark of hemlocks, which grew in abundance in the Forestport area. Treating the hides took many trees and large amounts of water from the Black River to soak and rinse the hides through many steps of the process. And it took the river to wash away all the hair, flecks of blood and flesh, lime and acid left from the process.

But for the feeder canal planners and builders, water was the main thing on their minds—not all the lumber, shingles, spars, spiles, and hides that came after the canal was opened. And as John Davidson made his way into the area, his mind most likely was on potatoes he might raise and ship by canal. In time it became the main farm crop to leave the area by water.

Yet when the feeder canal opened and started sending water south, the supply wasn't enough. The Erie Canal needed even more water and surveyors found it—after tramping through woods and swamps, across streams, and around hills—in the lakes and streams feeding the Black River from the southwestern corner of the Adirondack region. In such places engineers started building dams to make reservoirs to hold water back until it was needed. Little did they know how many they would have to build.

They finished the first in 1855 at North Lake out of which the Black River flows. In 1860 they finished the second at Woodhull Lake out of which Woodhull Creek flows to join the Black River at Forestport. In 1861 they finished a third at South Lake. In 1873 they finished another at Sand Lake, and they kept building—in 1881 at White Lake, Twin Lakes, Canachagala Lake, and First and Second Bisby lakes combined and in 1882 at Chub Lake.

The dam at Canachagala actually closed off the lake's natural flow to the east and its waters were forced through a man-made channel to North Lake, making the lake the new headwaters of the Black River. In the end the dams held back about 2 billion cubic feet of water—but never enough, it is said, for the driest summers.

All these lakes, streams, and rivers became veins of the Erie Canal reaching into Adirondack woods and mountains for water. But when the veins carried all they could to the Erie, they left too little for the Black River north of the feeder canal where mills were waiting to be turned by water.

The answer was more dams. Engineers raised a dam at Old Forge in 1881 at the foot of the Fulton Chain of Lakes and built a new one at Sixth Lake, both of which fed water to the Moose River that joined the Black River north of Boonville. North of the Moose, too, was the Beaver River where they finished the

Stillwater Reservoir in 1887 to feed the Black River. And they built a dam on the Black River itself just upstream from Forestport. It was finished in 1893 and holds back the waters of what is now Kayuta Lake.

For John Davidson who reached his 100 acres in 1855, the whole area around him was to see one dam after another built just to satisfy the ever-thirsty Erie Canal.

Notes

*Langbein declares the Erie Canal “the major water project” of the century.

*Shaw states the Black River Canal was “a miracle of engineering skill” (p. 240).

*Thomas C. O'Donnell, *Birth of a River: An Informal History of the Headwaters of the Black River*, Boonville: Black River Books, 1952, claims “topographical obstacles” on the canal seemed to defy solution (p. 38).

*Frank Graham, Jr., *The Adirondack Park: A Political History*, Special Research by Ada Graham, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978 reports the sizes of the Black River watershed (p. 198) and Macomb's purchase (p. 6).

*Howard Thomas, *Black River in the North Country*, Utica: North Country Books, Inc., 1963, 4th printing 1985, claims that no map before 1800 “traced the course of the Black River accurately” and calls the river a “geographical freak” (p.1). He also claims the Black River canal had the most locks in the world (p. 69).

*Thomas C. O'Donnell, *Snubbing Posts: An Informal History of the Black River Canal*, Old Forge: North Country Books, 1949, 2nd ed. 1972, points out the Black River was wrongly shown as flowing into the St. Lawrence River on a 1796 map (p. 15). He describes obstacles in building the Black River Canal (pp. 36-37).

*Alfred L. Donaldson, *A History of the Adirondacks*, Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, reprint of the 1921 edition, 1996, describes Emmons' ascent and naming of Marcy (v. I, p. 152) and using the name Adirondack for the group of nearby mountains (v. I, p. 36).

*Whitford's Chapter 9 about the Black River Canal traces in detail its legislative history, funding, use of planes, dimensions of the feeder canal, and building dams and reservoirs.

*Shaw describes the cut near Lockport and the work on locks and aqueducts (pp. 127, 131, 135, 404) and claims the planes were in Pennsylvania, not New Jersey (p. 240).

*O'Donnell in *Snubbing Posts* states, “Never in Albany did a clear-cut Black River Canal policy exist - never even a clear-cut theory of the functions of the Canal. Was the moving of goods its job? Or the carrying of Black River water into Erie at Rome? Or a combination of both?” (p. 29). I'd say the policy was clearly to do both, but supplying water to the Erie was the more important of the two, and a little ambiguity never hurt political purposes.

*Daniel E. Wager, *Our County and Its People: A Descriptive Work on Oneida County*, New York, Boston History Company, 1896, claims that building the dam at Forestport to supply

water to the feeder canal “stimulated settlement at that point, and the lumber business was soon active” (vol. I, p. 443).

*Tharratt Gilbert Best, *Boonville and Its Neighbors: The Chronicle of an American Community*, Boonville: Herald-Willard Press, 1961, reports the number of locks and elevation that the Black River Canal had to overcome and claims, “From a cold financial standpoint, it never was a success” (pp. 62-63). But had the costs of the feeder canal and all the reservoirs been charged to the Erie Canal, as seems reasonable that they might, costs and profits might look a little better for the Black River Canal and a little worse for the profitable Erie.

*Whitford states “The record shows that the [Black River] canal was built with dimensions of forty-two, twenty-six and four feet, while those of the feeder were forty-six, thirty and four feet” (Ch. 9). The Erie on the other hand was 40 feet wide at water surface, 28 feet wide at bottom, and 4 feet deep (Ch. 2).

*O'Donnell, *Snubbing Posts*, describes how “cribs” of timbers were made up for towing (p. 99).

*Shaw offers testimony to the need for spiles for docks in Albany - “In the season of 1843, for example, river arrivals and departures from Albany included 33 steamboats, 64 steam towboats, and 2,470 sloops and schooners” (p. 281).

*Barbara McMartin, *Hides, Hemlocks, and Adirondack History: How the Tanning Industry Influenced the Growth of the Region*, Utica: North Country Books, 1992, describes harvesting bark and tanning (pp. 3, 5, 16, 40, 45, 50, 89). She states that 70% of the hides came from Central and South America (p. 27) and has brief descriptions of the Proctor & Hill and Anderson tanneries (p. 266).

*O'Donnell, *Birth of a River*, reports on when the reservoirs were finished (pp. 45-46) and that reservoirs at White and Bisby lakes were abandoned by the state in 1889 (p. 48).

*O'Donnell, *Snubbing Posts*, states that the Canachagala and Chub lake reservoirs were in use by 1882, even though the Canachagala's natural flow was east to the Moose River. A 2003 letter from the NYS Canal Corporation confirms that the natural outlet flow was dammed and a man-made feeder built to send Canachagala water south to North Lake for the Erie Canal.

*Charles B. Sperry, *North Lake: The Jewel of the Adirondacks*, Whitesboro, NY, 1981 notes that Canachagala should be considered the “actual headwaters” of the Black River (p. 18).

*Joseph F. Grady, *The Adirondacks: Fulton Chain-Big Moose Region, The Story of a Wilderness*, Little Falls: Press of the Journal & Courier Company, 1933, writes that in 1872 a dam was built at Old Forge to hold water for the Black River if needed (p. 294). This dam was raised in 1881 to back up more water.

BLACK RIVER CANAL,

FROM ROME TO BLACK R.

1 1/2 M BELOW LYONS FALLS LEWIS CO
NEAR JUNCTION OF MOOSE R. WITH BLACK RIVER

FEDER FROM BLACK RIVER

7 INCHES DESCENT TO A MILE
FOR FEEDER

BLACK RIVER C.

FEDER

N^o 70

BLACK R. AND MOOSE CREEK
RESERVOIRS
2 M OF RESERVOIRS

M. S.

BLACK R. CANAL AND ERIE CAN. FEEDER
B. R. NAVIGATION

DELTA FEEDER NOT INCLUDED
1 1/2 M

92 MILES

FT 8,695
DESCENT

28 3/4

BLACK RIVER

42 1/2 MILES TO CARTHAGE

NECESSITY OF IMPROVING
ENDS
EXCEPTING DAM
AT CARTHAGE

LOCK

ENTER

BLACK RIVER

LYONS FALLS

PORT LEYDEN

A TO D

38.6

71

BOONEVILLE 693

above Rome

1120 F T W

N^o 70

FEDER FROM BLACK RIVER

about 53 to Summit of Chenango Canal

THE SUMMIT LEVEL WITH 76 LOCKS OF THE CHENANGO CANAL IS 702.31 FEET

WITH 70 LOCKS

BLACK R. CANAL

693.00

CHENANGO CANAL AT UTICA

AND ERIE CANAL AT

ARE 31 FEET LOWER THAN ROME LEVEL.

SEE L. N^o 40 ERIE CANAL.

THE TWO SUMMITS ARE EQUAL DISTANCE NORTH THE OTHER SOUTH FROM THE MOHAWK RIVER OR MOHAWK VALLEY

MOHAWK VALLEY

See 26 1/2 M each side 53

AT ROME

See N^o 6

ERIE CANAL

AT 427

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

307

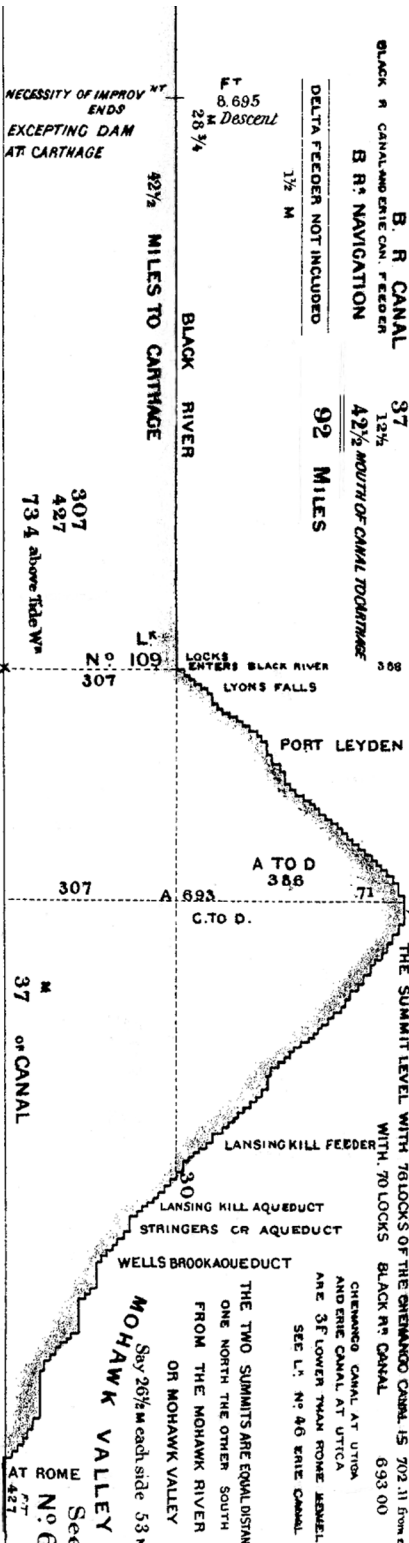
307

307

307

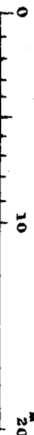
307

307



Note In examining these Profiles be governed by Figures, not by Scale

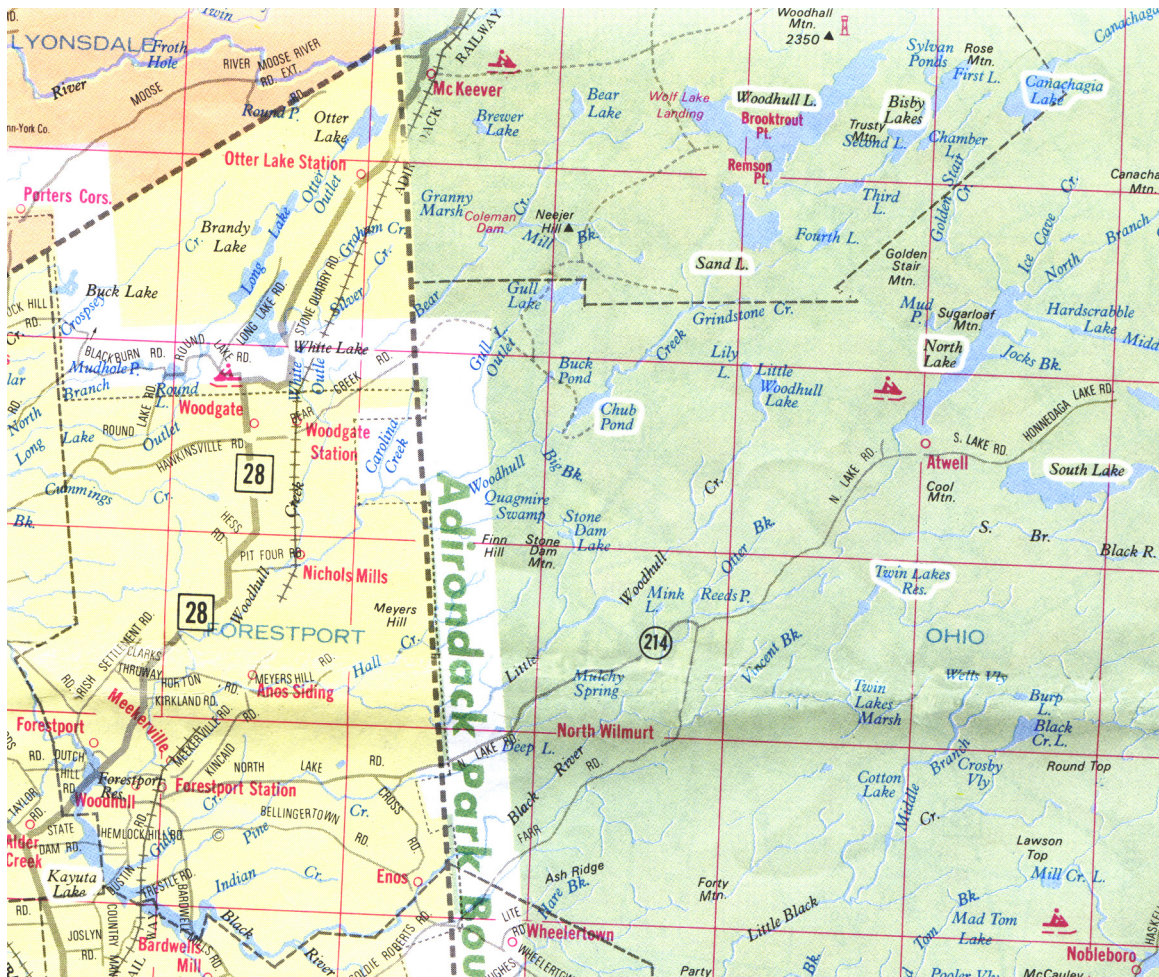
The Scales Horizontal and Vertical being too small to place the Locks in accurate position, in several places



This was copied from a larger map, thus there are some details about the Chenango Canal, which entered the Erie east of Rome and "3 feet lower." The summits of the Black River and Chenango canals were each 26.5 miles from the Erie. In upper left the line under "Feeder" Reservoirs" reads "10 1/2 M" and "2 M."

Source: Oneida County Historical Society.

Adirondack Lakes for the Erie Canal



Lakes dammed for the Erie Canal were North L. 1855, Woodhull L. 1860, South L. 1861, Sand L. 1873, Canachagala L. 1881, Twin L. 1881, Bisby Lakes 1881-1889, White L. 1881-1889, Chub P. 1882, and Kayuta L. 1893.

Source: Map is from *The Adirondack Atlas*, Syracuse: Marshall Penn-York Co., Inc.

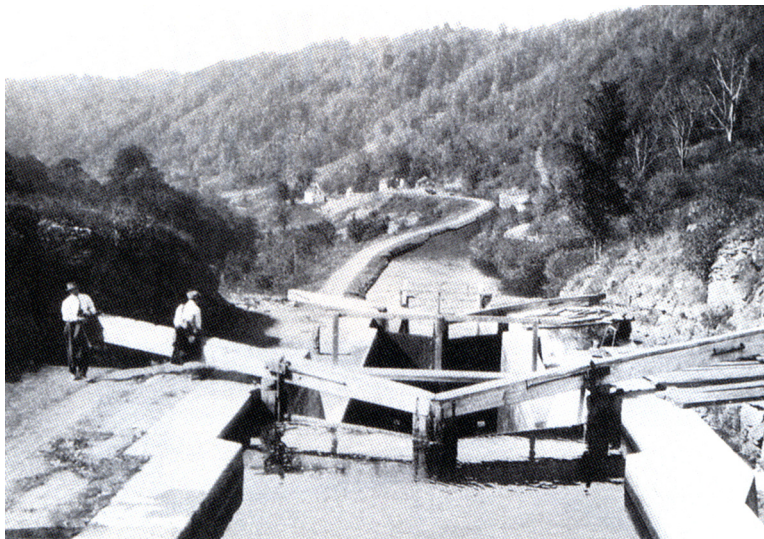
LIFT OF BLACK RIVER CANAL LOCKS

N ^o and Lift of Locks . feet & Inches									
Lock N ^o .	Lift	Lock	Lift	Lock	Lift	Lock	Lift	Lock	Lift
1	10	20	10	38	10	56	10	74	10
2	10	21	10	39	10	57	10	75	10
3	10	22	10	40	10	58	10	76	10
4	10	23	10	41	10	59	10	77	10
5	10	24	10	42	10	60	10	78	10
6	10	25	10	43	10	61	10	79	10
7	10	26	10	44	10	62	10	80	10
8	11	27	10	45	10	63	10	81	10
9	12	28	10	46	10	64	10	82	10
10	11	29	10	47	10	65	10	83	10
11	11	30	10	48	10	66	10	84	10
12	11	31	10	49	10	67	10	85	10
13	8	32	10	50	10	68	10	86	10
14	8	33	10	51	10	69	9	87	10
15	8	34	10	52	10	70	9	88	10
16	10	35	10	53	10	71	10	89	10
17	8	36	10	54	10	72	10	90	10
18	10	37	10	55	10	73	10	91	12
19	8								

This graphic shows 1,082.75 feet of elevation change up to Lock 70 and down to Lock 109. Notably, the Delaware and Hudson Canal, completed in 1828, covered 108 miles and had 108 locks to overcome 1,073 feet of elevation change. That canal carried coal from Honesdale, PA to Eddyville, NY near Kingston and the Hudson River. This graphic of the Black River Canal locks was provided by Bonnie Butler, a great-great-granddaughter of John and Jane Edgar Davidson.



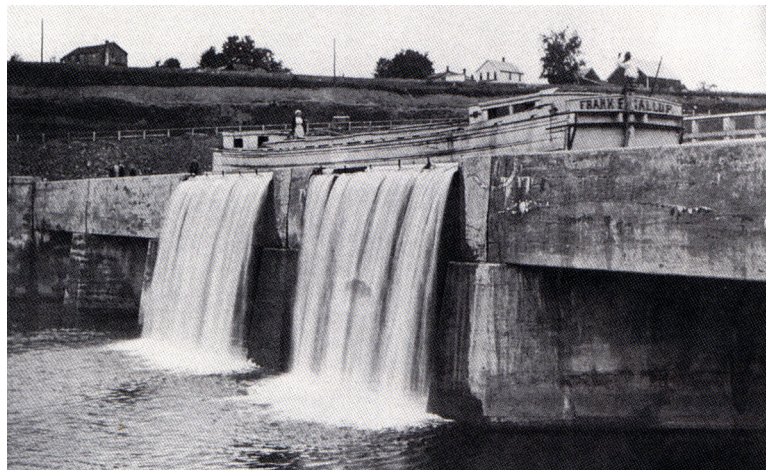
This is the set of the 5 locks on the Black River Canal being built. This photo is in the Erwin Library in Boonville.



Looking downhill over one of the locks on the Black River Canal. This photo also is in the Erwin Library.



This is the start of the Forestport Feeder Canal into which water flows under the bridge. The Black River is in the middle flowing to the left. Date of photo is not known. From Woodgate Free Library collection.



An aqueduct on the Black River Canal out of which excess water is spilling as the canal boat passes. Photo from Erie Canal Museum collection.



This is water behind the Forestport dam, which is beyond the line of buoys. Greg Hof age 9 in 2003 is a great-great-great-grandson of John and Jane Edgar Davidson and a great-great-grandson of Charles and Frances Kronmiller.



These locks once on the Black River Canal may be seen today from Route 12 north of Boonville.

3 – JOHN DAVIDSON - A SETTLER

John Davidson had no reason to settle north of Forestport, except for the Black River Canal and the Forestport Feeder Canal to get him there and give him hope of shipping his farm goods away.

Going to his land, though, he didn't have to stay on the boat all the way to Forestport. He and his family could have gotten off before there at Hawkinsville and likely did. From Hawkinsville they could reach his new land by wagon and team of horses he either hired or bought. It was a ten-mile-ride uphill, steep in places. The distance from Forestport was about the same but a more gradual climb.

The 100-acre woods they finally reached were not inviting. I know this from having been lost in those woods nearly a hundred years later with five others including one of his great-granddaughters who I eventually married. We've summered in the area for four decades, nearly three of them in the Davidson house. The land is filled with trees and from south to north slopes down to Bear Creek, which cuts across the northwestern corner and tumbles south over rocks to join Woodhull Creek and the Black River, a small part of the Erie's long reach. The land also is filled with glacial stones and boulders and with a north-facing slope at 1,600 feet above sea level surely was the last place a farmer should pick to make his fortune.

He would have found far better farmland by staying on the Erie Canal and heading west. With a little sense of adventure he could have gone all the way to the gold fields of California. But instead he settled for the North Woods of New York for reasons we'll never know. Under all the trees covering his new land, the ground was sand or hardpan filled with stones and covered with only a thin layer of topsoil. Almost none of it was level. In winter it was covered with deep snow, in spring fierce black flies, and in summer pesky mosquitoes and deer flies. August and September were the nicest months, if frosts didn't come early.

John Davidson and his family rode up to their woods in muddy May over a dirt road that cut through them—thanks to the Forestport Feeder Canal and its reservoirs. Only a few years earlier it was just a path that only gradually widened into a road as surveyors and dam builders tramped over it to get to North Lake and Woodhull Lake. For many years it was called the Woodhull trail or road and then became the Bear Creek Road because it crosses the creek of that name.

John Davidson and his father John "shouldered their axes" on May 16, 1855 and "commenced clearing" for a house and farm. What they cleared, in the words of one historian, was "wilderness." John was 31 then and his father 60. Woods or wilderness, clearing them one tree at a time might have looked like more than two men should try to do, especially when the older one was well past the average life span of the day. Looking at hundreds of trees in all directions, they might have wondered out loud where to begin.

More than likely, though, the younger John knew what they were up against because he had seen the land before taking his family there. Having bought the land four years earlier from his father, he had time to visit it and find out how he could make a farm there. He had time, too, to build a cabin for his family, but given his notes I'd guess they moved into the John McClure cabin when they got there in 1855. His father knew McClure because he bought the land from him six years earlier. Moreover, the younger John Davidson's earliest note is about plowing for McClure, perhaps in exchange for using his cabin. Whichever cabin, it would have been crowded with four adults and three children—John 7, William 5, Elizabeth 3—and a fourth born during the year named Samuel.

The road to Woodhull cut through the northern part of the Davidson land and a small stretch along the road that was close to flat became the site for house and barn. From the road, John and his father must have found it hard to look uphill or downhill through all the trees and see among them the farm to be. Any patches of flat land near the road were filled with water from winter snows and spring rains. Surely, the best part was Bear Creek tumbling cold and clear over rocks.

The house they built was, and still is, on the road, set back a little from it. A giant white pine stands at the beginning of the drive up to the house. A family story has it that the tree was planted as a seedling by William when he was five—planted at a spot where his father or grandfather could look south from the road and see where the house was to be and say, "put it right here." A five-year-old would need that kind of help. But before the tree could be planted, John and his father had to know the site for the house would be where they could have a well. And before the house could be built, they had to dig a well to make sure water would be there—dig by hand through hardpan and line it with stones scattered in abundance where glaciers had left them.

They had about six months to chop and build, plow and plant before winter snow and cold. Maybe they dug the well that first year, but I wonder if they had time. Chopping down trees for house lumber and a field for crops took a lot of time to begin with. Chopping off branches took more. And piling up branches and burning them and burning stumps may have taken longer than the chopping. A team of oxen helped with dragging the biggest limbs and moving logs to the sides of the fields. They too had to be fed through the winter, and hay for them needed bigger fields than potato, rye, and cabbage fields for people.

Plowing after the trees were cleared told the Davidsons the worst truth—the soil was thin and filled with roots and stones. Many stones were too big to plow through and had to be piled to one side or the other in walls that still stand in testimony. Some were too big to move at all and are where they've been since glaciers planted them there. The two men had enough to do without digging a well that first year, but maybe they finished it. Through their first winter they chopped down more trees for bigger fields the second year, burned

branches and stumps, hauled logs to the mill, and kept warm cutting firewood for their cabin.

Eight people in one cabin with maybe a dirt floor and no windows should have been enough to spur building a house the second year. But first, after plowing and planting for the season and assuming the well was dug the year before, they had to dig a cellar. It turned out to be a hole bigger than 32 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 6 feet deep. How long it took to move nearly 4,000 cubic feet of dirt and stones by hand with shovels, the notes don't say. I'm sure the work went slowly because of glacial stones buried in the ground, many of which are now in the two-foot thick cellar walls.

Those walls have stood straight and firm for more than 140 years, so most likely the Davidsons paid a mason to build it for them—with their help of course. That was after they made a daylong trip to Forestport or Hawkinsville to buy lime for the mortar and another day perhaps of hauling sand from a pit at the top of the hill behind the house site. The mason would have made sure that lime, sand, and water were mixed just right, and John and his father would have helped by carrying or pushing stones to the wall.

Maybe they took all the second summer to get the cellar dug and walls built and the following winter they again hauled logs to the sawmill for house lumber and logs for money. They needed money because I'm sure they had the house built or at least framed by a carpenter. It was built like thirteen others along the roads in the White Lake area. A local historian calls them the area's "earliest frame houses, all built before or shortly after 1855." I noticed for the first time how carefully the Davidson house had been built only when I tore out its old kitchen in 1992.

It was symmetrical in its general plan. Windows were opposite one another on the four walls. Front and back doors, opposite each other, were the same in detail—narrow panes of glass on each side of the doors. A hallway between the doors divided the house in half and stairs went up from there to the second floor cut low by its sloping roof. Trim throughout the first floor showed the hand of a carpenter.

The walls on the first floor were plaster which when I tore it away showed the house had been built when wood was plentiful and logs were large. The ceiling rafters are a true 3 x 8 inches, wall studs true 2 x 6 inches, and corner posts a full eight inches square. Nailed to the studs outside as a base for the clapboards are broad horizontal boards, some seventeen inches wide. Rafters are sixteen inches apart "on center," as carpenters like to say.

I don't know when exactly the house was built. But I do know the Davidsons had reason to build it sooner rather than later. By 1857 a fifth child—David—was on the way. After him four more were born—James in 1859, Robert 1861, George 1864, and Henry 1866. But John Davidson's accounts tell nothing of children being born or living in a log cabin. Not a flicker of cheer or

sadness shows on his smudged pages. They tell nothing of his family, worries, or dreams.

They tell only of work he and others did for one another, seemingly little more than lists of days worked and money paid or owed. But sparse as they are, his notes add up to a sketch of the little settlement along the Woodhull road—a picture of how closely families on an 1858 map were linked to one another. Seven families lived along the first mile of the Woodhull road from the main road, six families in the second mile, and only the Skillins and Davidsons in the last mile. The settled part of the road ended just past Davidson's. Deeper woods were beyond.

Most of the names along the road are in John Davidson's accounts. His earliest entry was November 9, 1855—"Bought 3 bushels of rye for John McClure, 9 shillings per bushel." Over the following four days he plowed and planted for McClure at the rate of \$2.25 per day, and he farmed for others even as he and his father had more than enough to do for themselves. In 1856 he plowed nine days in May for McClure and built a fence for him one day in July, more signs that he was living in McClure's cabins. McClure was a summer or fall visitor to the area, an "unresident," as such people were often called. John Davidson worked for him in the following years for a few days each year doing things like plowing, planting, and mowing—work a resident farmer normally would do for himself.

But clearings for small houses and fields were not the main feature of the three-mile road in the 1850s. Trees were. They were big old-growth trees like spruce and hemlock towering around each farm waiting to be taken by ax and oxen to John Herrick's mill. Lumber made from the trees was used in the area or taken to the feeder canal for shipping to cities. On December 21, 1855 John Davidson wrote, "Drewed the first logs to mill"—3 of them. They were for Mr. G. J. Griffith who had a house on the main road toward White Lake and over the next five days, he took 33 more spruce logs to the mill for Mr. Griffith. All of the logs added up to 2,578 feet or just over 70 feet each on average. He also took 16 logs he didn't measure.

The mill was about a mile and a half down the Woodhull road from the Davidsons at the point where it crossed Bear Creek. "Drawing" logs there meant dragging them one or two at a time or several on small sleds. John Davidson doesn't note where the logs were or how he got them to the mill. But whatever he did, he surely spent the better part of a day at it. During the first three months of 1856, he took more spruce logs to the mill for Mr. Griffith—116 in all. In 1857 he took 6,890 feet of spruce but didn't note how many logs. And in 1858 he took 11,152 feet. If these were linear feet, he may have dragged another 250 spruce logs for Mr. Griffith for a total of 600 spruce logs in the Davidsons' first years there. Money for hauling Mr. Griffith's logs would have helped to pay a mason and carpenter to build the house.

John Davidson's accounts hint at when his house was nearing completion. On October 24, 1857 he had a log sawed into boards one inch thick and clapboards 8 inches wide, but they were not put on until the following spring. On May 5, 1858 he traded 6 bunches of shingles with Mr. Moore for several items of food and 7 quarts of whiskey, more whiskey than John and his father needed for themselves—but not too much to reward men nailing clapboards on the house.

Making shingles for whiskey is only a sample of that work. The Davidsons made shingles for their own roof as well and enough to trade for other goods or to sell—238 bunches in all between 1857 and 1859. They made them from spruce logs sawed into blocks of uniform length. They split pieces off the blocks as cleanly and evenly as they could to make flat shingles that they then tapered at one end. After the work of chopping down the trees in the first place and hauling them to the house to be sawed, they had almost as much work in handling each piece many times—splitting, tapering, and packing pieces into bunches, as many as 600 to a bunch.

Shingles were money for John Davidson—\$1 a bunch for “sap” shingles and \$1.50 a bunch for “heart” shingles. He sold 49 bunches in 1857 for \$57.50, 83 bunches the next year for \$103.42, and 57 bunches the year after for \$92.75. He sold them to people like Griffith, Goodier, Kraft, Houser, Herrick, Jackson, Moore, Anderson, Dallarmi, and Hulbert.

John Davidson traded shingles for many things. March 11, 1857—“Let Mr. Griffith have 14 bunches sap and 1 bunch heart shingles. Received from him 2 sacks flour, 1 pound tea.” If there were 600 shingles to a bunch, 9,000 shingles for flour and tea looks like an uneven trade, but perhaps there was more to the trade than he wrote down. An account with Mr. Goodier in 1858—“April 12th bought one cow price \$20 or 16 bunches of heart shingles. April 10th delivered one bunch on the cow. Sept 11th delivered 5 bunches on the cow. November 16th delivered 7 bunches on the cow. December 17th delivered 3 bunches on the cow.” For 8 bunches of shingles in 1858, John Davidson “received in exchange” from Mr. Herrick 5 sacks of flour, 93 pounds of feed, 2 gallons of molasses, 13 pounds of pork. And he traded work for shingles, like plowing with oxen for his nearest neighbor. He noted in 1858 he “received from John Skillin” on different days a total of 37 bunches of shingles.

He kept making shingles into the 1860s. October 8, 1861—“Bought from Mr. Kronmiller 109 pounds of beef 4 cents per pound comes to \$4.36. Oct. 28 delivered to Mr. Kronmiller 4 bunches shingles 2 heart and 2 sap comes to \$4.50. Due to John Davidson 14 cents.” This was George Kronmiller, who by then was his second closest neighbor on the road. Unknown to both of them, George was to become the grandfather of Frederick Kronmiller who in the next century was to marry John Davidson’s granddaughter Margaret Jane Davidson.

In 1863 over many days, John Davidson hauled 217 bunches of shingles to Alder Creek, Hawkinsville or Boonville for eight of his neighbors. Given the numbers of shingles made and traded up until then, I’d guess the shingles ended

up in the hands of a few men along the Forestport Feeder Cancel who when they had enough shipped a boatload to some city. John Davidson didn't keep track of where shingles and lumber ended up though. His notes reached out only as far as he could see to the woods and fields around him and the road in front of his house.

Dragging logs to Herrick's mill or home for shingles left Woodhull road with ruts and mud holes needing repair. John Davidson worked on the road in August, September, and October 1858 for 20 days at 62 1/2 cents per day and was paid \$12.50—"Received pay January 12 [1859] from Mr. Griffith Road Commissioner of Remsen." In 1859 he worked two days with oxen for \$2.50—"received pay from Mr. Henry Rush path master."

In 1862 John Davidson became "road overseer" and in his accounts of roadwork he wrote longer, more detailed notes about how many days each year each of his neighbors worked. Each year-round resident worked on the road and if he had oxen to bring to the work was credited with two days for each day of work with oxen. "Unresidents" with land along the road paid a road tax, which in turn was used to pay residents who worked their share. In 1867 John Davidson worked most of the non-resident share himself, another small source of cash, but he didn't put down how much.

One of the best sources of cash for John Davidson through the years—thanks to the canals—was hemlock bark. It was harvested in three stages—chopping down the trees and peeling bark off them in early summer, piling the bark in cords in the fall, and hauling the bark to a tannery on sleds in winter. John Davidson first noted it in 1856—"Bark to Mr. Anderson. Sold 10 cords, \$1.50 per cord, \$15.00." He also sold 9 cords of bark to Anderson in 1857 and 18 cords in 1858, all at the same price of \$1.50 per cord. And in 1859 Davidson sold 52 cords of bark for 15 shillings per cord, or \$97.50, which worked out to \$1.87 per cord.

The amounts he was paid for each cord may mean he didn't take the bark to the tannery himself. When he did so in 1867, he was paid \$5 per cord for his bark. My best guess is that in the 1850s John Davidson was paid for each cord that he peeled from trees he chopped down on his own lot and piled into cords. Someone else was paid for hauling the bark to the tannery. During the 1860s, John Davidson harvested more bark or paid someone to do it for him. In 1862 he paid Mr. Powell \$40.25 for peeling 40 1/4 cords of bark, or \$1.00 per cord. He also paid Martin Fregan to peel 14 1/2 cords for him for a total of nearly 55 cords that year but he doesn't note how much he was paid for the bark.

For 1865, though, he received \$480.37 for 96 cords. For 1866, \$170.62 for 34 1/8 cords. For 1867, \$602.99 for 120 1/2 cords. In 1868, his biggest year, John Davidson chopped and peeled 23 cords himself and paid young Charles Kronmiller to chop, peel, and pile up another 132 cords without noting how much he paid him to do it. But he did note paying N. Ulrick and J. App \$2 a cord to

haul 132 cords to the tannery. They were part of the 155 cords for which Proctor & Hill Tannery finally paid him \$775 in 1869.

The arithmetic looks all to John Davidson's favor. If he paid Charles Kronmiller \$1.50 a cord for his work and he paid others \$2 to haul, that's \$3.50 for others and \$1.50 from each cord for John Davidson. But as good as this was for him, his notes don't tell of any more bark being harvested. He may have used up all his trees.

Hemlock bark was the biggest cash cow in the White Lake area in the 1860s—thanks to the canals that brought hides to the woods and took them away as leather. But John Davidson also made money on the trees themselves. Peeled bark left skinned trees on the ground, which some say were better left to rot because hemlock did not make good lumber for building.

People along Woodhull road thought otherwise. John Davidson took 66 hemlock logs to the mill for Mr. Griffith in 1856 and as many as 75 during the following year. In December 1861, John Davidson "skidded" 2,231 hemlock logs for Goodier. He noted the numbers of logs that were 13, 14, 16, 18, and 20 feet long and piled them alongside Woodhull road for Goodier. In 1863 he delivered 564 hemlock logs to the mill. Then in 1868 John Davidson with his son William and sometimes Charles Kronmiller and Henry Powell took to cutting up hemlock trees for logs at "\$8 per hundred," paid no doubt by a local mill. They "cut" 1,256 logs that year—a sure sign that someone thought the wood was good enough to use. But it was used only because the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals prompted harvesting the bark in the first place.

The 1860s were good to John Davidson because of the hemlocks and shingles from his woods. And his farming paid off too. In 1860 he had lumber cut for a barn 30 by 40 feet in size and noted on April 24, 1861—"Mr. Yoman and John Williams commenced framing our barn." On the same day John Davidson bought the first of 8 gallons of whiskey, no doubt to keep helping hands happy in their work.

By then the Civil War had "commenced" as well but it was too far away to ever make it into the account book. Only two entries hint of war. One is an address for Henry Powell in the infantry at Camp Grant. The other is the 1862 County Tax List showing that among his taxes he paid a Military tax of \$1.

On September 8, 1865, John Davidson noted—"Sent to Mr. Henry Powell 25 dollars in part payment for his lot of 100 acres of land laying on Woodhull tract, price 175 dollars to be paid in 4 years from date." The tract includes the Woodhull road lot on which Powell lived in 1858 and may have sold because he was in the Union Army. In addition, a Warranty Deed signed on May 20, 1868 shows John Davidson bought another 100 acres from Samuel and Elizabeth Robertson for \$400. This lot borders his original homestead lot on the south. The *Oneida County Gazetteer and Business Directory* of 1869 lists John Davidson as a farmer with 300 acres.

John Davidson farmed his own acres in the 1860s and land belonging to two others. He kept farming on John McClure's land as he had in the 1850s. And he added land belonging to E. P. Hornick who paid him and others to log and clear it and fence it in 1860. John Davidson then planted Hornick's land and kept doing so each year up to 1868. Over the years he raised buckwheat, rye, oats, turnips, straw, hay, and potatoes at different times. He listed the value of each crop and paid Hornick one third of it. For all the years, the value added up to \$287.27, of which Hornick's share was \$95.76.

John Davidson also had cows (named Violet, Daisy, Lilly, Rosey, Patty, Fanny, Polly, Spotty) that he noted each year were "bulled" by some neighbor's bull. And in November 1862, he was able to buy horses, maybe his first. He bought an 8-year old "bay horse" for \$65 and a 5-year old "gray mare" for \$75. He used oxen for dragging logs to the mill and other work, but he used the horses to haul things to towns 10 miles away.

Even so, town news and events were too far away to be part of John Davidson's notes—not even the biggest ones like fires and floods. On April 21, 1869 the dam at North Lake broke sending a wall of water down to Forestport. Logs floating in the pond there waiting for shipping through the canals were tossed and tumbled against the Forestport dam, which also broke sending even more water down the Black River. When the wall of water reached Watertown the next day, it had taken out bridges and mills all along its path. By then, too, the news must have reached White Lake Corners where neighbors talked, but didn't write, about it.

Though John Davidson surely knew about it, he had too much work at hand to think or worry about such disasters. After fifteen years of clearing wilderness, farming, and selling logs for lumber, shingles, and bark to others using the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals, he added up the gains from all his hard work. On January 2, 1870, he carefully wrote out an "inventory of stock and chattel on hand at date"—4 horses at \$435. 6 cows at \$195. 4 sheep at \$20. 21 hens + 3 turkeys + 4 geese + 2 ducks at \$12.25. Farm wagons, equipment, and hay at \$437.50. Homestead farm & 100 acres at \$1,500. Lot 7, 100 acres at \$400. And a one-horse cutter at \$40. Everything added up to \$3,039.75.

By then the 100 acres down the road that he bought from Henry Powell he had sold to his son William who farmed it and worked in the woods as his father had. But John was still left with the helping hands of seven sons for his animals and fields. He must have felt well settled. Before the month was out he bought another horse for \$85 and by November sold a bay colt for \$100 and "received cash." The following year he bought 2 six-week-old pigs for \$3.

He was living in an economy in which \$1 a day was typical pay for a long day of a man's labor. Low as it was, it's a scale to weigh John Davidson's farm assets. With fifteen years of work he had assets 3,000 times greater than a typical day's pay. At that rate today anyone earning \$100 a day would have to

have net assets of \$300,000 for the same period to match him—a lot of net worth in a time when just to get through each day, people must buy more goods and services than John Davidson ever thought of.

By 1870 the woods around John Davidson had given up many of its old growth trees to settlement, and the political landscape changed as well. A new township named Forestport was created from the northern part of the town of Remsen. The town of Forestport, as distinct from the village of the same name on the canal feeder, became the most northern of Oneida County's 26 townships and 2 cities. It also was the largest—over 5 miles wide from east to west and about 13 miles long from the Black River as its southern border to the middle of its northern border.

It was a lot of land for anyone to cover with horse and wagon in order to assess property values for town taxes. It took three people to do it and by 1871 John Davidson was one of them. He kept "An account of time assessing town property in the town of Forestport by J. Davidson" which shows 5 days assessing in June and July, "hearing complaints" on August 15th, and "comparing books and signing" on September 1st.

He assessed property in the northern half of the town where settlement was thinner than around the village in the southern half. John Davidson listed 74 people who owned land. Most held 100 or fewer acres. The largest holding was 1,810 acres, followed by 900 acres, then 684 and 505 acres. John Davidson showed 300 acres as his, which meant he was paying taxes for his son's 100 acres. At that he was the 7th largest landowner on his list. Whether he was still an "overseer of roads" is not clear. In September 1871 he noted "An account of nonresident work" on roads showing four days only for himself. But he credited himself with 24 days for the 4 days of actual work. Perhaps some of his sons worked with him. An auditor might like to know.

In 1872 he was again an assessor and noted on November 5th he also was an Inspector of Elections for 2 days. Then his small political jobs blossomed into something bigger, thanks to the Erie Canal's need for water. He wrote in his account book on January 1, 1873—"John Davidson taking charge of Woodhull and Sand Lake Reservoirs, salary 50 dollars per month." His notes show he was paid through the year and up to at least August 8, 1874.

It must have been one of the best paying jobs on Woodhull Road, if not in the whole township. He got it, I'd guess, from paying political dues with the lesser jobs of road overseer, inspector of elections, and town assessor. But also when Sand Lake opened in 1873, John Davidson's house was one of the closest to the reservoir. From his house he had about a 6-mile hike over the trails to Sand Lake and less than 3 miles around the lake to the Woodhull dam. On any given day he could check water levels in the lakes and be back home for supper. Or in a day's time he could hike in to lower the dams and tramp home again singing a song to himself, if he knew the words and tune—"Oh, the Er-i-e is

rising. The gin is getting low. And I scarcely think I'll get a drink till I get to Buffalo" (or home).

By 1874, John Davidson assessor's book had many blank pages so he started keeping some of his personal notes on them. On April 15th, he noted expenses for framing a house 20 by 32 feet—an addition on the front of the house he had built in the 1850s. John Pate was the hired carpenter for framing but sons William and David helped as did nearest neighbor William Skillin. The addition nearly doubled the family's living space. With at least 7 children at home—ranging in age from 8 to 21—they surely felt need for more space, especially bedrooms. On the second floor three bedrooms and a stairway up to them were added. A dining room and pantry off from it plus a parlor were added on the first floor.

The front addition also doubled space for those of us who were to enjoy it a century later as part of the Davidson legacy. The front of the house, like the back part, also shows signs of a carpenter's hand—a bay window area with three windows on both floors, an arch leading into the bay area on both floors, trim around the doors, and specially cut shingles under the three roof peaks outside. Today we have two large and three small bedrooms there, one full bath and two half-baths on the inside and two screened porches on the outside. It's our Old House in the woods on Bear Creek Road, not a camp as many other places are called.

John Davidson had one other source of cash, smaller than others, which first shows up on January 9, 1869 in "An account with P. McGuire." Philip McGuire—dubbed the "spars and spiles king"—was in Forestport and shipped spars and spiles by canal to Albany and New York City. Both spiles and spars were spruce and were 55 to 70 feet long—a lot of log to drag or haul by sled one or two at a time from Woodhull road to Forestport ten miles away. McGuire paid John Davidson for 61 spiles at \$2.44 each and 26 spars at \$9 each for a total of \$383.70.

Then in 1875, John Davidson contracted with George B. Anderson to deliver "50 and 60-foot spiles" at Forestport for \$2 per "stick." From the end of November of that year to March of the next, 490 spiles were delivered for \$980. But John Davidson didn't do the work himself. His neighbors and sons did it. He paid seven neighbors (C. Ringwald, G. Stell, A. Pate, M. Rigley, F. Myers, J. Jenkins, J. Skillin) and two sons (William and James) to haul the sticks there on sleds over the course of 50 days. He paid them \$1.25 per stick for their work and made \$367.50 on the contract. His skills at overseeing roadwork and managing the work of others paid him over 7 dollars a day in a dollar-a-day economy

Seemingly at the age of 51 he was well settled after twenty years in the area. But in March 1876 he paid the last of his \$372 account at McClusky's store in Boonville. Then he wrote on April 3, 1876—"Moved to Lafayette, Onondaga County." Lafayette, south of Syracuse, was nearly 80 miles away, and he moved the whole family there except his father who had died in 1865 and his two oldest

sons John and William—moved them all by horse and wagon over bumpy or muddy roads. Many pages of his accounts show he went to work for Mr. C. W. Hall who had a large farm there.

I can only guess why he moved. He may have lost his reservoir job and his farmland, poor as it was, would not yield enough to feed his large family. Farms in Lafayette had better soil and weather and he had plenty of helping hands in the six sons he took with him. He left not knowing if or when he would ever return. And he left behind 20 years of notes about his work settling in the White Lake area. They are messy notes in smudged pencil or faded ink—every page of “an account” with a neighbor filled with numbers of trees cut or shingles traded or fields plowed telling of all that he had to keep track of as he worked.

His numbers in total are large. In 20 years, John Davidson hauled or otherwise handled 788 unspecified kinds of logs, 2,968 spruce logs, 6,457 hemlock logs, and 205 shingle logs. And he hauled or kept track of 580 long logs used as spars and spiles. He didn't note the logs he hauled from the woods to home to be used for cooking and heating, but I'd guess at least 50 a year or another 1,000 logs for firewood. All the logs add up to about 12,000—a lot of trees taken from the wilderness. And from those trees he also made and traded 359 bunches of shingles and sold 648 cords of hemlock bark.

Among other things, John Davidson's dull accounts with all their numbers tell of a high level of trust among neighbors who in working for one another did not demand cash money at the end of a day's hard work. And they tell of the long reach of the Erie Canal into the southwestern corner of the Adirondack region through the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals.

Notes

*O'Donnell, *Birth of a River* writes that the “easiest terrain to navigate” to North Lake and Woodhull Lake was from White Lake Corners (p. 45). Further, the trail from the Corners to the lakes became “a pack-horse road” (p. 50). At the Corners the road went on to Hawkinsville and Boonville and today is called the “Hogsback.”

*Wager tells of the Davidson family—John and his father “shouldering” their axes to clear “wilderness” and that son John was a “road overseer” among other things. He also states the senior John Davidson died March 13, 1865 (vol. II, p. 207). The son did not note his father's death in his book of accounts.

*Virginia Davidson Burr is the last of her generation in the family and tells of William Davidson planting the white pine tree when he was five.

*Ann Steele, “Earliest Woodgate Frame Houses” with a map of 11 houses appears in *Adirondack Trail Guide*, Woodgate Free Library, 1998 edition. The 1999 edition contains her follow-up note on a 12th such house, and she reported a 13th house with a new map in an oral presentation at the library in 2002.

*A copy of my transcriptions and summaries of John Davidson's account book may be found in the Woodgate Free Library.

*Ted Aber and Stella King, *The History of Hamilton County*, Lake Pleasant NY: Great Wilderness Books, 1965, state "Always the principal problem was the roads. . . . Each resident was assigned a number of days of roadwork based on the size of his property as denoted by the number of workable acres and the size of the house he had built. No one complained. It was a system in use throughout the growing United States." (p. 38)

*McMartin, in *Hides, Hemlocks, and Adirondack History* writes, "For all its beauty, the eastern hemlock was little prized for its wood. It splinters, is of poor quality, and has knots that chipped a woodsman's axe. It was used for railroad ties and road planking, and recently it has been used for pulp for paper." She questions whether it was left in the woods to rot and notes it also was used for lath to support plaster (p. 44).

*Best says that hemlock was "despised for building" but was used for the Boonville Plank Road, 20 miles between Remsen and Turin (p. 52).

*William F. Fox, *History of the Lumber Industry in the State of New York with an Appendix; the Role of the Pioneer Lumberman*, Reprint Harrison, NY: Harbor Hill Books, 1976 was originally published in the 6th annual report of the New York Forest, Fish, and Game Commission, 1901. He claims, "Not until there was a scarcity of pine did lumber men find it profitable to take hemlock logs to the mills; and, then, for many years the margin of profit was very small" (p.11).

*Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Oneida County, N. Y. for 1869*, Syracuse: Journal Office, 1869 shows John Davidson with 300 acres (p. 259).

*Ann Steele is my source about the 100 acres that became William Davidson's. She says he held the land from 1870 to 1900. Today Jim Moon owns the land as did his father before him.

*Thomas describes the break in the North Lake dam (pp.137-140).

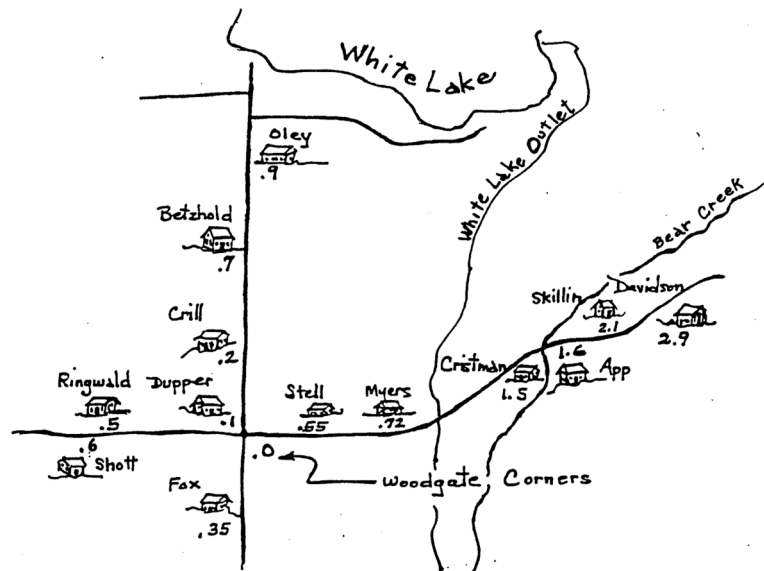
*John Davidson's note for July 25, 1871—"A Copy of Assessor's Notice. Notice is hereby given that the Assessors of the town of Forestport have completed their assessment roll for the year 1871 and that a copy thereof is left with Timothy Coughlin at his house where the same may be seen and examined for the next twenty days from the date of this notice and that the assessors will meet on the 15th day of August next at one o'clock pm at the Hotel of Samuel Maibach for the purpose of giving any person feeling aggrieved an opportunity to show why. . . . John Davidson, Stephen Willard, Timothy Coughlin Assessors."

*Lionel D. Wyld, *Low Bridge! Folklore and the Erie Canal*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962, describes canal songs and suggests that the lyrics of "The Er-I-e" did not become standardized until after John Davidson's time (p. 101).

*O'Donnell, *Snubbing Posts*, calls Phil McGuire "the spar-and-pile king," (p. 108).

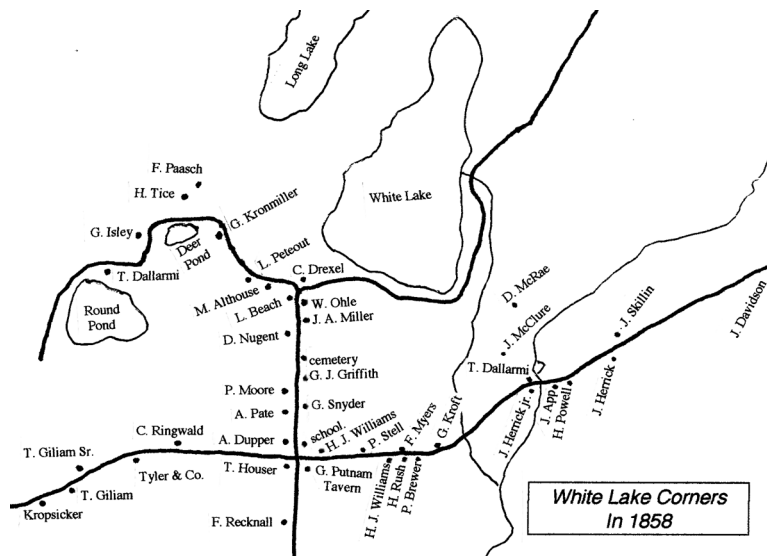
*My wife and I are indebted to my brother Ray and his wife Carolyn for sharing in ownership of the Davidson house and fixing it up beginning in the 1970s. When they moved to Florida, they sold their half to us.

*The number of logs John Davidson handled comes from my estimations in cases where he mentions only the log feet taken to the mill or he mentions the number of shingles handled. The logs were of known lengths ranging 12 feet to over 100 feet. John Davidson handled most of them himself but some clearly were cut or dragged for him by others. Though the number may not be exact, the scale is telling.



Set mileage at '0' and see Woodgate as it was!

"Woodgate's Earliest Frame Houses," research and map by Ann Steele.



Map by J. Huther. Locations are approximate. Scale: It's about 3 miles from the Corners to the Davidson place. Source of map: "Gillette's Map of Oneida County From Actual Surveys under direction of J. H. French," Philadelphia: John E. Gillette Publisher, 1858. The map is in the Oneida County Historical Library.



John Davidson 1824-1896. Date not known.



Jane Davidson 1826-1923. Date not known.

JOHN DAVIDSON'S BOOK OF ACCOUNTS



The book is 8 x 13 inches and about 1.5 inches thick with "Orders to England" printed on the cover and his name written on the cover. It was a leather-bound book of blank pages. On the first page in a fine hand written in ink are 2 lists of various goods and "Albany 25th February 1792." On the second page on the same date is a letter signed "Your most humble servant John Taylor." Below is a sample Davidson page.



Many opening pages are covered with newspaper articles pasted over John Taylor's writing. Perhaps no more than 15 percent of the pages had been used when John Davidson gained possession and he started using blank pages for his accounts of work he and others did in the White Lake area beginning November 9, 1855. A copy of my transcriptions and summaries may be found in the Woodgate Free Library.

4 – CHARLES KRONMILLER – A SETTLER

Charles Kronmiller first shows up in John Davidson's notes in October 1865, listed with other men doing roadwork. He was 16 at the time. The year before, his father George died from having his leg amputated in a Philadelphia hospital after being wounded near Petersburg. He wrote to his wife just a month before he died, "Thank the Lord I am well, only my left leg got shot off."

George had moved to the White Lake area from Germany with his wife Regina Ruth and young Charles some time in the 1850s. He left Germany, as a family story has it, to avoid further service in the army there. More likely than not, he and his wife and young son traveled by canal to get to the North Woods, because it was the easiest route to Hawkinsville where some members of the Ruth family had already settled. George Kronmiller's name is on the 1858 map between White Lake and Deer Pond. About that time, though, and possibly before, he bought a 50-acre farm on the Woodhull Road, about a mile west of the Davidsons. They became the Davidsons' second closest neighbors after the Skillins.

George volunteered for the Union Army and joined his unit in 1863. He left his wife with Charles born in 1849, Louisa born in 1856, Philip born in 1859, and George born in 1862. And he left his wife pregnant with Mary born in 1864. In the army, he worried about his oldest son. He wrote to his wife in January 1864 that he heard Charles was going around with a woman "all kind of hours" and "hanging out day and night in the App's." He asked her to let him know if Charles was "disobedient, impudent." But he also spoke of Charles earning money, most likely from working in the woods. When he died, George left Regina with a 20-year mortgage he had taken out on his farm the year before and with the Army owing him at least six months of pay. Charles was left as the only support for his mother and her four young children.

One day after working in the woods for a period, Charles came out to find that neighbors had taken his mother, brothers, and sisters to Rome to the county Poorhouse because Regina had no money for food. She also had little or no English to get by with and was lucky Charles came to take them all back home. He was the family's only hope because Regina did not file papers for a widow's pension and support for her children until August 25, 1866. Her lack of English may have slowed the filing. She had to have a lawyer in Utica fill out forms and write letters to her and for her. He did so for nearly two years and did not get the money—\$760—owed to her as a widow until 1868.

In the meantime Charles, the once troublesome teenager, became a man of fields and woods as his father had been. Each year he paid the interest on the mortgage, except for 1866 when John Herrick, the mill owner, did it. Herrick may have done it on the family's behalf or he may have owed Charles the money for work. No notes other than a signed receipt tell of his deed.

But John Davidson's notes tell of some of Charles Kronmiller's work as a teenager. In 1866, Charles peeled 50 cords of bark for Davidson worth \$1.37 a cord. He paid Charles for this work with various goods not specified, 11 pounds of pork, 2 rakes, a whetstone, a pair of pants, and cash. He also spent half a day "drawing in hay" for Charles because he had oxen and horses and Charles didn't. In all, Charles earned \$68.75, a little over half of it in cash, for all the trees he chopped down and peeled and the bark he stacked in piles 4 feet high, 4 feet wide, and 8 feet long.

In 1867, Charles traded 3,200 pounds of hay with John Davidson for plowing and harvesting by Davidson with his horses and oxen. The next year Charles traded 1,500 pounds of hay with Davidson for food and other goods, cash, and work by Davidson with his team totaling \$97.92. Davidson charged \$4 a day for working with his team, which seems steep for a dollar-a-day economy. In 1868 when Charles was 19, he worked even harder for John Davidson. That was the year he chopped down enough hemlock trees to peel 132 cords of bark. Years later his notes would show that it took an average of 5 trees to make one cord—660 trees to be chopped by ax because the saw was not used for cutting down trees in the Adirondacks until the 1890s. His notes also would show he could chop and peel about 6 trees a day on average. John Davidson paid him \$1.37 per cord for his work, or \$180.84.

Charles also worked for Davidson in 1868 cutting fallen and peeled hemlock. He worked with William and James Davidson and Henry Powell at various times and in all they cut 889 trees. The work may have been hard enough to convince Charles he'd rather work for himself than John Davidson. That same year Charles bought a 60-acre farm, about a mile down the road west from his father's farm. He paid \$1,000 for it using his money, some or all of his mother's \$760 from the government, and some money borrowed in Utica. He bought the farm from Fred Myers who had cleared and planted it years before. Among other things, the farm had a better house than the cabin the family had been living in. Like the Davidsons', it was one of the original thirteen earliest frame houses in the area and symmetrical in its design. Thanks to the Kronmiller family I summered in it with my young family nearly 90 years after Charles bought it.

In 1871, Charles contracted with the Proctor & Hill Tannery to buy 100 acres of woods in exchange for an unspecified amount of hemlock bark on the land. Through the northern half of the land, Bear Creek tumbled down a winding course over rocks from the lot next door on the east, which was John Davidson's homestead. Charles' lot was steeper, rockier, and wetter than Davidson's so he never tried to farm it. He called it, "my woodlot," and his father's farm and barn he called "the old place." By age 22 he had 210 acres to pay for and he could try to do so only because the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals gave him the chance.

He also had his mother, his brother Philip, and two sisters to look after as well as pay for his land. His brother George was no longer with them because the Shofer family in Frankfurt, New York adopted him as a baby and gave him their name. George had been one mouth too many for Regina Kronmiller to feed after her husband died. With five to feed, Charles became a serious farmer. At age 25 he started keeping notes, perhaps his first, in a small leather-bound book. When that was full, he started another, and then a third. They added up to over 500 pages of daily notes from September 28, 1874 to May 14, 1880 with only a few months missing in 1879. In those years he settled into a lifelong habit of keeping almost daily notes that were to fill over 30 notebooks of varying sizes, some quite big.

Even though they are a better daily record than John Davidson's accounts, the notes are short, sometimes no more than a line—people Charles talked or worked with, prices he paid or charged at stores, money owed to others or to him, weather, work in fields and woods. He kept track of what he did—not what he thought or felt. It's a matter-of-fact record of a life lived plainly, honestly, and largely without complaint. Among all that he did, he collected taxes—"Whole amount of school tax which I can get \$128.94. Whole amount of school tax I had collected Sept. 28th 1874 is $\$79.77 + 4.76 + .70 = \85.23 ."

The 74 names of people in John Davidson's assessor's book were enough for a school and taxes. The school itself is on both the 1858 and 1874 maps, on the main road between Forestport and White Lake. And the collected school taxes, some at least, are in Charles Kronmiller's notes. Collecting taxes may have weighed heavily on him, enough to get him started with his notes. His second and third pages show only sets of numbers he kept adding. Of six different sets, only one came to \$128.94. The others were 12 to 58 cents more or less than the sum he settled on. I take it as a sign he wanted to get the numbers right, not that he couldn't add.

As it is today, collection time was September and October and seemingly done when Charles wasn't working on his harvest or daily chores. September 30th—"It rained about all day. I gathered some school tax." Gathering meant door-to-door in the district, going several miles in all four directions, walking in the rain. From the main road, what we today call the Hogsback road ran west to Hawkinsville and Boonville, and Bear Creek Road (then Woodhull) ran east to the woods. These roads with the main road going north and south made corners that with the lake gave the little settlement its name—White Lake Corners. The 1874 map shows P. Studor's hotel on the southwest corner and the schoolhouse near the northeast corner. In short, the Corners were the center of settlement and Charles' world.

October 4th—"Sunday. I went up to Adam Pate's & returned the school tax that was unresident." Adam Pate, who lived on the main road, was a school trustee. An "unresident's" school tax may have been different from that of a resident, as it was in the case of road tax. But if it was, I don't know why Charles

needed to keep the money separate from the residents' tax. Perhaps it's only a sign that his world was divided into residents and "unresidents"—and everything followed from that.

Charles not only collected the taxes but was a walking treasury for the school. October 1st—"I went to A. Biel's to see Mr. Pate about some school tax & he give A. Biel a order on me for three dollars. I paid it." October 6th—"Frederick Recknall came with a order from the trustees for his pay for furnishing schoolhouse with wood \$16." By October 12th Charles had finished collecting. But a final accounting doesn't show up until the last few pages of his notebook. There his numbers show that his collection fee for two taxpayers came to \$1.95, a little less than five percent of their combined taxes. There too he added more numbers noting both residents and unresidents, and to this latter day "unresident" his arithmetic looks all right. But on the last page are more little sets of numbers he kept adding to get to sums different from those already noted—a fuzzy audit trail at best.

After he finished collecting taxes in 1874, Charles and his brother Philip, then 15 years old, started "ranking bark." They had peeled the bark in early summer in 4-foot lengths and left it on the ground to be picked up in October between other chores. "Ranking" meant picking up the bark and piling it into full cords 4 x 4 x 8 feet. They ranked on nine days in the month and in the end had 35 1/2 cords. Some days they ranked 5 to 6 cords together, but the day Charles went to Utica, Philip ranked only 2. To get to Utica, Charles got up at 3 am and walked 10 miles to Forestport, took a stage from there to Alder Creek, and then a train to Utica arriving at 11 am. He made a payment on his farm loan, paid interest on loans his father and others had taken out in the 1860s, bought clothes and yard goods, bought cigars and brandy, and retraced his route to home arriving late at night. The next day he wrote, "I felt pretty tired. So we didn't rank but 3 cords."

He started "drawing bark" to the Proctor & Hill Tannery in mid-December 1874. "Drawing" or hauling was part of his winter work between 1874 and 1879—work for money, thanks to the canals, at a time when the rest of the nation was suffering from a financial panic that started in 1873 and put many out of work. Charles didn't note all the work to drawing bark, but it's there between the lines: He and his brother fed two horses, harnessed them, hitched them to the sleigh, drove two miles up the road and into the woods, piled the bark on the sleigh, hauled the load back to the house where they took it off the sleigh and piled it on the ground again. They did this three times on December 15, 1874 before unharnessing horses and grooming and feeding them for the night.

Charles took smaller loads from woods to home than to the tannery because of more "pitch holes" in the woods than on the road. Several times he noted getting part of a load in the woods and then "topping" it off at home before going to the tannery. In all, he handled that bark many times—peeling it, ranking it, loading it, and taking some of it home where he unloaded and loaded again

before delivering it to the tannery. And I'll bet he unloaded and stacked it himself in one of the long rows of bark that tanneries kept ready for use. If nothing else, the last handling was a way to warm up after a cold ride there and before a cold ride back.

During December 1874 and January 1875, Charles spent 18 days taking his 35 1/2 cords to Proctor & Hill. January 18, 1875—"I took a load of bark to Proctor & Hill's tannery. This was the last load for this winter. I settled with Proctor & Hill. This finishes paying for the lot that I bought from them on the first day of June in the year 1871 on a contract. We also balanced up all other accounts up to this 18th day of January in the year of our Lord 1875. I received balance due to me amounted to \$9.16, part in trade and part in cash. I am to get a warrantee deed the first of next April of the lot from them as Proctor is not here just now to sign off. I have to wait till then for the deed to Charles C. Kronmiller."

He had paid for his woodlot—to an unknown extent—with four years of bark harvest. Four years of, say, 36 cords per year at \$5.50 per cord (Proctor & Hill's price in 1870) would add up to \$792. But that would have been way too much for 100 acres because one study says tanneries bought land with hemlock for \$2 an acre in the 1860s and 1870s. Charles should have paid no more than this—even less with hemlocks gone—and he probably did. Also his notes clearly show that on most trips to Proctor & Hill, he charged goods from the company's store—and at least \$60 worth against the year's bark before settlement on January 18, 1875.

Fifty years had passed since the Erie Canal opened and 25 years since the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals started reaching into the woods around Charles. What the canals took from those woods in hemlock is most clearly told in Charles' notes for 1875.

He and Philip chopped down hemlock trees and peeled the bark on 23 days in the months of July and August between all of their other work on their crops. They chopped and peeled 277 trees, an average of a dozen trees a day—but twice they peeled 23 trees in a day. After they peeled the bark, they turned it outer side up to protect it from rain until fall. During October they ranked bark on 10 days, piling up 4 to 6 cords a day. In the end they had 54.25 full cords from 277 trees—about 5 trees for each cord.

It seems now like a lot of trees for a cord. But worse than that number is the claim that 1 cord of bark would tan only 4 or 5 hides—roughly 1 hide per tree. Moreover, the same study reports Proctor & Hill tanned as many as 25,000 hides per year. In huge numbers then, trees in the area and cows elsewhere gave up their coats for one another, only because the canals brought them together. With 25,000 trees falling to Proctor & Hill's hides each year, half a million trees would have been taken in 20 years of their operation alone. A similar number at the Anderson tannery and other tanneries in the area would quickly add to a million hemlocks—tall straight evergreens that are said to live as long as 600 years and might still be standing in the area if the tanning industry hadn't taken them.

Charles' notes also tell of Charley Luce for whom he had peeled 33 & 1/2 cords of bark the year before and of Theodore Putnam who had piles numbered 338, 339, 350 and so on. Piles of bark were mounded up in the woods like tombs in which the sweat and work of men's hands, arms, and backs were buried—a cemetery of bark tombs among fallen and naked hemlocks. Piles were built in the woods at places not always easily reached with horses. During the fall of 1875, Charles and Philip worked 3 days “cutting” roads to reach their bark piles. They moved stones or built fires over them to break them up when they were too big to move. They chopped down trees to make a path wide enough for horses and sleigh. Their roads were far from level I know from walking over Charles' woodlot a century later. He also wrote of having to fix up “pitch holes” in them, so called because they could make a load tip or pitch over. They spent one whole day leveling roads, “grubbing knolls” as Charles called it.

Some of the hemlock trees they had chopped down and peeled were on the north side of Bear Creek, so they had to build a 98-foot bridge over it. Worse, a steep hill dropped down to the creek, so a gently sloping road had to be hacked out of the hillside. For three days Charles and Philip “graded down” that road which we still walk along to get to the creek 125 years later. They dragged logs to the mill to make planks for the bridge and on November 20, 1875 built part of the bridge.

Charles never noted what Philip thought or felt about the work—whether Philip felt he was a full partner with his brother or felt he was only working for him. Philip was unhappy, as it turned out. Three days after working on the bridge, Charles started one of the longest entries in all his notebooks—“This morning I got up & found that brother Philip was run away.” Samuel Davidson told Charles he saw Philip on the stagecoach to the Alder Creek train depot. Later Charles learned Philip went to Chicago.

The bridge may have been one thing too many for the 16-year-old brother. With help only from his horses, Charles put up a 50-foot middle span to the bridge and finished it. He then hauled bark from his woodlot to Proctor & Hill for 25 days in December 1875 and January 1876, taking 2 loads on one of the days. They were heavy loads, averaging nearly 2 tons to the load of bark plus half a ton for the sleigh. He duly noted the weights—both the weight as shown on Samuel Maibach's scale in Forestport and the weight on the tannery's scale. I don't know if everyone weighed in at Maibach's or Charles didn't trust the tannery. All that his numbers prove is the scales showed different amounts, usually less than 100 pounds, and the tannery's was usually lower.

In the end the difference didn't matter. February 19, 1876—“I went to Forestport & Woodhull today. I settled up with Proctor & Hill today. My bark made 49 cords and 150 thousand pounds according to their weight and figures. We settled according to that. That leaves my credit on their books up to this date and after the settlement on Jan. 18, 1875: \$271.25 and their charges against me \$251.24. That leaves due to me at the present time \$20.01 according to their

figures.” It works out to \$5.54 per cord. But pay per day is another story. Charles and Philip had peeled for 23 days, ranked bark for 10 days, worked on road for 7 days making 40 days in all to be doubled for a total of 80 days. They worked together on the bridge for 3 days making 6 to add to the 5 days Charles worked on it alone or 11 days for bridgework. And Charles hauled bark to his house or the tannery on 30 days—121 days on everything or \$2.24 per day, per man.

Charles also hauled bark for others. He hauled one load for Henry Rush in December 1875 for \$2.00. Then for another 5 days in February 1876, he hauled bark for George Putnam and was paid \$15.31. And for 10 days in February and March 1876, he hauled for the Anderson Tannery in Hawkinsville and was paid \$32.08. Whether he had figured it out or not, hauling for others was less work and better pay per day than hauling his own bark.

When Charles hauled bark to the Anderson Tannery, he probably followed the Hogsback road we still drive today to get to Hawkinsville and Boonville. The road drops about 160 feet in less than three quarters of a mile through several curves that slow a car down to 20 mph—or less when something is coming the other way. All along those curves, steep banks drop down both sides and I keep both hands on the wheel in order to stay on the narrow road. Charles surely had both hands on the reins and a foot on a brake to keep his sleigh load of bark on the road—a load “weighing 5,500 pounds sleigh and all.” Never once, though, did he mention the danger of it or accidents from it.

By 1877, Charles had taken all the bark from his woodlot. He hauled only two “little loads” to Proctor & Hill in January and hauled no other bark during the year. Then in early 1878, he hauled bark for 12 days to the Anderson Tannery for Barney Stars. And in 1879, from January to April, a year of long snow cover, he hauled bark for Anderson on 37 days. By then the Anderson Tannery was taking bark from around Gull Lake, which was over two miles past the Davidson house in deeper woods. The bark around the farms on the Woodhull road was gone. In 1880, the Anderson Tannery closed but Proctor & Hill kept going until the late 1880s. Charles was coming to the end of bark harvesting. But while it lasted, he earned more from it than anything else he wrote about in the 1870s. In those years he noted \$483 from his bark and almost \$200 from hauling bark for others.

He earned far less from making and selling shingles, which also were hauled away by canal. Actually, Philip made most of the shingles. In the year he ran away, Charles seemed to keep him busy with shingles when he didn’t need his help at many other things like hauling and cutting firewood, peeling and piling bark, plowing and picking up stones, planting and hoeing crops, cutting and sharpening hop poles, making fence posts and mowing hay and oats. Philip made shingles on 38 days during the months of January through April, though only “a few” some days. It was work for snowy and rainy days. On those days, I

have the feeling from Charles' notes that he might have said to Philip, "Better make shingles today."

When the weather was at its worst—"Southeast wind & considerable rain this afternoon"—Charles also made shingles, but most of the time Philip worked at it alone. During 1875, they sawed and split 21 logs. After the shingles were made, they packed them into bunches, for which Charles made frames to hold the shingles together—600 to the bunch as he noted years later. In 1875, Charles sold 48 bunches of shingles—28,800 shingles harvested after they had chopped down the trees, hauled them out of the woods, sawed them into blocks, split the blocks into pieces, tapered the pieces at one end, picked up all the pieces, packed them into frames, loaded them on a wagon, and hauled six or seven or eight bunches at a time to Forestport or Boonville to be sold.

Charles sold three bunches for \$2 each and all the rest at \$1.75 each. For the work of it all, Charles and Philip earned \$84.75 from shingles that year. But Charles didn't mention giving Philip any share of what was made. Rather, he noted what he spent for Philip's clothing—\$5 twice for boots, \$1.50 for a hat, \$1.75 for a pair of pants, \$4 for material out of which sister Louisa made a shirt for Philip. Charles also let Philip keep \$1.50 that he had collected for Charles from a neighbor. And he noted on July 1, 1875—"I give brother Philip for Fourth of July money in cash \$5.00." It all came to \$23.75 for the year. Philip didn't go west with a lot of cash.

Before he left he had also helped Charles with growing potatoes. In 1874, the two dug up 115 bushels and the following year they took up 178 bushels. But Charles wrote nothing about selling any either year. Potatoes still are a good crop for the area because of sand in the soil that keeps it loose. But in Charles' time, the size of the crop differed from year to year. In 1876 he had 210 bushels, the year after 241 bushels, but in 1878 only 103 bushels. Weather surely made a difference, and he also may have planted different amounts each year.

Growing potatoes started in late fall with plowing the field. In the following April or May Charles went down in his cellar to look through potatoes from the year before and picked out seed potatoes. It was work for rainy days. One year it took three days with hired help. He furrowed the field in May and planted seed potatoes in June. Planting also took about three days with hired help. After plants came up in June, someone had to pick potato bugs off the plants one at a time, a job that fell to Charles' sister Mary beginning at age 12, if not younger. Mary also helped with hoeing and hilling potatoes while Charles plowed among them. In 1876 they started that work at the end of June and worked right through the nation's 100th birthday celebration. July 4, 1876—"I plowed 16 rows of potatoes & hilled 2 rows." And throughout the rest of the month they hoed, hilled, and picked potato bugs. October was the month for digging potatoes.

Charles sold some of his potatoes to neighbors as seed potatoes—usually for 25 cents a bushel. He also sold potatoes for market—70 bushels at 75 cents each in 1876 for \$52.50. He made three trips that year to deliver all of them to

Smith, a potato buyer in Forestport, who shipped them by canals to a city. In 1877 he sold 74 bushels, but the price in Forestport dropped to 40 cents a bushel or \$26.60. With a much smaller 1878 crop, he sold just 26 bushels at 85 cents each and 6 bushels at 75 cents each, just \$22.10 altogether.

Along with falling prices for potatoes and bugs and weather threatening them, Charles also had his neighbor's cows attacking them. Seemingly, cows were all around his farm, perhaps looking longingly over whatever fences there were to the other side. The thought of them today makes the White Lake area scene seem almost pastoral even though it was on the edge of the North Woods, still depicted by some as wilderness. Cows were the wildlife of the borderland. Henry Williams' cows raided once, Philip Stell's several times, and Gotlieb Kraft's several times before an all-out invasion on October 27, 1877—"Gotlieb Kraft's and Philip Stell's and Jerry App's and Henry Rush's and Henry Williams' cows and bulls were all pasturing in my lot today."

Though cow raids meant work on potatoes and other crops was ruined and money lost, Charles did not let any ill will toward the cows or their owners creep into his notes. But after the raid by Williams' cows, he wrote—"Destroyed a nice radish bed that I had that I would not have taken \$10.00 for & ruined considerable potatoes," and he noted "considerable damage" after other raids. In such tight-lipped words I sense a little anger. His care in putting a dollar amount on the damage also has a trace of anger. At times he noted damage at two dollars or five dollars. I think I hear anger in his words on October 22, 1877—"Gotlieb Kraft's cows was in our potatoes this morning and ate about one bushel worth, 40 cents. I drove them home, took me about 2 hours. My time is worth 20 cents an hour." Perhaps he felt he fully vented his anger by putting a cost on losses. *"My time is worth 20 cents an hour."*

In addition to potatoes, the only other source of money for Charles stemming from nearby canals was the long spiles that John Davidson also profited from. Between December 1879 and April 1880 Charles dragged the logs for Jerry App. He dragged a total of 117, which he sometimes called "sticks" but usually called "spiles." He carefully noted the length of each one because he was paid by length. The "sticks" were 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, or 75 feet long and he was paid a total of \$186.50. He sometimes dragged three sticks in a day, most often two, a long day sitting behind two horses plodding the ten miles to Forestport. Perhaps dulled by the plodding, Charles never thought or noted how the sticks were floated away by canal, never thought about where they may have ended up.

He never even noted there were canals. But the money the canals brought to him for his bark, shingles, potatoes, and sticks whether he thought about it or not made it possible for him to make a living for his family. The canals also made it possible for him to try his hand at one other source of money that did not depend on the canals. When Charles wasn't chopping down trees, dragging logs, and hauling bark, he grew hops on his 60-acre farm. In the 1870s

hops became a major cash crop for farms in the White Lake area and Charles followed the lead of neighbors in planting and growing them. And neighbors helped one another with the harvest.

New York led the nation in hops in the mid 1800s, and hops from White Lake farms, though in the northern-most and coldest corner of Oneida county, helped in a tiny way to make it one of the leading counties growing the state's crop. Hops grew on vines tied to poles stuck in the ground. At harvest, the poles were taken down so pickers could reach small cone-shaped blossoms growing along the vines. The blossoms were dried, baled, and sent by rail to distant places to make beer. The hop is a perennial plant grown in hills about 7 feet apart, about 800 to an acre. Because they won't grow horizontally, they must be tied to poles or upright wires. For each acre then, Charles needed at least 800 hop poles.

To my way of thinking the hop poles were more like "sticks" than spiles were—maybe 20 feet in length and only two inches or so in diameter. They were young, straight trees that Charles took from his woodlot along with old-growth hemlocks for tanneries and spruce for shingles. Hop poles most likely were maple and beech that still grow all over Charles' woodlot. Charles, with Philip's help before he left, chopped the young trees down and trimmed away their branches with axes, as many as 100 a day. By early December 1874 they had 470 stacked on the woodlot, which Charles didn't have the deed to until the following year. While Philip chopped more poles, Charles started hauling them home—50 at a time.

The most poles he ever noted were in a letter to his sister Louisa in May 1876. "I have all my hop poles set and it was quite a job for you know that there is 3,568 poles now." Given this many, he may have had four to five acres of hops in two plots—one started in 1873 or earlier and a new one started in 1875. After he hauled the cut poles to his farm, he "sharpened" them—chopped one end to a point. It took him ten days in 1876. He sharpened them to make it easier to "set" or push and twist them into the ground. "Setting" all the poles took eleven days. The most he ever set in one day was 700.

At the end of May after the poles were in the ground, Charles started hoeing the hop yard, manuring the plants, and tying the vines. Tying took another 16 days in June 1876. The vines started growing fast then. In a later year Charles noted the vines were tied a second and third time—just when black flies were swarming and biting. Tying took two hands—when at least one was needed to swat flies. Because of black flies we stay away from Woodgate in June, but Charles didn't mention them or other bugs in his notes. Perhaps such pests like his daily chores are buried between the lines of his notes, too numerous to mention.

As the hops grew up the vine in June, they also sent out runners along the ground that had to be trimmed or pulled. It took four days during the month and another four days in July. Charles also plowed among the plants during those

months. Then he wrote no more about them until harvest at the end of August or beginning of September. Picking the small hop blossoms took many hands. Young and old, men and women all worked together going from farm to farm. In 1876, Charles had 7 “pullers,” men who pulled the poles out of the ground and laid them down so pickers could reach the blossoms. They were paid a dollar a day. He also had 28 women and 15 men who picked for two days and were paid 50 cents a box. Lena Stell was the best picker that year filling 2 & 5/8 boxes over two days and earning \$1.31. Most, though, did not fill a box per day and it's no wonder. One source says hop boxes were 6 feet long, 28 inches wide, and 22 inches high. If this also was the size in the White Lake area, it was a lot to fill with tiny blossoms.

After the blossoms were picked they were dried in a barn with heat from a wood stove. Then they were pressed together and packed in large bales to be taken to either Boonville or Alder Creek where they were sent to breweries. The bales went by train some years, perhaps all years—the years when canals were losing freight to the railroads. The bales were heavy. On October 26, 1876, Charles wrote, “This morning I rode over to Boonville with Philip Stell. We went over to get our pay for our hops. The hops weighed as follows, the different lots: Adam Pate had 785 pounds of hops in his 4 bales. Gotlieb Kraft had 906 pounds in his 5 bales & Philip Stell had 2,548 pounds in his 15 bales & I had 918 pounds in my 5 bales.” This was Charles' third crop of hops and his best for cash paid, though he didn't know that at the time. All he could have known is that hops looked promising, maybe more so than anything else he could see around his farm or in the woods.

Without another word about his plans, in March 1877 he started dragging over 40 logs to the lumber mill. It was the beginning of a big bet on the future of hops that isn't clear in his notes until August 8th—“I went up on my woodlot and drew 2 long sticks to the mill for sills in my dry house.” He also called it his “hop house.” Maybe paying Philip Stell \$10 to dry hops was too much for Charles, or maybe the cash being paid for hops set him dreaming bigger things. He didn't say what his dreams were or why he was building a dry house. He didn't say anything about how big it would be. And he didn't ever say whether it was a freestanding building or attached. I only know from staying in his house in the next century that it was attached to a barn and part of one or the other had fallen down, leaving a large building we called the barn but was really his dry house.

Though he never wrote anything about its size, Charles wrote a great deal about how he built the dry house in the midst of all his farming and logging during 1877 and 1878. On more than 170 days he worked on the building in some way or other, starting with dragging logs for lumber and ending with taking down the last of the scaffolding in December 1878. He framed through October and into November 1877 when finally he had a “raising.” The day before he bought a half-barrel of beer in Boonville for \$4.00. November 24th—“This afternoon I had

my hop house raised. There were plenty of hands here and the frame went together like a charm. I never saw a frame go together better. This is the first building I ever framed. Nor I never helped to frame a building before.” Among all of Charles' notes, this is a burst of feelings. He was pleased.

For all his care in writing down what he spent on building his dry house (\$93.78—but without a word about lumber mill costs), Charles was silent about what he charged people for drying and baling hops. I doubt he came close to covering his out-of-pocket costs in his first year of drying. He did note that he insured his dry house for \$300, barn for \$200, and house for \$200.

For all his care, too, in writing about the work of raising, harvesting, and selling hops, Charles' records on sales are complete for only four years. In 1874—3 bales weighing 527 pounds paid him \$194.99. In 1876—5 bales weighing 918 pounds paid \$298.35. In 1877—8 bales weighing 1,795 pounds paid only \$152.57. But in 1878—7 bales weighing 1,457 pounds paid even less, \$116.56. Though this adds up to \$762 and more than his cash from bark, he probably made more from bark because he had many unnoted expenses in harvesting hops.

As Charles' dry house was going up, the price for hops was going down. The 37 cents per pound everyone was paid in 1874 dropped to 32.5 cents in 1876, then for some sank to 8.5 cents in 1877 and 8 cents in 1878. Also the hop buyer in 1877 became fussy. Philip Stell, Adam Pate, Philip Studor, Fred Recknall, and Andrew Vicks got 10 cents per pound. John Skillin, M. Rigley, Fred Myers, Jacob Isley and Charles got 8.5 cents. But William Davidson was paid 7.5 cents.

The lowest price noted by Charles went to M. Rigley and Fred Myers for their 1878 crop. They held out until May 20, 1879 when they were paid only 4.5 cents per pound. On May 11th that year, Lena Stell Borden out in Nebraska wrote to Louisa—“I'm afraid White Lake hop growers will get discouraged raising hops at so small a price. I don't think my folks have sold theirs as yet.” Prices paid to White Lake farmers were always less than the average state price for the best grade of hops. During the time of Charles' notes, average prices in New York changed monthly—up to almost 44 cents per pound and down as low as 9 cents. Charles was working on a roller coaster but it was running downhill.

Even so, his hard work in a decade of owning his own farm and his own woods had given him a living. The canals had given him money for his work in woods and fields but just as important had brought foods and factory goods to Forestport, Hawkinsville, and Boonville on which he could spend his money and support his family. Many things he bought came from the Proctor & Hill Tannery store.

Other than potatoes, Charles wrote almost nothing about foods he raised or ate. Now and then he noted a cow or a pig he bought and later butchered. A few times he mentioned trading eggs for food at a store. So he had eggs and chicken to eat; milk, butter, and beef from the cow at least some of the time; and

pork after a pig was butchered. He probably had vegetables from a kitchen garden but said almost nothing about them, because most likely the garden was women's' work—left to Mary and his mother. He had wild blackberries and huckleberries some years. Once he brought home venison from a deer he and a neighbor killed. And he ate fish a few times, usually right where he caught them.

The foods he bought most often were flour, molasses, syrup, sugar, coffee, tea, vinegar, and pork. Flour, he usually bought by the barrel. For 1876 six barrels and two sacks added up to a lot of flour—1,276 pounds or almost 25 pounds a week. The following year he bought 1,130 pounds and the year after 1,004 pounds. The flour surely went into bread, biscuits, pancakes, pies, and cakes. Seven or eight gallons of molasses a year and the same amounts of maple syrup each year gave the family of three (Louisa was away much of the time) plenty to sweeten things with when they didn't use the sugar Charles bought—47 pounds in 1876, 82 pounds the next year, and 76 pounds the year after. Sugar also may have sweetened 6 to 10 pounds of tea and 16 to 20 pounds of coffee each year. On the sour side, Charles bought 4 gallons of vinegar in 1876, 3 gallons the next year, and 2 gallons the year after.

He bought other foods, usually in small quantities or less often, that offered some variety in daily fare without changing color much—rice, oatmeal, Indian meal, cornmeal (250 pounds over three years), barley, beans, lard, fresh beef, ciscoes (fish by the half barrel in 1877 and in 1878), and salt (a barrel in 1876). Variety in taste and color came in very small quantities and from far away, surely by canals. At one time or another, and sometimes only once, he bought oranges, lemons, raisins, prunes, apples, grapes, black pepper, dried apples, cake meal, onions, cabbage, ginger, nutmeg, allspice, clove, herring, mustard, and cream of tartar, butter. Cider, bran, and a pig head may have been local.

For the house, Charles bought lamp chimneys, brooms, clothes hangers, bars of soap, turpentine, garden seeds, pens, ink, matches, window glass, candle wick, wash board, wash dish, cork screw, glue, paper edging, mouse trap, window curtains, candles, sewing machine oil, stove pipe, wallpaper and edging, and a pancake griddle. Almost monthly he bought a gallon of kerosene oil for lamps. He paid 25 cents a gallon early in 1876, then 30 cents, and then 40 cents for the first part of 1877. But by the end of 1878 he paid only 20 cents—less than a penny a day for dim light by which he wrote his notes and his mother sewed.

For the farm, he bought a shovel, horse shoeing, horse feed, horse liniment, whip lashes, a cow, ax and ax helve, files, wagon grease, whetstones, grass and clover seed, a pig, bran for pig, iron bolts, nails, strap hitches, a hay fork, a hay rake, pails, plow points, colter, bags, band iron & rivets, wagon repair, oat seed, plow, bushel basket, spikes, chains, hame strap, sleigh repair, pea seeds, buckwheat seed, Paris green potato bug poison, pitchfork handle, tin sprinkler, hop press, hop string, hop sacking and twine, and hop tickets (to keep track of boxes picked).

Charles spent most of his clothing money on footwear—two pair of boots each year for himself and shoes for his mother and Mary. Over the three years, he also bought for himself two pair of overalls, two pair of pants, a vest, and an overcoat. For his mother and Mary, he bought sewing supplies—many spools of thread and many yards of calico plus factory cloth, shirting material, wool, cotton flannel, cambric, drilling, waterproof material, sheeting, toweling, bleached muslin, ticking, and buttons. Charles also bought a pistol, a rifle, ammunition, a compass, a spyglass, four jackknives, a memorandum book (the very one in which he kept his notes), and yearly subscriptions to the *Utica Weekly Herald* for himself. And he bought a *Fifth Reader* and cuff pins for Mary and a magazine subscription for Louisa.

Many of these foods and other goods were only a day and a wagonload away from White Lake Corners—after they were carried into the area by the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals. The canals made life on the rough border of the North Woods a little easier but hard work and plain living there paid for it.

The main ease in peoples' lives came from Sundays, the only day of the week when they didn't work. Charles sometimes wrote, "Sunday. Done nothing." But often he visited his neighbors or they visited him—especially the Stell family next door and the Rush family across the road. On a few Sundays, Charles walked two miles up the road to the Davidson homestead or his woodlot where he looked for trees to chop down during the week. Sundays also were the day to walk around to neighbors before hop harvest to line up pullers and pickers. On only a few Sundays Charles noted going to "meeting," but he didn't say where. White Lake Corners did not have a church in the 1870s so a traveling minister may have held services in the school.

Charles was far more likely to go hunting or fishing than to meeting. Often he went the night before so he could go "floating" for deer—sitting in a boat with a neighbor, one rowing and the other ready with a gun and light to flash on a deer and shoot before it bolted away. In the five years covered by his notes Charles never got a deer by floating, rarely even saw or heard one. And he had little luck hunting on foot. Once though, Charles, William Skillin, and Fred Myers tracked a deer in snow, which Charles shot. After, he wrote—"We run him down & I shot him with my revolver. He was a big chap. We hunted around the rest of the day but didn't find any more. So we brought him home and each one took his share."

"*Shot him with a revolver?*" In William H. H. Murray's hands I'm sure telling of the kill would have covered pages, if not a book. But then Murray was looking for "sport" while Charles was looking for food. Murray called "night shooting—the most exciting of all shooting." He liked shooting from a boat paddled by a guide and hated "tramping" to hunt. Charles on the other hand had only his feet to take him into the woods and lakes, and he noted no thrills in kill or catch as Murray did. For someone working on Adirondack borderland as Charles

did, hunting deer may have seemed like more work. Walking 15 to 20 miles in a day of hunting—or just 10 miles to a lake to stay up all night floating—was work enough perhaps to keep a man from talking much about the thrill and sport of it after it was over.

Murray started hunting and fishing after the Civil War in the Adirondack interior—and perhaps worse for any of the wild still left in the wilderness started writing about it in glowing terms. "You choose the locality which best suits your eye, and build your lodge under unscarred trees, and upon a carpet of moss, untrampled by man or beast. There you live in silence, unbroken by any sounds save such as you yourself may make, away from all the business and cares of civilized life." Such writing attracted many other sportsmen to the interior.

But not far beyond Murray's sight and hearing, trees were falling to the woodman's ax and hotels were going up to the carpenter's hammer. Each year spring-swollen streams and rivers carried thousands of logs floating east to the Hudson River, and hotels served hundreds of sportsmen and other guests who rode into the woods from the southeastern Adirondacks by train and stagecoach. The Adirondack interior opened up enough in the 1860s and 1870s to stir worries about destroying the wilderness entirely and to cause the *New York Times* to editorialize about making the region a "Central Park" in the North Woods to protect it (said to be the first words about making a park of the region). Already a lot of the wild had been taken out of the interior's wilderness.

The eastern boarder had lost its wilderness decades earlier and the southwestern border lost its after the canals. By Charles' time trees were gone or going fast and in their place cows grazed and fields bristled with hop poles. At age 19 Charles had staked his future on his fields and woods, but a decade of hard work left him with little but land. At one point he wrote he would take \$1,500 for his 60-acre farm, if someone offered it. In the decade he had owned it, he saw potato and hop prices fail and hemlock bark and shingle wood all but used up.

After three decades, the canals that had opened the Forestport and White Lake area to settlement and drained water from the region for the Erie Canal had also drained the area of hopes for future prosperity. The canals could do little more for the area.

Notes

*Frank Lesure, "Dart-Lesure Mailbag," Christmas 1988 edition is the source of the George and Regina Kronmiller history. He is a grandson of Mary Kronmiller Dart. The mailbag includes letters to George and Regina translated from German, Regina's pension application and lawyer's letters, and Mary's diary as a girl of 15.

*Charles Kronmiller's first memoranda book is 4 x 6.5 inches and covers 93 pages. His second is 5.5 x 7.25 inches and covers 138 pages. The third is 7.5 x 9.5 inches and covers 275 pages. His largest books in later years are 8 x 12 inches.

*Copies of *Charles Kronmiller's Memoranda Books 1874-1880* transcribed and edited by John Huther, 1999, are available in the Oneida County Historical Society Library, the Woodgate Free Library, and the Town of Webb Historical Society.

*McMartin in *Hides, Hemlocks, and Adirondack History* tells of the price of hemlock acres (p. 89).

*O'Donnell, *Snubbing Posts* writes of potatoes shipped by the canal and that 1880 was the peak year for tonnage shipped (pp. 140-141).

*Thomas Summerhill, "Farming on Shares: Landlords, Tenants, and the Rise of the Hop and Dairy Economies in Central New York," *New York History*, April 1995, pp. 125-152 claims New York led the nation in hops in 1850 (p. 128).

**A Gazetteer & Directory of the County of Oneida 1884*, Utica: Compiled & Published by Chas. N. Gaffney, 1884 notes Oneida County's leading role in hops in the state (p. 14). The county averaged 710 pounds per acre in 1879, well above the 300-400 pounds Charles Kronmiller may have had per acre in 1877.

*Floy S. Hyde, *Adirondack Forests, Fields, and Mines: Brief Accounts and Stories Concerning Lumbering, Forest-Related Products, Farm Specialties and Mining Yesterday and Today*, Lakemont, NY: North Country Books, 1974 gives the number of hills and poles per acre (p. 127). He also gives a general picture of a drying structure (pp. 131-132) and prices (p. 133).

*E. Meeker, *Hop Culture in the United States*, Puyallup, Washington Territory: E. Meeker & Co., 1883 shows hop prices by month from 1869 to 1883 in New York State (p. 124).

*The best idea of what floating was like can be seen in the photographs of Hobart V. Roberts who captured startled deer in his light and lens in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

*William H. H. Murray, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, edited by William K. Verner with Introduction and Notes by Warder H. Cadbury, Adirondack Museum/Syracuse University Press, 1970 includes *Adventures in the Wilderness; or Camp-Life in the Adirondacks*, Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869, writes of floating (pp. 49-50 and 171) and his dislike of tramping (p. 18).

The *New York Times* editorial of 1864 is printed as Appendix D in Donaldson (v. II, pp. 280-282).

*Jane Eblen Keller, *Adirondack Wilderness: A Story of Man and Nature*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980 puts the number of hotels or "hostelries" in 1875 at 200 (p. 128).

Charles Kronmiller's Memoranda Books 1874-1880



Charles Kronmiller's first memoranda book lower right is 4 x 6.5 inches and covers 93 pages from September 28, 1874 to March 27, 1875.

His second book in lower left is 5.5 x 7.25 inches and covers 138 pages from March 28, 1875 to January 31, 1876.

His third, which is open here, is 7.5 x 9.5 inches closed and covers 275 pages from February 2, 1876 to May 24, 1879 and from December 20, 1879 to May 14, 1880 with some days missing from the period.

His largest books in later years are 8 x 12 inches.



Charles Kronmiller 1849-1926. Photo taken in 1883.



Charles' Dry House or Hop House built 1877-78. Photo was taken in the early 1900s. The drying part of the building was on the left side.

5 – LOUISA KRONMILLER AND A BOATMAN

Louisa Kronmiller was not only a native of the area that the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals opened in the 1850s but possibly was born on the road into Woodhull and North lakes.

When her mother applied for a Civil War widow's pension, the lawyer in Utica wrote to ask for the names of people who witnessed her children's births. She sent back the names of Louisa App and Fridrika Meyers, both of whom lived on the road. Louisa App was one of the closest neighbors to the 50-acre farm the Kronmillers bought on the road and a likely source for the name of Louisa Kronmiller. She's also a hint that the Kronmillers may have been living there in 1856 when Louisa was born, rather than between Deer Pond and White Lake as shown on the 1858 map.

When Louisa's father died, she was 8 years old and her mother's main help in their small house. She was the one to be sent outside to fetch more firewood and water, maybe cook and empty chamber pots, or look after Philip who was 5, George 2, and Mary the baby. Worse, after the family was taken to the Poorhouse in Rome, Louisa was the one to speak English for her German mother, more than likely asking for directions and explaining them to her. Louisa didn't leave notes about those days, but she left many if not all the letters she ever received in her lifetime, about 1,000 of them covering over half a century. The earliest ones, starting in 1870, tell of another sad part of her young life.

The first one dated September 27th is from Hattie McGillivray in Vienna, a village west of Rome. Seemingly she was about Louisa's age and sent a chatty letter about people she had visited and her recital. She wrote, "I am very glad to hear that you arrived safe at home, and that you are enjoying yourself. I am very sorry to hear that your mother is sick, but hope she will soon be better. . . . It seems very lonesome without you, and we often talk about the nice times we used to have together. . . . Please write soon, and let us know what day you are coming back, so I can meet you in Utica. I am your affectionate friend Hattie McGillivray."

Hattie's mother added a second and third page to the letter—"Very many times we have thought and talked about you since you left here. I miss you as a member of our family for I have watched and cared for you for a long time. . . . Do you not remember how many times I have told you how good and merciful our Heavenly Father is in sparing our Parents and kind friends to take care of us? . . . Well dear Louisa you have made a long visit to see your friends and we are expecting to have you come Home soon. Please write soon and tell us what day we may expect you." She closed—"You have a mother's love from me."

Mrs. McGillivray seems to have overlooked that Louisa's father was not spared but otherwise seems to care about Louisa. "A mother's love" from her suggests that Louisa like her little brother George may have been given up for adoption so that her mother again would have one less to feed. She addressed

the end of the letter to Charles—"I am expecting you to take Louisa or send her to Utica next month as you promised me and one of us will meet her in Utica. She has been with me so long and when she was so small that I miss her as a member of our family."

Perhaps Louisa was as young as 10 or 11 when the McGillivrays took her in—took her most likely when she was in the Poorhouse in Rome, 12 miles away. When Louisa finally got to go home to her family again, she was 14. Six months after her first letter, Hattie wrote to Louisa again, "I was surprised that you did not answer my letter for we was anxious to hear from you. What are you doing and how is your health? And be particular to let us know about your mother."

And Mrs. McGillivray wrote to Charles again. "Master Charles, I was disappointed that you did not fulfill your engagement with me about Louisa, as I was expecting to go to Utica for her. There was other girls that I could have had but as I thought so much of her, that I let them go and then it would have been honorable in you to let us know if you had changed your mind. Write soon and let me know your mind. Give my love to your mother."

"Other girls that I could have had!" Clearly, Louisa was not an adopted child but a hired girl, a common role for young girls then who often learned housekeeping duties from a mother burdened with bearing babies year after year. Louisa had become a girl at work before she ever had much time to be a girl at play. She also received another note from Mrs. McGillivray. "My Dear Louisa, I have wondered very much that you did not answer our letters. We feel very anxious to know how you are and your mother. I was waiting to go to Utica for you and you should let me know if you changed your mind. We are going west and if you want to go too, come right along."

She did not want to go. She wanted to stay with her family. But her years with the McGillivrays set a pattern for the next decade of her life. At age 17, if not earlier, she again became a hired girl. Off and on, she worked in villages like Holland Patent, Stittville, and Boonville, all of which were on the rail line between Boonville and Utica. She got to those places by having Charles take her to the train depot at Boonville or Alder Creek. Trains, not canals, were the way to get around in her life.

When she was away from home, Charles wrote telling her about local news or gossip as well as his work on the farm and in the woods. His letters tell more than his memoranda books about social life in White Lake Corners in the 1870s. The 4th of July and New Years were the main holidays featuring dances. In January 1875 he told her who went to the New Years Dance—neighbors like Lena & Sarah Stell with Fred Herrick, Julia Rush with William Davidson, Minnie Rush and Sam Davidson, Lizzie Pate and Tom Williams, and George Stell without any girl. Some stayed home—Libbie Davidson, Rebecca Skillin, William Skillin, and all the Apps.

He also wrote about local troubles. "Libbie App and Albert Dibble had a blowup some time ago about an iron rod that belonged to Frank's bobsleigh that

he didn't bring back after he had borrowed it. So the next morning Frank went out when Al was going past the house and took Al by the leg and pulled him off from his sleigh and gave him a licking. So I guess that was the reason that the Apps didn't go to the dance. They were afraid that Al and some more would be there and give them a licking. So the next day or so after the dance, Al sued Frank and had him put under bail. So if they had gone to the dance and got their licking, they would have saved all that trouble. . . . We have had the awfulest snowstorm the last five days we ever had. I think there was six of us shoveling road all day today and then we only got from our house up to the corner." The corner was less than a mile away.

The following year when Louisa was still 19 she also received a letter in Holland Patent written on April 9th by Samuel Davidson who had moved to Lafayette with his family. "We got to our [new] home all right but it is lonesome here when you don't know anyone. . . . I would like to see Philip. He was good fast boy, always full of fun. I always liked him for company. Louisa, I thought a good deal of you too. If you think as much of me, I think that you and me might talk the thing over some day or other. What do you think about it Louisa or don't you think just now? Well this is the first letter. I don't hardly know what to write. . . . Don't forget to send me your picture when you get it. I will send you one, the best one I get. You must excuse this writing. Good night, Louisa. Sleep tight. Lib sends her love to you. I send all mine to you. Write soon and tell us all the news."

Two days later his sister Elizabeth [Lib or Libbie] also wrote to Louisa. "I thought I would write to you and let you know how we are getting along in our new home. . . . We got to Lafayette at 6 o'clock and it was raining quite hard. Louisa, I must let you know that grandmother [then 85] got along all right. It did not seem to do her the least bit of harm. She is as smart as ever. She stood it better than we thought she would. . . . The boys say they like it here better than White Lake. Well I like it here better myself. It looks like living around here to look at the big farms and there is not any snow here. It is quite warm and the birds are singing all around. It is quite a change from White Lake. I suppose it don't look anything like spring up there yet. . . . I wish you were working around here some place so we could go and see you once in awhile."

In part, these are letters between friends who were about the same age and wanted to keep track of one another after they left the White Lake area. But Samuel's letter also is a fumbling attempt to say he's fond of Louisa. Less than two weeks later he wrote again. "I got your letter and was glad to hear from you. . . . Well I got over being lonesome. Now they have church here twice a day so we got plenty enough. . . . I was glad to hear that you have got a good place. I don't think that you have time to get lonesome if you got ten in the home. I ain't got any of my pictures yet but I won't forget you when I get it taken, you can bet. . . . It is twelve o'clock and I must go to bed. So good night my dear. Louisa, when you write, write me a long long letter and write soon. When you dream

don't forget to dream of me and I will of you. Louisa, ain't anyone that I can send my love to there so you can have it all to yourself if you want it."

Louisa may not have known at the time but Samuel was also writing to Mary Rush whose family lived across the road from Charles' farm. I never would have known about the letters myself if I hadn't torn out the kitchen walls in the Davidson house in 1992. Behind the crumbling plaster and lath in a pile of dirt above one of the windows I found a small stack of letters that in dim light I could make out were from the 1870s. Months later when I read them I found they were love letters to Samuel and most of them were from Mary or Minnie as she was usually known. The others were from Louisa.

When the first of the letters was written in 1875 Mary was 15, Louisa 19, and Samuel 20. Mary wrote most of the letters in the little triangle and in one closed with, "Sam you said dream of me and I will of you. I don't believe that I sleep one night but what I dream of you. Sam you're with me in my sleep in my heart all the time. If I am in your mind then you know how I can feel." She also sent him little lines of valentine verse. On May 1, 1876 she closed with, "My pen is poor. My ink is pale. My love to you shall never fail." And in several letters she wrote, "Round is the ring that has no end. So is my love to you my friend. If you love me as I love you, no knife can cut our love in two."

Sam went home to White Lake Corners in June that year to go hunting, and he spent some time with Mary. On July 4th he went to Syracuse for the Centennial Celebration where he got drunk and was sick the day after. But for the New Year's Dance back at White Lake Corners, he asked Louisa to go with him. On August 20th he wrote to Louisa, "You said that you would go to the New Years Party. I was glad to hear that. You don't want to forget it. I think we will have a good time. I ain't been any place since I left White Lake. I think about New Years. I will be ready for a little rest and a little fun that we will have. How some of the folks will look when they see you and me riding out, Mary Rush especially. Well we can't help that. This is a free country for all. Mary keeps writing to me right along. I ain't answered one of them since I been up there. When I get through with your letter I will write her."

The following month Louisa wrote to Sam, "I was glad to hear that you was pleased with that picture and that you think it's a good one. I am in hopes that I will have one of yours soon to look at. Mary Rush had hers while I was at home and she said that she sent one off. . . . So you have got one of hers about the same time so you can see which is the best picture. Mary Rush will be mad and [want] to take the head off from me when she sees you and I going to the New Years party and leaving her behind. . . . Please write soon and so good night and pleasant dreams. I remain your affectionate friend."

Sam wrote back, "I wish that we lived close together so we could see each other Sunday nights anyway. But never mind that time is coming when we will see each other if nothing happens by New Years. . . . Louisa, you said that Mary Rush sent pictures off. I got two pictures about the same time. She sends

one about every time she writes. . . . I told her that I didn't think that it was any use of spending her time writing to me any more. I didn't get no letter since I said that. . . . Well I never thought anything of her any more than to have a little lovin' with her. She was full of that. That was all she knew. Well I guess I will give her ring back." He signed off as Louisa's "loving friend" and added a valentine verse he had picked up somewhere – "Remember me and I will you. . . . To my sweet and loving you."

Both wrote more letters through the fall. On New Year's day, Charles duly wrote in his memoranda book, "January the first in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy seven. I kept New Years till noon and then I drew home 6 firewood logs. . . . Samuel Davidson took sister Louisa to the New Years' dance. This is the first dance for her." But her first dance also was the beginning of the end with Sam. When he got home he told his sister about it and she wrote to Louisa, "How did you like the party? Samuel said that they was fighting about all night. So I don't think you would like it very much when there was so much fighting going on."

Nearly two weeks after the dance Sam wrote to Louisa, "I didn't enjoy that ride much. I don't know whether you did or not but I don't think you did with that bucky horse and it being so cold that it wasn't very nice. . . . Louisa, I got my picture taken and I will send you one of them in this letter. I got one of you and I want you to have one of mine. . . . My love to all but don't forget yourself."

On January 21st Mary wrote to Sam, "O could I see you and have a good talk with you. Well there is Louisa. You know yourself that she has made [a] disturbance between you and me. . . . What did Louisa say about you when you was agoin' with me? Well she says Samuel Davidson [is] nothing but a loafer and she said that he never could support a woman. Well I don't care. Sam you can do just what you want, to write to her or me. I don't care but how I hate to think that you are mad at me again. But Sam don't get mad again will you my loving one. Had I you here today wouldn't we have a good old time?"

Two days later, Louisa wrote to Sam, "I was very much surprised to hear from you again for I heard so much said since New Years that I thought you would not write to me again." She had heard that he also saw Mary while he was back for the New Years dance and that Mary was boasting she could have gone to the dance with Sam if she wanted to. She closed—"Samuel if you would so much rather have Mary Rush's company than mine I want you should have it, for I don't want to be where I ain't wanted. So I want to drop corresponding and that will be all I will say now. . . . I never thought you was deceitful before now but I am glad I found out. Well I must close now. Give my love to all and yourself if you like. I won't ask you to write for if all things are true that I heard I don't want you to."

Sam denied it all and he and Louisa wrote to each other a few more times until September 1877. But Sam and Mary kept writing until 1882 when they were about to marry. Then on February 9th Charles wrote to Louisa—"Minnie Rush

has died and was buried today. She died with the consumption. They all feel very sorry for her but so it is. Samuel Davidson bought her a \$30 coffin and it looked splendid. Sam has been weeping for the last 3 days for her."

All that while Louisa did not lack other young men who were interested in her. She went to a July 4th party in 1877 with Nick Ringwald whose family lived just past the Corners on the road to Boonville. In April 1878, Tom Williams, another neighbor living near the Corners, wrote to her in Boonville, "I received your letter and was glad to hear from you and to hear that you liked your place. . . . Louisa, as you spoke of not promising to keep steady company with anyone for the next year to come, I would like to have your reasons for it. But maybe you think that it is none of my business but for all of that I would like to know. . . . I would like the pleasure of waiting on you this summer and next winter too if you would only accept my offer." She didn't.

On January 1, 1879 when Louisa was then working as a hired girl in Boonville for the Wiggins family, she kept a diary for the year in which she wrote brief lines nearly every day. James Cook was man-of-the month for January, calling on her and walking her home from church. Philip Studor, another former White Lake Corners neighbor, also walked her home from church on Sunday in January.

One day in February she wrote, "James Cook came and spent the evening. We played with dominos and with wishbones and looked at pictures and he proposed of putting a ring on my front finger. I refused it." No reasons given. Philip Studor called again. "Philip asked me to give up going with James Cook." But she doesn't say if she will or she won't. And she doesn't waste a line on the thrill or anguish of having proposals from two men in a week. Both kept calling on her but Philip became man-of-the month from March until June when Tom Williams showed up again.

Tom took her to the July 4th dance in Hawkinsville and called on her through the following months until October when she wrote, "This afternoon Philip called for me to go out with him but I couldn't go for I expected Tom Williams. I gave Philip one of my pictures. . . . [But that evening] Tom proposed an engagement and I refused him. And then he said he would keep on coming to see me if I was willing and I couldn't have any objections to that so he went with such an understanding."

Philip Studor showed up again in November but perhaps for the last time. Tom Williams called again the following February to press his case without success. With three courtship proposals in less than a year, Louisa didn't lack a chance for marriage. And she didn't lack attention from other men who show up in her diary from time to time. Charley Carter twice in April 1879. Ed Mathers once in May. John McCan once in August. Will Oakley four times in September. Henry Reams three times in February 1880 and Tom Johnson once in that month. But Louisa never put down a word about liking, or not liking, any of them.

She was 24 years old in 1880 and during the following decade received many letters from other men. But of all the letters she saved the best written were from John G. Clarke, a canal boatman working in the beginning down the Forestport Feeder and Black River canals to the Erie and on to Albany and back. He started writing to Louisa in 1887 when she was 31 years old and still unmarried. She was in N. Y. Mills, a village bordering Utica, working on looms in one of the mills, as she had been for a number of years.

He first wrote from Forestport on February 19, 1887—"Dear Miss Kronmiller: I take the liberty of writing you a few lines, trusting you will pardon me for being so bold on such short acquaintance. You left the church so suddenly Sunday evening, I had no chance to bid you goodbye, & of course, I could not get time to call after services. You probably know how it is yourself so you will excuse my seeming lack of politeness." He then mentioned a local party and a campfire where speeches were made and "several pieces spoken." He closed—"Now, Miss Louise, I hope you will think this worthy of an answer, & will write soon, & that you will allow me to sign myself, Your friend, John G. Clarke."

As a rare woman unmarried at her age, Louisa thought the letter "worthy" and soon answered. John G. Clarke wrote again on March 7th—"I wish you could be here the 17th. The G. A. R. Post are going to give a dance, & I would like to have the pleasure of taking you there, provided, of course, I could get your consent, as it always takes two weeks to make a bargain." He added that they had a "hard" snowstorm the week before and the day before. "I have been out all day helping to break roads, & we shoveled through drifts at least ten feet deep. Several houses in this vicinity were so blockaded with snow that the folks had to crawl through the windows upstairs & shovel the drifts away before they could open their doors." He signed off as her "sincere friend."

He wrote on March 18th to say the G. A. R. dance was not held but—"Someone got up one at the Sherman House last night. I did not go & am very glad of it as it ended in a drunken row. They were so rough the women would not get supper. I went to Boonville to see a play called the "Blue & the Grey." It was very fine. I wish I could describe it to you, but that is beyond my power." He added—"The party business here is having a rest & I am glad of it. I am so tired of them I do not want to hear party mentioned around here."

He soon recovered, though, and by April 14th wrote—"I have not the same excuse you gave for not writing sooner, as I have had nothing to do the last two weeks but eat, drink, & be merry, but I trust you will pardon me this once, & like you I will try to do better next time." He closed—"Guess I'll stop before I make this letter look any worse than it does now, as my head aches so I hardly know whether I've got a pen or a crowbar in my hand. Regards to all who may inquire for me, & please write soon to your sincere friend."

By May 1st the canal was open and he told Louisa "I am working now, so I will not be able to write two letters to your one, but will write as often as I can, conveniently." He also told her—"We are going to have a play here in about two

weeks. It is called "Better Than Gold" & is a good one. They coaxed me into taking a part in it, & as it is my first trial of that kind of business, it is rather embarrassing. But I guess I will pull through all right." Other news—They had rain all the week before. "But the lumbermen needed the rain in order to run their logs, so we did not complain." Will Syphert lost part of a finger in a log drive and two others had accidents. "I never liked that kind of work & such things as these do not increase my love for it." He closed hoping she would write soon to her "sincere friend, John G. Clarke."

From Forestport on May 31st he asked to be excused for not writing sooner. "I had hardly received your last letter when we started the boat for Albany & I could not get time to write on the way, as I have to work from daylight till dark. So if you have been provoked at my delay I hope this will clear your brow & 'cause you to smile again.' There is not much news to write, only there is a Methodist fair tonight in Traffarn's Hall with ice cream & of course I'll have to go. . . . When are you coming up here again? I must make this letter short, as I have been busy all day & my time is limited tonight."

He wrote next on June 24th from Whitesboro, which is next to New York Mills where Louisa was working. "You will see by the heading of this that I am on my way down the canal. Yours of the 18th I received all right & was glad to hear from you & that you are having good times. I am going to Albany & would like very much to get home for the Fourth but hardly expect to. We will pass the mills this afternoon & will be back in about a week from next Friday or Saturday. The boat's name is C. W. Colton. I feel like jumping off the boat every time we pass the mills & running up there but I guess I will have to wait till next fall for a visit." Then as though he hadn't written enough to keep up Louisa's interest in him he added—"I would like to meet you at some dance or other & have a good whirl if no more. I have not got over the disappointment of not seeing you at that dance last winter, you remember when. . . . Please write soon to your sincere friend."

By July 26th he was back in Forestport. "You waited so long before writing I thought you had forgotten me entirely, so you may well believe I was pleased when your letter came. I was back to Forestport in time for the Fourth but did not stay here. Had a fine time where I went though & did not get home till the next night." Local news—Will Sykes who drowned in the pond "was working for Will Morreal & was carrying some sawdust on the boat. Nobody saw him fall overboard. This was Friday night & the body was not found till the next morning. . . . There is the usual amount of small talk, which is not worth writing & a little scandal thrown in to leaven the lump. I get so sick of hearing it that I get off by myself somewhere & long for someone who will talk sense. I do not mean to say they all are like that, but the majority cannot, or at least do not, talk anything but nonsense & scandal. Of course, I mean the young folks, though the older ones take their share no doubt. . . . I wish I could see you & have a good visit with you. I hope your next trip will be to Forestport & that I will be here while you are.

Now, please don't wait so long this time before writing or I shall have to write you an awful lecture."

He wrote from Forestport on August 21st—"Probably you think it is I who deserve a lecture, but when I explain you will be as lenient as possible, I know. I was sick nearly the whole trip & part of the time was not able to do anything. When night came, I was too glad to get to bed to think of writing. It is a terrible time around here for sickness & death. . . . I do not get much time to enjoy myself, for just about time there is to be a dance or party, we have to start for Albany. We will be loaded tomorrow night, & start Tuesday morning, to be gone two weeks as usual."

From Forestport on September 11th he wrote, "Your letters are always welcome, & I look forward with pleasure to the time when I receive them. . . . I hope to see you soon after you get home but cannot tell how soon, as a boatman is not certain where he will be from one day to another. However, there is a long winter before us & it will be strange indeed if we do not meet 'once or twice' in a while. By the way, Louisa, I wish you would do me a favor. Maggie Shanks has a couple of books of mine & as I do not know when I will see her, if you will kindly get them & bring them up with you, I will be very thankful to you."

By October 8th he was on the Erie Canal at Frankfort, east of Utica, and Louisa was in White Lake Corners. "Perhaps you may feel slighted because I did not come to see you while I was in Forestport, but really I could not help it. I was busy most of the time & when I could have gone the weather was bad. Thank you for bringing the books with you as soon as possible. I will be up after them." So Louisa still had one more hope of seeing him again after their first meeting at church, but perhaps not much. He asked, "Did you go to the dance in Alder Creek? I had to leave before it came off & you may believe I did not like it a little bit."

Over five months passed before John G. Clarke's next letter on March 22, 1888 from Brooklyn to Louisa in White Lake Corners. "It was a pleasant surprise to receive a letter from you today, as I had given up hope of hearing from you. I am very glad you took advantage of 'leap-year privileges' (though I don't see why that should make any difference among friends) & wrote because it shows that you did not receive my letter written six weeks ago. I thought the same as you that perhaps you had grown tired of the correspondence, & as it is the lady's right, in such cases, to close the correspondence when she chooses, I had nothing to do but submit. . . . I do not think you bold in thus writing, as we are good enough friends, I trust, so that we need not care who writes the first letter. I received your letter last fall & intended to answer it by making you a visit, but every day that I set for it was stormy or something happened to prevent my going. Then when I came here I had a good deal of visiting among old friends to do, so it was some time before I wrote, & when I finally did write, waited in vain for an answer. I think this will explain my seeming slight & restore me once more to your good graces."

He added that he didn't know when he would get up her way again and she would have to hold his books for him. "But I would give a dozen such books for the privilege [of] a handshake & an hour's conversation with you. . . . Probably you are completely out of patience, though, by this time, as you said you would expect an answer the fore part of this week & you will not get it until the latter part or perhaps the first of next week. . . . I hope, Louisa, that we may keep up a correspondence. . . . I will answer your letters to the best of my ability. The best that friends can do when separated is to write back & forth & thus keep up their friendship."

On April 16th he wrote only a short letter from Weehawken, New Jersey—"Your letter was received in due time & should have been answered before but having been pretty busy I did not take time to write. My work is such that sometimes I am very busy & again have a short spell of leisure, which latter is the case just now. . . . Sending you my best wishes & trusting to hear from you soon I remain your friend, John G. Clarke."

From New York City on July 3rd he wrote—"I am on the canal again this summer but go to Buffalo instead of up the Black River. It is pleasanter than last season on the canal, but when I get to Utica I always want to jump off the boat & take the cars for Alder Creek. I never was homesick before but must plead guilty to that this spring for I do long to see some of the folks in that section of the country. . . . The "glorious Fourth" will be over by the time you get this but I suppose you will have had a great time wherever you may be. There will be a fine time here tomorrow, excursions, picnics, dances, etc. without number. I think I shall go to Rockaway Beach & I wish you were here to go with me provided, of course, that I could persuade you to go. . . . I expected to hear you were married this spring along with the rest of the crowd." He closed—"If you write direct your letter to Boat S. J. Hatch, Collection Office, West Troy, N. Y. Or if you cannot write so soon direct to Buffalo instead of Troy."

John G. Clarke's last letter to Louisa was from Buffalo on August 7th—"We were detained some time by a break in the canal & I did not get your letter till yesterday. I have taken the first opportunity to answer it. . . . There are two young ladies from Brooklyn taking a trip on the boat & the captain's daughter makes three, nearly all of the same age. You can guess we have lots of sport. We were out rowing on the lake Sunday afternoon & went about three miles out. It was a fine afternoon & the girls enjoyed it to the utmost & it goes without saying that your humble servant enjoyed it, although he is awfully bashful, you know. One of the visitors is very bashful & we tease her sometimes until she is about half crazy. Well, I hope you will get this letter without unnecessary delay & that I will hear from you in New York. I would like very much to see you & perhaps may this fall though I can't say for certain whether I shall go up that way. And now, with many good wishes & friendly handshaking in thought, I remain your sincere friend."

Given these letters I'd say John G. Clarke was no ordinary seaman or boatman. I doubt he ever walked behind two mules or horses for six hours, cursing them on their way. I also doubt he manned the stern rudder to steer the boat. Most likely he was a steward and served meals and drinks to passengers chatting all the while to amuse them and put them at ease. He was, I think, more social butterfly than the "awfully bashful" humble servant he claimed to be.

His letters were better written than those Louisa received from other men, especially Sam Davidson, but they were unlike many of the others because he did not offer a proposal or speak of love. John G. Clarke's best lines made excuses for not writing or not visiting Louisa. He was a boatman after all—here today and gone tomorrow. The Forestport Feeder Canal that gave Louisa's brother a living was not to give her a husband. Seemingly she was faced with spinsterhood. She had tried working and living on her own but by 1888 moved back home to be with her mother.

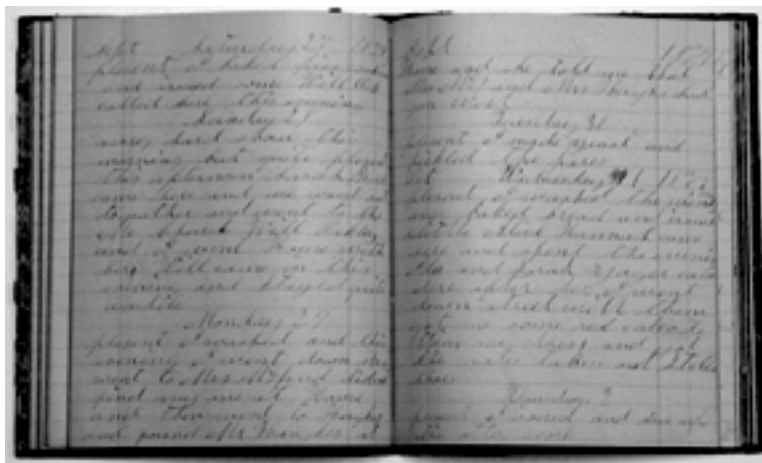
Notes

*The story of Samuel, Mary, and Louisa is more fully told in Chapter 19 of *Adirondack Borderland: A Woodgate, N. Y. Legacy From the 1800s*, by John Huther, self-published, 2002. The book is available in the Woodgate Free Library, Old Forge Library, Town of Webb Historical Association, Adirondack Museum Library, and Oneida County Historical Library.

*After I shared Sam's and Mary's letters with Ann Steele she called one day to say she found Minnie Rush's obituary in the *Boonville Herald*. Minnie had died on February 7, 1882 at the age of 21 years, 8 months, and 16 days.

*Wyld writes, "The record shows that canallers would fight at the drop of a hat, but it also shows them to have been friendly and convivial. They were, of course, without societyish restraints and refinements, but their brawling, although frequent, seldom had real malice in it" (p. 61).

Louisa Kronmiller's Diary



The diary is 6 x 7.5 inches and covers January 1, 1879 to December 20, 1879, February 1, 1880 to the 22nd, and May 1, 1880 to the 12th.

A Boatman's Letter

Forestport, Feby 19th 1887.

Dear Miss Kronmiller:

I take the liberty of writing you a few lines, trusting you will pardon me for being ~~so bold on such short acquaintances~~. You left the church so suddenly, Sunday evening, I had no chance to bid you goodbye, & of course, I could not get time to call after services. You probably know how it is yourself, so you will excuse my seeming lack of politeness.

You remember the party that was to be at Nichols' Monday evening. It was a success in every way, & a complete surprise to Clara. She received several presents, & we had a good time til one o'clock

Written by John G. Clarke, a canal boatman

Louisa Kronmiller 1856 – 1938



This picture was taken in 1883.

Mary Kronmiller 1864 – 1932



This picture was taken in 1883.

6 – MARY KRONMILLER IN THE BARK WOODS

Mary was six months old when her father died from his Civil War wound, too young to know him or days in the county Poorhouse. She grew up on the road first tramped down by men building reservoirs for the Erie Canal and later widened and repaired by John Davidson, her father, brother Charles, and neighbors.

The only home she really knew in her early years was the farm that Charles bought in 1868. Because it was his farm and he was 15 years older than Mary, he must have seemed more like a father than brother to her. Though Charles usually calls her sister Mary, his notes are mainly about providing for her, as a father would. She first shows up in his notes in 1875 when she was 11. He gave her 15 cents that year toward a dress, bought new shoes and had old ones repaired for her, and bought yard goods for her.

Several times he bought medicine for her from Dr. J. B. Nold in Boonville. In June when he took his mother and Mary to see Dr. Nold he also noted he bought, "3 beers for Mother, Mary & me \$.15." On July 21st he wrote, "I got up this morning at 2 o'clock & went to Boonville. . . . I got 2 boxes of salve from Dr. Nold for sister Mary's face that I burned accidentally cost 50 cents." He doesn't say how he did it, maybe from poking the fire in a stove and having a burning chip fly up into her face, but the early hour of his trip shows his worry.

Other than that, Mary's 11th year seems normal enough for the time and place. Several times Charles sent her up to the Corners with money to buy a gallon of kerosene when it was needed. She went to church with Louisa and picked blackberries with her. At the end of August and into September for eight days she picked hops with Louisa, and she helped pick up 48 bushels of potatoes that her brothers dug up in October. So Mary grew up as another helping hand but also as a girl with a life of her own. On January 11, 1876 when she was still 11, Charles wrote to Louisa, "Sister Mary had a party this evening. The following were to it: Carrie Stell & Lena Pate & Ettie & Dwight Jenkins & Fred Rush."

Charles wrote to Louisa about the hop harvest in September 1876 when Mary was 12. "I would have wrote long ago if I could have got the time at all. But for the 16 days I have been working almost day and night for it was hop picking. It took 2 days to pick my hops and 5 1/2 days to pick Stell's hops and 1 1/2 days to pick Pate's hops, 8 1/3 days to pick Gotlieb Kraft's hops and 1 day to pick Fred Myers' hops and 1 day to pick old Rigley's hops and I helped them all. And Mother and Mary picked every day except in our yard. They couldn't because they had all they could do in the house. I had 40 pickers the second day and 4 of them stayed with us all together."

Mary's own letters in 1877 show her to be a 13-year sister teasing the 21-year old Louisa. "Fred Manning is boarding at Hawkinsville now. He was awful mad because you went out with Nick. . . . Next time I see Nick I am going to tell him that if you was up here you would give him a kiss but as long as you are down there, he will have to wait for you to come up. . . . Louisa, don't you and Nick correspond with each other now? I suppose that hired man down there will

be sweet on you. I am going to look in the paper every week and see if I can't see your marriage in it and if you don't get married to the hired man you can get a man from the poorhouse."

In May, Mary wrote to Louisa, "Well I heard said that Nick cried Sunday and Monday about you. Too bad ain't it? Well what kind of ride did you have and when be you coming over here again? . . . And Minnie said that you had got mad at that Jim over there. What did you get mad at him for? When you write let me know." A year later she asked, "Louisa, does Tom Williams come over there to see you and do you write to him? Everybody around here says that you do. Rose Rigley says that she saw the outside and they say that he lets everybody see the outside. First, he asked them if they know your writing and then he shows them the outside."

But Mary's diary best tells what she was like in her teenage years. When she was 15, Louisa gave her a book in which she kept her notes. On the first page she wrote, "Memoranda book Presented to Mary Kronmiller By her sister Louisa." She also listed Carrie Stell, Lillie Goodier, and Minnie Rush as "my friends." She kept the diary from August 18, 1879 until May 30, 1881. Unlike Charles and John Davidson who wrote about their work, Mary wrote about her social life. Unlike Charles, too, she didn't write something each day, only days when she did something she thought special—often "Splendid" times, as she called them.

Life on the dirt roads, among the hop poles, and in the farmhouses of White Lake Corners was both livelier and sadder than Charles' memoranda books ever told or his letters ever hinted. How much so is in Mary's diary. She went to many dances and parties. But a few times she also wrote of going to church, Sunday school, prayer meetings, or a church supper. She went to a couple of political meetings. She went strawberry and blackberry picking. She went on two camp-outs and several times stayed overnight with girlfriends. She went to quiltings. She took a few buggy rides around White Lake Corners and went to Forestport and Boonville. She went to funerals and "set up" through nights with sick friends.

And she picked hops. Though Charles never wrote any more about raising hops or drying them after spring 1879, Mary told of picking neighbors' hops that year starting at Rigley's—"Clara Coudray, Ed Coudray, Katie Dupper and myself picked together through the hop yards. Fell off the hop wagon and nearly broke my neck." Picking with others to fill one box was not unusual because of the many blossoms it took to fill a box, but I don't know how pay per box was worked out. All of Charles' notes show only the number of boxes filled and pay for one person, or sometimes two from the same family.

Mary picked hops again on September 11th—"Got done at 3 o'clock. Louisa [using Charles' horses and wagon] and I and Katie Dupper, Carrie Stell took the Schell girls home. Had a Splendid time." September 12th—"Today we picked hops to Stell's. This evening Tom Williams came and I went to a party down [to] Kraft's and had a Splendid time."

The following year Mary started picking at Nichols' on August 27, 1880—"Carrie and Ettie Nichols and Mrs. Clark and Francis Herrick picked to our

box. Had lots of fun. This evening Carrie and I and Francis and Ettie went with George Winegard when he took the pickers home. Dwight Jenkins went too. Going out Forestport way we sung. Coming home the boys run [the] horses fearful. Never saw horses run so and I was half scairt to death. Stayed all night to Henry Nichols'. Carrie and I slept together." September 4th—"Minnie Rush and I and Fred took the hop pickers home [using Charles' horses and wagon, again]. Had lots of fun. Minnie stayed all night with me." September 6th—"Picked hops to Stell's today. This evening Annie Coscomb and myself and Will Merrill and Will Stell went to a surprise party to Frank App's. Had quite a time getting enough together for to dance. Frank and Libbie were to bed when we got there. Roused them out, danced 4 sets, and then came home again. Had a good time."

September 8th—"Will Merrill took us boat riding [on White Lake] this evening. A load of us from this way went down to old Kraft's to pick his hops for him. Had wine first thing when we got there and picked hops awhile. . . . Bought us a limburg, sung and danced and picked hops all day. An Irish load came from Forestport way. Our boys came to visit us. To our box were Minnie Rush, Carrie App, Libbie App, Carrie Stell, and myself. And George Davidson and Libbie Davidson picked at our box. We sung and danced and this evening Minnie Rush and Libbie Davidson and I stayed to the dance. Had a beautiful time. Stayed all night to Kraft's. Didn't have much sleep though but lots of fun."

Mary never wrote about Charles using his dry house in 1879 for hops, only for parties or dances. August 21st—"This evening we had a dance in the dry house. There were quite a number here. Had a Splendid time." August 29th—"Today Lilly Goodier [teacher] had a school picnic and her scholars spoke pieces. We had a Splendid time. In the evening they had a dance in the dry house. This is Lilly Goodier's last dance up here. We had a Splendid time."

The biggest dry house dance, though, started on November 26th—"Today we were getting ready all day for a dance Carrie Stell, Minnie Rush, and myself are getting up in the dry house [on the next day]. This evening Carrie Stell, Will Stell, and Peter Shriver, Clara Coudray, Minnie Rush came and we went in the dry house and danced and carried on. Peter Shriver walked on his head and entertained us." The next day was Thanksgiving—"Today we all worked hard putting the finishing touches onto everything for the dance. This afternoon Rebecca Skillin and Lena Pate came and spent the afternoon. This evening a lot came from all over. We had James Clark and Henry Goligar played. We charged 50 cents a number. Sold 28 numbers."

From this I'd guess they charged people for each dance or set of dances in order to pay the musicians—half a day's pay per dance or set. It probably meant that only a few danced at a time, which was a good thing in the dry house where the second floor was only 20 feet long and 18 feet wide. This left others to sit along the walls and watch or stir up trouble as Mary's diary goes on to tell. "Everything went off Splendid till the last set. I went on the floor to dance with Willie Donovan when John Cropsey stepped on ahead of us. We spoke to him about it. When he challenged Will to fight, they had a fight and Will whipped

Cropsey bad when they parted them. We had a goose for supper and this ends our Thanksgiving party."

Others rented the dry house for parties. One in the spring of 1880 was a "sugar party" from the season's new maple syrup where they "had all the jackwax we could eat" and danced until 3 in the morning. Another was John Rubyor's "oyster supper and dance in the dry house." Mary of course had a "splendid time" at both.

The dry house still stands—maybe the last sign of hop growing still to be seen in the area. But without Charles' notes, I never knew until 1999 that it was a dry house or hop house. We always called it a barn. To me it was big as a barn and in the middle at the top of a dirt ramp leading into it were two sliding doors that made it look like a barn. In the entryway on both sides it had a second floor I assumed was for hay. That it didn't have stalls for cows or horses was beyond my notice even while looking right at it. Its only feature that ever struck me as odd was a room to the left of the entry that was plastered. Why? I wondered a little but never asked because I was overwhelmed by staying and working in the house during summers in the 1960s. Looking at it closely in 1999, I finally saw that the second floor on the left also was plastered right up to the roof. Thanks to measurements by Charles' great-grandson Duane Frymire I learned the plastered room was 18 feet wide at the front and 20 feet deep and the floor above was the same size. The whole building was 46 feet across the front and 20 feet deep. And a picture from the early 1900s shows it with a cupola sitting a little to the left on the roof peak, squarely over the plastered rooms. It must have been a good place for dances.

Other dances and parties were held elsewhere in the area and Mary went to many of them. Several times she went to "donations" that were held to raise money to help someone—a neighbor, politician, minister. In October 1879, one was held at the Corners with a dance and she "had a Splendid time." On Christmas day that year she went to a donation at Forestport and "had a nice time. Got home at half past one." A year later she went to another donation and dance where they had "musicians from Hawkinsville and Boonville. Good music." She also went to a donation where "a party from Forestport came up and were going to whip our boys but our boy[s] wouldn't fight with them. They were horrid, all drunk."

She went to "kissing parties" too but didn't note how they were played. Thinking back about the winter of 1877-78 [when she was not quite 14], she wrote, "We used to have kissing party every week and had an exhibition that winter too and I played lots of parts. . . . Them were the winter[s] I had fun." But after a kissing party at Ettie Jenkins' house she wrote, "didn't like it very much."

Amid parties and dances and other "Splendid times," though, Mary felt time passing. Friends getting married or going away sometimes left her feeling alone, perhaps feeling a little sorry for herself. January 26, 1880—"This evening Carrie Stell and I went up to the Corners and got the mail. It was a Splendid evening, the moon bright as day and Carrie says that this is going to be the last winter that she is a Stell. So we won't have many such evenings more. I forgot to tell you old D[iary] that she is engaged to get married to Roselle Putney. He is

a Splendid fellow but I am awful sorry to lose Carrie. We have always been together since we were children and it seems hard to think that after she gets married I won't have anyone but my old diary to tell my secrets to. I forgot to put down that the 15 of January 1880 John Pate and Rose Rigley got married and so there is no more Rose Rigley. And Ettie Jenkins is going to be married 4 of July to Chris Nichols. So I won't have her to go with and Carrie Stell and Charley Evans are going to stand up for them. Not even Carrie knows this so old diary you must not tell my secrets. Well I won't write any more just now for my hand trembles so I can't hardly finish. Goodbye for this time."

Her very next entry is all about Minnie Rush going to Rochester to work. January 29th—"It was [a] Splendid moonlight night and when we came home I got started and slipped from the top of the hill [in front of the Kronmiller old place] clean down to the bottom. Minnie is going Monday. Today is Thursday. When we got down below our house the moon shone down on us and we was wondering where that same moon would shine down on us in a couple of years, where we would be. The snow sparkled like glass and I told Min our best days were past and she said I should remember 5 week[s] from tonight. It seems too bad to think our parties is all knocked in the head now that Min is going off. Dear old diary this place is getting awful lonesome. Carrie is down to Nichols' and I can't see her and it is awful lonesome without her."

The death of George Stell, Carrie's brother, also was a sad time for Mary. She noted he was "worse again" on April 11th and with others "set up" with him before he died on April 17th. Mary wrote, "I was very sorry, for George was a nice young man. He was 28 years old. He died in a thunderstorm and was taken sick in the awfulest thunderstorm I ever saw." George was sick for three years with "slow consumption." His death, Mary wrote, "ended the troubles of one of the jolliest young men I ever saw. He was always so good-natured through all his sickness. George is 28 years and 5 months and 5 days old. When he died he died easy just as if he was going to sleep. The thunderstorm he died in was not very hard. I helped Stells all day today and tonight Arny Lockwood and Charley Nugent and George Studor and Lizzie Studor, May Scanlon and brother Charley set up. Carrie and I went to bed." Mary stayed all the next day to help and wrote that night—"there were quite a number in to see George. He looks as natural as life." The funeral was the following day—"It was the largest funeral ever was up to White Lake. There were 30 teams. They had Mr. Cleveland, Presbyterian minister from Forestport preach the funeral sermon down to the graveyard."

Parties may have been "knocked in the head," but they didn't come to an end for Mary that year. Often she went to White Lake for what turned out to be parties and fun. She went fishing there with others on May 19, 1880—"Carrie Stell, Clara Coudray, Maggie Herrick, Will Stell, L. Gifford, [and] Carrie Gifford went out in one boat and Maggie and I and Will went out in another boat. Rowed around on the lake and fished a little but didn't catch any. Sung and had lots of fun on the lake. Came back to Kraft's and seen George Studor and Charley Nugent. Came on home and had lots of fun on the road. Rolled a spile in the middle of the road and teetered on another spile and sung and made speeches and had a jolly night of it. Got home at twelve o'clock." July 18, 1880—"This

afternoon Roselle Putney came with a horse and carriage and took Carrie out riding and I went down to the lake with her. We went over on the big island and ate some huckleberries. Came to Kraft's and had peanuts and candy and lemonade. Had a Splendid time. Couldn't be beat. Roselle is the old Harry to carry on." A week later she was at another lake party—"This afternoon went up to Stell's. Was there awhile when Willie Merrill and George Winegard and Chris Coscomb came and then Lew Gifford came and we all went down to the lake and had a Splendid time. Was out on the lake and sung songs and had all the candy we could eat. And George Winegard bought Carrie and I a limburg cheese. I stayed all night with Carrie. Had Splendid time."

Holidays, too, were special in Mary's life, unlike Charles who barely noted them, and none is bigger in Mary's diary than the Fourth of July 1880. The Fourth itself fell on Sunday—"This afternoon I went up to Stell's and had lots of fun shooting firecrackers and eating apples from Stell's trees." And the main celebration was the next day—"This morning I sewed on my dress and finished and got ready for the picnic down to White Lake and Carrie and I went with Chris Coscomb. Got down to the lake and made Susie Kraft to go with us. Chris bought a limburg cheese and we went over to the big island and had a Splendid time singing and eating limburg cheese. Had a Splendid Supper. Stayed there about 4 hours. Hilton came over to see us while we were there. There was only Carrie and Susie and Chris Coscomb and myself to the picnic but we had a Splendid time. Carrie was full of the old Harry today." The picnic, though, was only the start of the day—"Came back home. I got ready to go to the dance over to Hawkinsville. Chris Coscomb, Susie and myself went over together. Sung songs on the way going over and had a Splendid time. Got over there and never had a better time in my life. They had a fearful fight downstairs but I didn't see anything of it. Was up in the ballroom all the time. Minnie was downstairs and fainted. John Cropsey was in the mess but the[y] wouldn't let him fight. Will Donovan was in the fight but didn't get a scratch but had his shirt torn fearfully. Got acquainted with Ed Putney. Think he is quite nice. Had a Splendid time. Got home at eight o'clock the next morning. Danced most every set that night."

The wedding of the year was Carrie's, Mary's next-door neighbor. November 8, 1880—"This evening Carrie Stell and I went up to Sophia Stell's and spent the evening. Had lots of fun with Carrie about her getting married tomorrow. We plagued her awfully, the last evening Carrie and I will be out together as girls. Came down to Carrie's and I stayed all night with Carrie the last time while she is a girl."

The following day Roselle Putney came with a double team to take Carrie, Mary, and best man Arny Lockwood to Boonville for the wedding. They all stayed the night in the American Hotel. November 10th—"Last night was the first night I ever spent in a hotel. Slept good. Carrie, Roselle and Arn and I went up to the picture gallery and had our pictures taken." November 11th—"Roselle brought us home this afternoon. I hated to part with Carrie but all must part sooner or later. Got home at 4 o'clock. Carrie has gone to a home of her own and I have got no more best friend. So goodbye Carrie."

The year of 1880 was Mary's 16th and her last as a dependent child. The mix of fun and sadness in her diary puts her on a border between girlhood and young womanhood. Like others her age she too left White Lake Corners the following year to start working for wages—not knowing if or when she would ever return.

In 1881 at age 17 she started working away from home. Her last two diary entries tell where. May 29th—“Today I left home and went with Carrie and Roselle Putney. Am going to work in the bark woods with them.” May 30th—“Today we went up in the bark woods above Bellingertown 11 miles from Forestport. The men that are going to work for Carrie and Roselle are Frank Cropsicker and Gotlieb Dupper, James Putney, Dias Martin, Alonzo Pettibone, Jack Mahan, Ed Morgan, and Mike Coleman. They are all very quite [or quiet?] nice boys.” Following these lines are 21 pages of recipes for “delicious ginger bread,” doughnuts, pies, cakes (sponge, delicate, jelly, white, black wedding, buttermilk, coffee, lemon), cookies (molasses, sugar), and 2 1/2 quarts of ice cream. Mary was Carrie's dessert chef for all those quite or quiet “nice boys.”

But Charles and Louisa were not happy with Mary being there. Charles wrote to Louisa working in New York Mills that Mary was back in the bark woods on June 12, 1881—“Seems that she must do as Carrie says. We did not want her to go but she was bound to go anyway.” A month later Charles wrote to Louisa that Mary “came home Sunday before the Fourth and stayed till the next afternoon. Mother says then she went to Hawkinsville to the dance and we didn't see her again till Wednesday morning. Then she came home and got ready and went in the woods with Putneys again.”

Louisa, nearly eight years older, must have written a sisterly letter to Mary about being in the woods with so many men and urged Mary to work with her in the mill. But Mary fired back on July 25th—“I never have spent a summer so easy before in my life and I am healthier than I ever was before and if I had the business to do over again, I would do the same as I did for I consider myself just in as good company as with you and Charley. Well enough of this. I will go hop picking with you if you want me and when we come back [from] hop picking I will see the mills and see what I think of working there. If it suits me I will work and if you think we'll get along keeping house I will see about having the carpet moved and get things ready for keeping house.”

Mary wrote to Louisa again on August 15th—“I received your letter this morning and was glad to hear from you and to see you have changed your tune from the other letter. So you can see I can talk insulting as well as you and I will too when people talk to me as you did. I suppose you thought you just done it when you wrote that letter, but two can play at that game remember. . . . But I am coming down there this fall and go through the mills and see what I think of them. I don't fancy housework any too well. . . . I am going hop picking . . . and if I can will let you know when and where to go to if you don't feel too high toned to pick hops with a barkpeeler.”

But she had cooled down by the time she wrote to Louisa on August 24th—“I received your kind letter yesterday morning and would like to go [on an excursion train to the Thousand Islands] ever so much. But I will tell you just how

it is coming in the bark woods. This summer I did not get me any new hat. I did not think it necessary as it wouldn't be worthwhile for the few times I could wear it and I should not like to get one now it is so late." She then told Louisa she had been asked by the Whites in Holland Patent to work for them and she would do so starting September 5th. On September 11th Mary wrote to Louisa from Holland Patent—"I don't like it here one bit. I get so lonesome and I don't think I will stay long and if I leave I shall come down to New York Mills, that is if I will be welcome and you will promise not to be scolding me all the time. I am going to try it another week."

Through the years Mary lived at home she of course benefited from the money the canals brought to the area and her brother's income. But her work in the bark woods, as a cook not a "barkpeeler" as Louisa may have called her, was the one part of her life where she benefited most directly from the tanning industry made possible by the canals. The woods she was working in belonged to the Proctor & Hill Tannery. But Mary like Louisa—not married and seemingly without prospects—had to leave the area to make money to support herself. The canals supported the first settlers for only a few decades. After that their choices and the choices of their children were to stay to scratch out a living in a harsh climate and depleted woods or move away.

Notes

*Mary Kronmiller's diary is part of the "Dart-Lesure Mailbag" 1988 edition, pages 52-71. She went to 13 dances and 18 parties during the 22 months covered by her notes.

*Mr. Cleveland, Presbyterian minister from Forestport, was a brother of Grover Cleveland, U. S. President.

*John Davidson's Assessor's Lists for 1883 and 1884 show Proctor & Hill owning 100 acres in Woodhull Lot 6 on the road to Bellingertown.

7 – SETTLERS AND NATIVES UNSETTLED

During the 1880s the benefits of the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals to the settlers of White Lake Corners dwindled and finally dried up. Many in the Davidson, Kronmiller, and neighboring families had to go elsewhere to make a living.

Surprisingly, though, in 1880 the Davidson family moved back from Lafayette to their homestead farm on the Woodhull road. John Davidson didn't note the reason, anymore than he noted why he moved away in the first place. One guess is that working his own land, no matter how poor it was, was better than working for someone else on far better land. Or maybe he was fired. Or maybe like many of us who followed him in the next century, he and his family felt closer to the White Lake area than any other place they ever lived. After moving to Lafayette, John and some of his children kept going back to visit, hunt, pick hops, and go to dances. I'm sure they thought of it as home.

No surer sign that it was home to them is in Charles Kronmiller's memoranda book. December 22, 1877—"This evening I heard that old Mrs. Davidson died." She was 85. December 24th—"I got up early and Wm. Davidson, Wm. Skillin, and I went out to Alder Creek Depot to meet John Davidson and the rest with his dead mother. They all were there. I carried or drew the corpse for them." December 25th—"Christmas. I done nothing, only went to the funeral up at Davidson's."

The family had moved Elizabeth Davidson's body about a hundred miles first by wagon or sled to a train to Syracuse, another train to Utica, and a third train to Alder Creek before the last stretch on Charles' sled. Charles may have offered his sled because he was a friend of the family and his woodlot made him their closest neighbor. Elizabeth was buried on the Davidson 200-acre farm near his woodlot and present-day Kronmiller camp—alongside her husband John who had died at age 70 in 1865.

When John Davidson's notes picked up again in 1880 at White Lake Corners, he wrote down grain he sowed (oats, barley, buckwheat) and vegetables he planted (potatoes, corn, peas, turnips). But more importantly, some of his accounts show he and his sons hauled spars and dock sticks again to Forestport for Phil McGuire who in turn was still shipping the logs—up to 70 feet long—by the canals to port cities. He worked for McGuire until 1883 when he may have stopped altogether or simply ran out of space in his notebook. During that time, he or his sons hauled at least two hundred logs for McGuire. He didn't note the exact number but his accounts for feed, food, and other goods that he got in exchange from McGuire add up to \$975—worth perhaps three or four hundred spiles to go floating down the canals.

In addition to hauling spiles and farming, John Davidson went back to overseeing roadwork and assessing land and other property for the town. In one sense little had changed for him except his children were older and some were

already off on their own or close to going. By 1883, son John was 35 and working on the railroad out of Schenectady to become an engineer. William 33 was married to Julia Rush and had his own farm down the road. Elizabeth was 30 and about to marry. Samuel at 28 and after Minnie Rush's death the year before was about to return to Lafayette to marry and farm. Still at home in 1883 were David at 26, James 24, Robert 22, George 19, and Henry 17. John Davidson still had many hands for heavy work in fields and woods, but in the end only James would be able to stay on the farm. The rest had to move on.

In the meantime, Mary Kronmiller had joined Louisa in New York Mills where both worked on the looms and 1882 their mother moved there as well to live with them. At 33 Charles was left home alone on his farm, but farming was failing him. He gave up the chickens and his potatoes turned out "very poor." In December he wrote to Louisa, "I don't intend to work in the woods this winter if I can get along without it for I fairly hate it." He seemed to be giving up on both farm and woods, but he hadn't given up helping in the hamlet. The Presbyterian Church was built in 1882, most likely during the summer and fall months. An old post card picture of it has a penciled note on the back—"Charles Kronmiller helped build this church." Also, on October 21, 1882 he was elected chairman at the annual Burying Ground meeting. The following year he served as clerk.

Poor health nagged Charles. He wrote to Louisa in early February 1883 after a visit to New York Mills—"I got home all right and feel about the same as when I left you." And again on March 1st—"I haven't done but very little since I was down there for it has been so stormy and the snow so deep that I have stayed at home about all of the time. But I feel pretty well at present so I don't find any fault." March 26th—"I have not done anything to speak of in some time but it don't cost me much to live and as soon as I do a good day's work I don't feel good. My back gets lame so I thought I would wait till spring before I done much." On May 21st Louisa wrote to Charles—"Mother is fretting about your spring planting because you haven't got horses to work with." Without chickens and horses Charles' farming days were near an end. By June 8th, though, he was feeling better and working in the Blake Tract peeling bark.

The surprise of the year—of many a year really—came in August 1883 when Louisa wrote to Charles that their brother Philip would be coming the next month for a short visit, his first since running away in 1875. "I want you to come down here so we can have a family picture taken and have us all together and for which we haven't been since father died." As it turned out it was the only time in their lives after the Civil War that they were all together as a family. In 1883 Mother Regina was 56 years old, Charles 34, Louisa 27, Philip 24, George 21, and Mary 19.

After his visit, Philip went to the west coast—to Oregon to work on the railroad. And he went to British Columbia in 1885 to work on the railroad where he wrote, "times are very dull out here" and asked to be addressed as "P. K. Miller." He made shingles in Idaho and worked in gold mines in Washington and

California. He never went back east again. George [Kronmiller] Shofer stayed in the Utica area working on the Shofer farm some of the time. At age 20 he went to Whitestown Seminary perhaps to prepare for teaching, but nothing came of that or anything else he tried to do with his life.

After the family reunion in 1883, Charles wrote to Louisa in October—"I am building a fish hatchery for the Bisby Club and we [have] just raised the frame today. . . . This job pays pretty well for this time of the year for I get \$2 a day and board. So I will stay as long as I can." The club was named after the lake on which it was located, the same lake that served as one of the reservoirs to feed the Erie Canal. The club was a new mission for the lake.

Donaldson's history of the Adirondacks tells of the start of the Bisby Club. "This little club of twenty-five members was organized on June 1, 1878, and was the first sporting-club in the mountains to own its preserve. The Tahawus Club was organized two years earlier, but held its lands under lease." In 1893, the Adirondack League Club acquired the Bisby Club with its 329 acres of land around the First Bisby Lake. The Bisby Club may have been the first to pay Charles for carpentry work because he no doubt donated his help building the church. Building his dry house and the church had served him well. Carpentry became his route out of farming and peeling bark and at the same time a way into the deeper woods of the Adirondacks.

Charles wrote to Louisa in December 1883—"I have got through in at Bisby's. I finished on the first day of this month but didn't come out just then. I think that I will stay at home till after New Years so that you can come to see me if you wish when you come up. . . . I don't like to see the snow come for it bothers me but everybody can't be pleased, for I well remember when I use to wish for snow myself when I had a team standing in the barn eating about a dollars worth of feed every day. But it is awful dull around here now by what it used to be for there ain't but very few around here and they are all old batches like myself and old maids."

"Dull" was not Charles' word for a lack of dances or parties. Times were "dull" because of a lack of money or ways to earn it. The national depression of the 1870s seems finally to have reached the borderland. Charles' next letter hinted at this as well as more poor health. January 22, 1884—"I am feeling middling well at present but still I can't say that I am real well. . . . I have got my pay from John Davidson since you was up here but he is the only one. I think that I will have to threaten to take Fred Myers' cows for he don't seem to try to pay at all." *"Pay from John Davidson?"*—maybe for doing roadwork for nonresidents. Or he may have been paid for building something for John Davidson. He didn't say.

I also haven't seen his reply to a letter to him from John Abbott, Forestport Town Clerk. April 29, 1884—"I hereby inform you of your nomination and appointment as Overseer of the Poor for District No. 2 in place of Adam Pate who failed to qualify. I also inform you of your reappointment to the Office of

Inspector of Election of District No. 2. You having failed to qualify it is necessary to qualify within 10 days." Most likely he didn't qualify.

The letter was forwarded to Old Forge because by then Charles was north of White Lake at Dart's Camp near Big Moose Lake. He wrote to Louisa and Mary on May 2nd—"I am now in at Brown's Tract at Wm. Dart's Camp and I expect to help him put up a house if my health holds out long enough. I didn't go into the Bisby's because it took them too long to get ready for me and I knew that Bill was ready for me. So I thought that I better take the first chance and be sure of a job and perhaps I might earn quite a little sum before the other would get ready for me and I would see the country back here."

He went on to tell how he got there. "It is a long ways back here, 35 miles back in the woods from home. It is by the side of quite a nice lake. But I don't think I would like to live here for it is too far back altogether for to suit me. I left home yesterday morning and walked all day yesterday and till 2 o'clock today. If I had known that it was such a distance I don't think that I should have come in here for I got awful tired before I got here. When you write let me know how you all are and how you are getting along with mother and what you are going to do with her. If everything works all right I will be in here till June anyway, but I can't tell anything about it yet." Charles had walked the whole way instead of taking a boat from Old Forge up 4th Lake and from there walking up to Bubb, Moss, and Dart's lakes and boating across them. Today, my sister and her husband who have retired to their place on the dirt road into Dart's Lake will say, "It *is* a long ways back" even by car, and in winter it is "too far back altogether."

While Charles was at Dart's Camp, his mother and sisters decided they no longer could live together in New York Mills. Louisa wrote to Charles at Dart's Camp on May 11, 1884—"And about Mother. She says she is going to live to White Lake, that her money is on that place and she is not going to give it up. She won't hear to board at all. That's all I can say now about it." As it turned out, "*her money*" was some of the \$1,000 Charles paid for the 60-acre farm back in 1868. When Charles noted paying off a loan in 1876, it came to \$205.67 for what he called his "lot mortgage whole amount interest & principal." It was part of his share of the total cost, the rest coming from money earned working for John Davidson. But the larger share was his mother's.

Charles was back at the farm in June 1884. Louisa in the meantime had tried to get their mother into the Old Lady's Home in Utica but found she was "too young." She was 57 years old at the time and in July she moved back to the farm to stay with Charles. Through the summer and fall, Charles was not well and not working. He wrote to Louisa in October that he needed to work "if I don't get but 50 cents a day," that he had doctor bills to pay, and that he had earned only 70 dollars in a year.

Charles went to New York Mills to visit Louisa and Mary before Christmas 1884. On the train back to Alder Creek he met General Hill of the Proctor & Hill Tannery who asked Charles to work for him in the bark woods "to help fix up

roads and see to loading his teams” for 18 dollars a month. Charles wrote to Louisa—“So I think I will go next Monday morning, for the most of the men seem to be working for 15 dollars a month.” Times were still dull.

He left his mother home alone when he went into the woods for Proctor & Hill. He wrote to Louisa and Mary on February 1, 1885—“I ain't at home much, for on week days I have got to be at my post so as to tell the teams where to load and see that they pick up the bark clean. For I have from 10 to 13 teams a day to see to and some of them get in the woods quite a little before daylight. Anyway it keeps me busy from 5 o'clock in the morning till after dark for I have got to look up all my own roads and fix them up too and the land is very rocky and hilly. So it makes it awful hard to get road fit for drawing loads on. I have worked at it for 35 days now without losing a day.” He finished working for Proctor & Hill by March 24, 1885—“In the forepart of the winter, they didn't expect to get all their bark in this winter. But the winter lasted so long and the teams were so plenty that they got it all in. They have over 5,000 cords in the tannery yard at present, more they say than they ever had at any one time. . . . There were over 50 teams drawing bark alone.”

This was one of the last entries in all of the Kronmiller and Davidson notes and letters mentioning any work in the woods that relied on the canals. And Charles didn't know at the time but the tannery's days were numbered. It closed three years later.

Donaldson calls 1885 “a red-letter year in Adirondack history.” It was the one in which New York State tried to protect state lands in the Adirondack and Catskill regions by designating them Forest Preserve. The 1885 law states the Forest Preserve should remain “forever wild.” Charles may have learned about the law from Verplanck Colvin. On November 16, 1885 Colvin sent a printed form postcard to Charles with blanks filled in to say—“I have to-day sent to you through American Express (paid to Boonville) a copy of the photographs & book promised you with photographs also for LeRoy Dart, Wm. Stell, & Chris Herrick.”

Charles didn't say what this was about until he wrote to Louisa on December 15th—“I have been tinkering around all over this fall. I helped cut roads to bark and to rank bark and helped dig potatoes here and there and was in the woods a few days [with] Verplanck Colvin Superintendent New York State Adirondack Survey and helped cut roads to logs and bought a Winchester rifle and went hunting a spell and built a wood house for P. Studor and killed the people's pigs around the neighborhood and a few cows too. So between all I have been quite busy all fall.” He also cut “9 or 10 cords” of firewood.

Most likely, Verplanck Colvin was surveying in the area, possibly along the Oneida and Herkimer county boundary on the east of the Davidson farm. Twelve years earlier he had been authorized by the State to do an Adirondack Survey and he made numerous reports to the State about the Adirondack region. In March of 1886 he made what Donaldson calls a “massive” report of “360 pages, crammed with dry statistical matter.” Perhaps Charles, whose memoranda

books might be described the same way, helped add a dry detail or two to Colvin's report.

That same year Charles wrote to Louisa on March 15th that her letter with \$50 reached him and he had done some work on the house. "I think that I will put on a new roof just as soon as the weather gets warm enough. As I don't care much about the house I would like to have it in some shape that it would suit you and Mary as near as I can as far as I go." He had sold the farm to Louisa and Mary. A Warranty Deed from him to his sisters for the 60-acre farm is dated August 10, 1886.

Charles was through with farming, free to do any work he could get. With Wally Skillin that summer he built a new mill for Jerry App. He continued to live at home with his mother and made more repairs on the house. He wrote to Louisa on September 8th—"I have had some help already at that well. That well was a terrible bother and it ain't all right yet but we get water out of it. I have got the pump in the cellar at present & intend to leave it there until I get the wall built so as to have the water handy for the mortar. For I am going to mix the mortar right in the cellar." As it turned out, the well was good enough to supply us with all the water we needed in the 1960s for showers and a washing machine. And the cellar wall lasted until 1980 when his teenage grandsons Eric Huther and Duane Frymire tore out the west wall and built it over again.

Charles' memoranda book for 1887 is mainly a listing of days worked, many of them from January until July 7th at the Bisby Club. He made shingles many days and he worked for others building cottages for individual club members. He also worked as a guide a few times during that period. After Charles finished working at the Bisby Club he went to Woodhull and did carpentry work for a Mrs. Herrig until July 21st. Pages for the rest of the year are torn out of his book except for a few days in October that show he worked for three days helping to stock Bisby Lake with trout.

For much of 1887 Charles seems to have earned money—but not enough to pay off the loan on the old place. On September 20, 1887 the state took the 50-acre farm because the \$200 loan had not been repaid. Receipts for interest payments for every year (except 1869) show payments were faithfully made from 1863 to 1883. Failure to repay the loan is puzzling because Charles' sale of his farm to Mary and Louisa should have given him some cash to pay back the loan. But perhaps money was not involved in the transfer of the deed to Louisa and Mary. Or perhaps Charles saw no need to keep the old place because he was no longer farming. Louisa actually took over payments in 1882 and 1883, but paying off the loan may have been beyond her means once she helped to buy Charles' place. Whatever the reason, the old place in 1887 was no longer in the Kronmiller name, another loss to dull times.

It didn't matter much to Charles because he moved on, as he noted on November 29, 1887—"I leave home this morning to accept a situation at Wilmurt Lake, Hamilton Co. NY. I go to Utica to meet the members of the Wilmurt Lake

Club before I go to the lake. I am to have forty dollars a month and board myself.” He was hired as the “Keeper,” or manager, starting in January 1888.

The Wilmurt Club—about 25 straight-line miles to the east of White Lake—was a private hunting and fishing club. It was rebuilding its main lodge at the time and individual club members were starting to build their own camps. They needed someone with experience in logging and building and someone who could keep track of expenditures. Charles Kronmiller was their man on all counts. If there was any doubt, he could have shown his old memoranda books with all the items noted down to the penny. At the Club his notes show he was in charge of men cutting and dragging timber, making shingles, and gathering materials to build the Club house and a cottage for one of the members. At age 39 the pay for 12 months each year was the best money he ever made.

The club had a printed list of 6 rules that no doubt were posted in various places on the property and showed Charles’ duties.

Rule 1—The keeper shall, under the officers, have charge of the grounds, buildings and other property of the Club, and shall see that the same are properly cared for and kept clean and in an orderly condition. At all times, when not personally employed by members of the Club, he shall devote his services to the maintenance and improvement of the Club property.

Rule 2—Guides and employees are not expected to enter the Club House unless required to do so by a member of the Club or the keeper. Guides using boats must see that they are kept clean and are properly cared for.

Charles also served as a guide at times and was in charge of getting trout from a hatchery each year to stock Wilmurt Lake. The rest of Rule 1 spelled out the keeper's fish duties—“He shall keep a sufficient quantity of bait on hand for the use of the members and their guests, and weigh all trout taken from the lake and shall keep an accurate account thereof. He shall see that the rules of the Club are rigidly enforced.”

Some of Charles' notes show names of those who fished and the weight of their catches. But often the line after weight was left blank despite the last rule.

Rule 6—No member of the Club shall take to exceed one hundred pounds of trout from the lake in any one year. These may be taken by the member himself, his family, or his guests. No other person shall take or attempt to take any fish from the lake. C. H. Smyth, Secretary

The number of fish taken may have been important because the lake was not large. Charles typed a note on the Club typewriter on January 27, 1890—“I measured Wilmurt Lake length and width. It is 103 & 1/2 rods wide in the widest place and it is 292 rods long in the longest place [a third of a mile wide and nearly a mile long]. I think it is a good deal smaller than what its owners thought

it was so they will most likely be surprised when they get my letter. But so it is and it can't be helped."

While Charles was settling into his Keeper duties in 1888, Bill Dart was building up his camp on Second Lake (now Dart Lake) near Big Moose Lake in Herkimer County, about 25 straight-line miles to the north of White Lake. Dart's Camp was to become a "family camp" that in time was to have a main building with 30 sleeping rooms and dining rooms to serve the entire camp which also included 15 rustic cottages of different sizes plus a three-story boathouse with a dance hall on the second floor and bachelor quarters on the third. The buildings had the Adirondack look—walls of upright logs and wide porches or "verandas," as they were called in a brochure.

Bill had started the camp in 1879 with a cabin on the shore of the lake. It was the site to which Charles Kronmiller had hiked 35 miles in 1884 to help put up another building of some kind. In 1887, Bill wrote to a cousin, "I am building a cottage for a party from Boston. I get a thousand dollars for it and then they board with me and pay me \$10.50 for board." But as a bachelor, he had to hire—or marry—someone to cook. He chose Mary Kronmiller.

Bill wrote to Mary on May 26, 1888—"One thing I wished to tell you was that you have my whole heart. If I had the choice of all the women I know I would not change so you can rest easy on that matter. . . . If my love for you keeps on increasing as fast as it has since Tuesday night I will be loaded down by the first of July. I did not think it possible for me to fall so much in love but you have got me head, neck and heels so don't keep me waiting too long. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Also I thank the Lord and hope he will bless us with a long and happy life." He also asked for Charles' address and that his best wishes be given to Louisa.

Louisa may have been on his mind for the reason Louisa revealed in her June 11th letter to Charles at the Wilmurt Club—"Oh Charley I had the honor to have an offer of marriage from W. M. Dart the first part of May. He wrote me a letter to the Mills. He thought I better go in there with him than with you but I think I rather be an old maid all my life than tie myself to him. But Charley don't say anything to anyone up that way so it will get out around. I will show you the letter some time. I feel sorry for the poor fellow but I never could like him. I hope he has got someone else that he can love and have for his wife." She did not know yet that it would be her sister Mary.

On June 13th Bill Dart also wrote to Charles—"Friend Charles. I thought I would write you a few lines to let you know that I am still alive and well and expect to be one of the happiest cusses in the land soon, for Mary has promised to share my lot in the future. Hope you will congratulate us. I know that I am not worthy of her but will do my best to make her happy. . . . Write me soon and let me know what you think about having me for a brother-in-law."

Bill also wrote more letters to Mary because business was picking up and he thought the sooner she could get there the better. He suggested July 5th but

the earliest date Mary agreed to was July 9th. So they were married that day in Forestport. She was 24 and he was 38. From Forestport they took a horse and wagon to Old Forge at the foot of the Fulton Chain of Lakes. The rest of the trip is described in Joseph Grady's book on the region—"Bride and Groom arrived at the Forge House in the summer of 1888, rowed to the North Shore of Fourth Lake, and from there followed the carries and water routes to Dart's. It was a honeymoon of woods and water with hard work awaiting at the end of the trail, but the couple were young, ambitious and in love, and they began their life companionship with a determination that never faltered this side of success."

The route into Dart's Camp might have been harder than Grady made it out to be. Bill and Mary's only child, Emma, described it years later. Emma was born in a Utica hospital but to get her there her father rowed her pregnant mother "across our lake, walked over the trail to Moss Lake, rowed across there, walked the trail to Bubb Lake, rowed over that, and walked to the landing on Fourth Lake. From there they rowed all the lakes to Old Forge and got the train at Fulton Chain, now called Thendara. It was the reverse of the way she had come into the woods as a bride eight years ago."

As the new bride, Mary wrote to Louisa from Dart's Camp on July 13, 1888—"I arrived all safe and sound and I like it up here much better than I thought I should. It is very pleasant and I don't believe that I will be one bit homesick. I got along very nicely coming in here. Will took me fishing yesterday and I caught 2 speckled trout weighing about 3/4 of a pound each. Made us a lovely breakfast this morning and we went again this afternoon and caught enough for tomorrow morning." Grady also described Mary as "a young lady of Adirondack experience whose charm as a hostess and skill at the kitchen range contributed a large measure of success to Dart's Camp." Cooking in the bark woods for Carrie Stell Putney had not been a waste of time for her.

Along with cooking at Dart's Camp, Mary also had to find women or girls to serve meals, clean rooms, and do laundry. One of the people she turned to soon after getting there was Louisa—"We should like to have you come the first week in August if you can. And if you can come let me know as soon as possible. . . . I thought about the wages. If we have a big house full and lots of work 3 dollars and if there is not very many and not very much work \$2.50 if you think you can come for it. If not why we will give you 3 all the same."

Bill Dart wrote to Louisa on July 24th about how to get there—"Louisa, you will have to come in by Boonville. You drop Frank Barret a line and tell him when you wish to come in and he will fetch you the teams. Start from the Hulbert House but he will call for you anywhere in the place if you don't wish to go up there. The fare will be \$3.00. You pay him and I will pay you back. When you get to the Forge you take the steamboat and go up to Mr. John Meeker's and stay all night and I will meet you in the morning. Don't put on a dress that you don't want any mud on, for you will find mud aplenty." He didn't tell her she

would have to hike several miles uphill and boat across three lakes along the way, just “*mud aplenty*.”

At the Wilmurt Club, Charles was in charge of hiring help and one of the people he wanted to hire was Louisa. He wanted her to start there in 1888, but she was at Dart's Camp. By February 1889, though, she went to the Wilmurt Club and worked there each spring, summer, and fall until 1894. During the winter months she lived with her mother at White Lake Corners on the farm she and Mary bought from Charles.

For the Kronmiller family, Dart's Camp and the Wilmurt Club, both inside the blue line of the Adirondack Park established in 1892, were a new route to making a living in the deeper woods and a way out of White Lake Corners to which the family had first been taken by the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals. Figuratively speaking, Dart's Camp and the Wilmurt Club were extensions of the Erie Canal's long reach into the Adirondacks.

The Kronmiller Family in 1883



Seated left to right: Charles, Mother Regina, and Philip.
Standing left to right: Louisa, George, and Mary.

Notes

*Elizabeth Davidson married Edward Scanlon but died in 1889 leaving three sons—William, James, and George.

**White Lake Burying Ground Co. Journal 1851-1885*, in the Woodgate Free Library shows Charles Kronmiller was elected chairman at the annual meeting on October 21, 1882. The following year he served as clerk.

*On February 22, 1899 Philip K. Miller wrote from Delta, California to Charles after Charles had written to him 4 years earlier. “. . . am sorry to hear that George drinks as I can’t see why a man will drink when he has a family. I know I can’t. I used to before I was married but not because I liked it but because the crowd I went with did. I think George must take after our father that way and I guess George had a pretty good chance to get along if he tried to. . . . & about myself, I ain’t worth much. All I have got is the house I live in and have to work and sometimes have to be away from home for two and three months at a time. At present I ain’t doing anything but play with little Charley.”

*On April 27, 1899 Philip K. Miller wrote to Charles again from Delta. “Well you ask what kind of country it is here. Well it ain’t much. It is all mountains around here and all that is going on is mining and it is pretty well mined out too as they have been mining here ever since 1852 and there ain’t much gold left. But there are other mines such as copper and quicksilver. I never worked at the copper mines so I don’t know much about them. I have worked at the quicksilver mine and am going to work there again this summer. I get \$2.50 a day. The wages are all right but everything is high here too. . . . This is a great country but I never seen anybody but what was disappointed when they got here. All I can say for this country is it has a good winter climate and that’s all.”

*In 1893 Philip K. Miller married and fathered a son and daughter. The son he named Charles after the brother he ran away from. Mary and her family visited them in California in 1903, but the last anyone may have heard from P. K. Miller was a telegram in 1926 saying he would not be able to get to Charles’ funeral.

*By 1890 George [Kronmiller] Shofer married but had trouble finding work. He borrowed \$200 from Charles in 1894. His wife died in 1899 leaving him with two young daughters and money owed to Louisa who declared he was “a good for nothing.” And Mary wrote the following year he was “losing his mind” and probably “drinking too much.”

*Donaldson writes of the Bisby Club in a footnote in vol. II (pp. 159-160) and reports on annual State legislation about the Adirondack region and Preserve including the actions of 1885, (Vol. II, pp. 167-256) and tells of Colvin’s report in 1886 (Vol. II, p.179).

*Barbara McMartin, *The Great Forest of the Adirondacks*, Utica: North Country Books, 1994, puts the size of the Wilmurt Lake Club as 1,800 acres (p. 71).

*Grady tells of Bill and Mary Dart and Dart’s Camp (pp. 194-196).

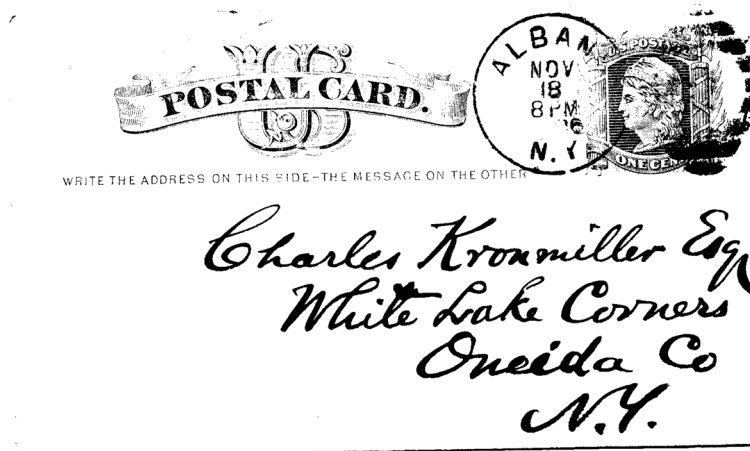
*I read Grady’s description of Mary and Bill’s trip to the Camp at the wedding ceremony for our son Jeff Huther and Lana Pendergast on October 3, 1992—on top of Bald Mountain looking over 4th Lake. The wedding reception was held at Dart’s Camp, now owned by the Rochester YMCA. The next day bride and groom flew to the Czech Republic where Jeff taught economics for a year.

**Dart's Camp*, Auburn, New York: The Fenton Press: no date, is a brochure with pictures of the camp that tells of its virtues—"As a place of rest, recreation and recuperation after the grinding life of the winter, there is no section of the country which can offer more charms, more advantages and more conveniences, coupled with its natural beauties, than the northern New York forest regions. . . ."

*Emma J. Dart, *Tales of an Innkeeper's Daughter*, tells of the trip her mother took to and from Dart's Camp (p. 2).



Postal Card from Verplanck Colvin



Albany, Nov. 16th 1885.

DEAR SIR:

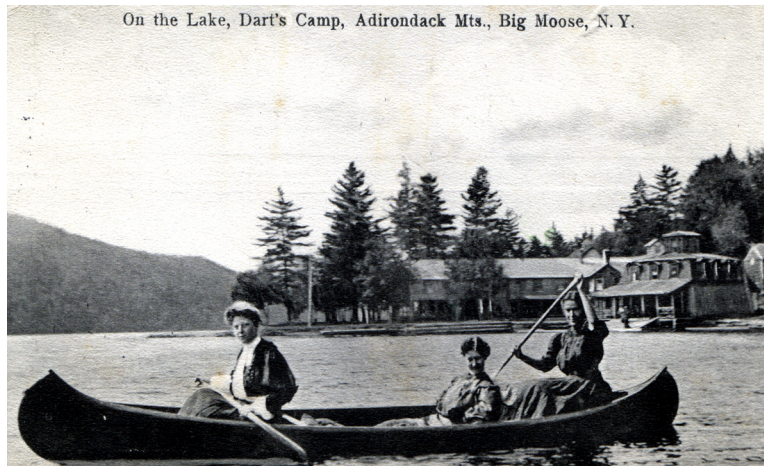
I have to-day sent to you through *American Express* (paid to Boonville) a copy of the photograph & book promised you with photographs also for Le Roy Dart, W. Still, & Chris Herring.

Very truly yours,

VERPLANCK COLVIN,

Superintendent N. Y. State Adirondack Survey.

Dart's Camp on Second Lake, now Dart Lake

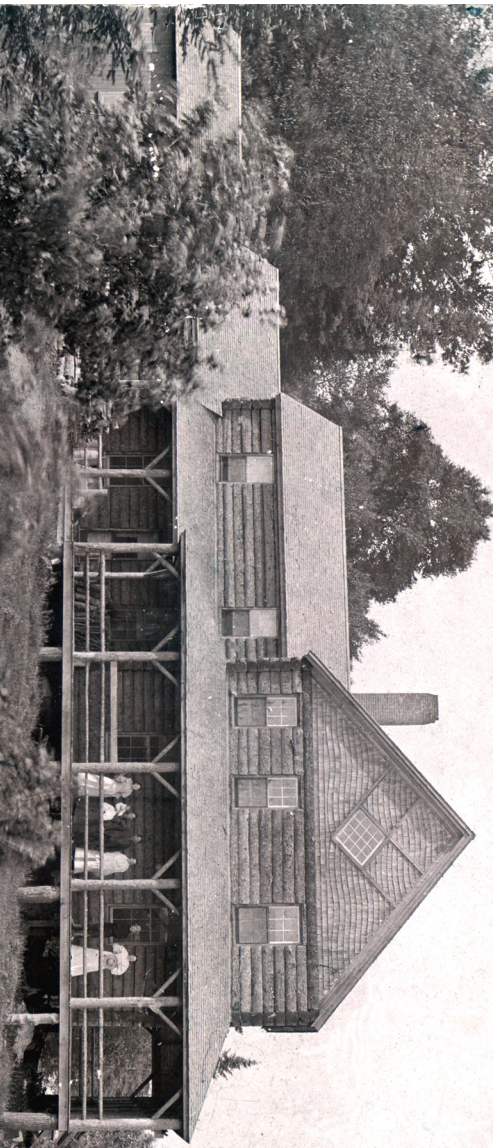


The Camp's first boathouse is in this picture.



Charles Kronmiller helped in a small way to build this second boathouse in 1907. The second floor was for dancing and the third floor had rooms for bachelors.

WILMURT LAKE CLUB



This is the Wilmurt Lake House, probably the main lodge built in 1888. The Wilmurt Club is in Hamilton County on a lake of the same name. Members could sleep in the house or in their own camps. The Club was a private fishing and hunting group and Charles Kronmiller was manager from 1888-1896.

On the porch is Charles Kronmiller third adult from the left and his wife Frances is to the right of him. To the left of him is their baby son Wilmurt held by his grandmother Catherine Wooley. The picture was taken in 1896 or 97.

FISH HATCHERY



Henry Davidson, a son of John and Jane Edgar Davidson, like his brothers was part of the next generation forced to move on and away from the family homestead. Eventually he became a foreman at this hatchery.

8 – A “BIG THING” FOR WHITE LAKE

Canals took people and goods to the edge of the Adirondack woods but not through them. Cutting through was a task for a railroad, which many had dreamed of building during much of the 1800s. But it took until 1890 for Dr. W. Seward Webb to start in earnest with formation of the Adirondack and St. Lawrence Railroad Company.

In all of White Lake Corner's history, the coming of the railroad surely was its biggest event. It must have been talked about in every house and barn for miles around, as well as Studor's Hotel, and filled whole evenings of people's thoughts and dreams. Everyone who owned land near its rumored route must have said, "I wouldn't mind selling off a piece for a railroad." But not Charles Kronmiller. He was at the Wilmurt Club when a letter to him there from a lawyer—dated May 21, 1892—talked of land the railroad wanted to buy. It was to be for the line running from Herkimer to Malone—right through the Adirondacks, right through White Lake Corners, right through Kronmiller land that Charles had deeded to his sisters in 1886.

“Dear Sir,” the railroad lawyer wrote, “I was very much surprised to get the letter I did from you because most people want us to take more rather than less land. The contract says 50 feet or more on either side of centre line except it should be only 40 feet at house line.” I can only wonder what Charles had written to the lawyer. My guess is he wasn't against the railroad cutting through the land as much as he was against having it run too close to the house. In the 1960s my wife and I slept in the bedroom on the trackside of that house. When the last of the freight trains then came through in the middle of the night, they blew the whistle to cross Bear Creek Road and always sounded like they were going to cross our bed as well. So I think Charles wrote hoping to cut down on the amount of land to be taken, just to keep the track as far away from the house as possible.

But the railroad lawyer had something more for Charles to worry about. “Now the engineers laid off 250 feet more on west side of centre line in the swamp for about 400 feet in length in order to get water and so make a water station at White Lake and have all trains stop there which would be a big thing for your place. It would bring it into notice and might help you sell your place.”

The lawyer, looking at Charles' letter and knowing that extra land already had been taken for water, saw a problem to put to rest quickly. He didn't deal with Charles' first worry at all but moved right into selling the water station. “If they did not get water there few trains would stop at White Lake, especially in the winter when there are no visitors there. I wish we could have a water station here and catch all the trains. I tell you it is a big thing for you. You could jump on to a freight or any other train when stopping to take water and it would bring the place into notice. It would be a fine sight to see great vestibule trains stopping at White Lake: the only place they would stop between Remsen and Old Forge.”

Then in a postscript written along one side of the front page, the lawyer covered his backside—“I did not know that the Railroad had taken more land on west side until about 2 weeks ago when I went by there but I thought it would please you to have them spread out at White Lake.” So the land had been cleared before it was purchased. Even the track may have been down while Charles was quibbling over the width of right-of-way, worrying about his mother getting a good night's sleep. Five months before the lawyer's letter, the *Boonville Herald* reported the following on January 7, 1892:

KILLED BY AN EXPLOSION. Three Italians Blown Up While Drilling Out an Old Blast. A fatal accident occurred on the new Adirondack and St. Lawrence railroad near White Lake Corners about 4 P.M. Thursday, which resulted in two Italians being badly injured and one so badly hurt that he died Friday.

Another news article claims track bed had been graded between Poland and the Moose River by March 1892 and that tracks probably would reach White Lake Corners by April 15th—more than a month before the lawyer's letter. The line was built fast, even by today's measures. It was started in 1891 and on July 1892 train service opened between Remsen and Old Forge. Service on the whole line between Herkimer and Malone opened October 24, 1892. That's fast, I think, then or now. And it was a “big thing” for White Lake Corners.

After boosting the water station in his first paragraph, the lawyer moved to closing the purchase in his second. “Now I want to know whether we can have the extra 250 feet in width on west side and take water from the brook. If you are not willing we will go farther up. There is fine water on Wilcox land also at Moose River. We must pump it and we can pump at other places. Your power of attorney gives you authority to decide for Mrs. Dart. The purchase price for the right of way and the extra land will come to \$252.00. The track Master will build your crossings when you want them. Please write me at once. I will be up in a few days with the money if we agree. Yours Truly Milton Howe.” On the envelope to the letter Charles noted, “answered on May 24th, 1892.” I doubt he had any more objections. One old photo of the White Lake Station shows the water tower on the west side of the track and the station itself on the east. Only the station still stands today being slowly restored outside to its early appearance and remodeled inside for a residence.

The railroad did “spread out at White Lake.” A siding southwest of the station, on the south side of Bear Creek Road—not Kronmiller land—was built. And at the station two sidetracks stretched to the north. One of them held “27 forty-foot cars in 1910, 58 of them in 1913, and 49 forty-four foot cars in 1939.” The summer passenger schedule for July 15, 1892 shows two round trips daily between Remsen and Old Forge. Less than a year later, the New York Central took over the line, naming it the Adirondack Division with service starting in Utica. A fall-winter-spring schedule in April 23, 1893 shows two trains up and back daily between Utica and Montreal and two up and back between Utica and Malone.

Eight passenger trains a day at White Lake Station—a “big thing” for a small station.

And it was a big part of the 60 acres Charles bought for farmland in 1868, almost a third of it. The railroad took 18.3 acres (“more or less,” as deeds like to say). But they took it through the middle of a rectangular lot leaving Kronmiller land on both sides of the track and the need for crossings over it as the lawyer promised. As deeded, the railroad took only 40 feet instead of 50 on the house side of the track, but it took 100,000 square feet (2.3 acres) of land with pond for the water tower. The pond drained into White Lake outlet, which joined Bear Creek and eventually the waters of the Black River and the canals—one more little part of the Erie Canal’s long reach into the Adirondacks.

Though Charles no longer owned the land, he acted on his sisters’ behalf. The girls were paid \$365 for “tracks, pond and station.” At \$20 per acre that was slightly better than the \$17 per acre Charles paid for the whole farm back in 1868. The station was called the White Lake Station, even though it was about a mile away from the lake. But it was close enough in those days to attract people to build camps on the lake and vacation there in the summer.

Among those who thought they saw a “big thing” in the railroad was George Davidson—a son of John Davidson. After his apprenticeship as a carpenter in Schenectady, George at age 28 moved back to White Lake Corners in 1892 to marry Frances Putney. The year before he wrote to Charles Kronmiller from Schenectady on July 20, 1891—“I have been up home looking if I could buy a piece of land where the railroad crosses White Lake Road but Hank Rush won’t sell any. Do you want to sell one acre or more below where the railroad crosses the road?” For reasons unknown, the answer was, “No.”

Instead, George bought 78 acres on Bear Creek Road just west of the White Lake outlet. There he built the first hotel on the road called the Adirondack and St. Lawrence Hotel and hoped to catch some of the passengers from the newly opened railroad. He sold it in 1895. Like the Kronmillers, George Davidson moved on. He used his skills to help build other hotels and camps in the Adirondacks. Among them were the Otter Lake Hotel, the Glenmore Hotel on Big Moose Lake, a large camp on one of the islands in Big Moose Lake. And he built an Adirondack Camp exhibit for the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904.

None of the Kronmiller letters tell of the railroad being built—men cutting and burning trees, leveling land for tracks and putting them down, putting up a water tower and station. But Regina Kronmiller was there to see it all, no doubt watching by the hour from her kitchen window. And Louisa may have seen some of the work during winter months when she was home from the Wilmurt Club. Watching others come and go at the station across the tracks may have given her the idea that she herself could travel by train. In the fall of 1893 she went by herself to the World’s Fair in Chicago where she stayed with Wally and Rose Skillin who had moved there from White Lake Corners.

On November 23rd Louisa wrote to Charles. “Well I have seen quite a little of Chicago. It is a very large city and a great business place. . . . The weather is so much pleasanter here than out there but it is very smoky most of the time because there are so many manufacturing places here. . . . Well I was to the fair 6 days. I have had such a hard cold the first four weeks I was here that I couldn’t go as I would have liked to. . . . I don’t think it is very healthy here in Chicago for there are such awful bad smells and so much dirt here in the city. There is a river goes through. The river is enough to knock a dog down. I have to hold my handkerchief over my mouth and nose every time I get near it or it almost makes me vomit.”

Better to go back to White lake Corners, which she soon did. Better to follow up on another idea the railroad had given her. Before going to the fair, she had written in June to the Horton Manufacturing Co. in Fort Wayne to buy “washers” for the Wilmurt Club. The company wrote back June 19th thanking her for her order and added—“If you wish to make it a business of selling our Washers please let us know what towns you will work in, and then if we get any inquiries from any of your towns we will refer them to you as our Agent.” Horton Manufacturing wrote to her again on October 11, 1893—“We are glad to receive your reply and trust you will enjoy your visit to the Worlds Fair and return safely, and then proceed to work the Washer business in earnest in your locality.”

After the Fair, Louisa went home to take care of her mother through the winter and in March 1894 Horton Manufacturing wrote—“We have put you down as Agent for White Lake Corners, Forestport, Boonville, New York Mills and Utica. We have one or two Agents in Utica, but as it is a large city it will not do any harm if you sell there. . . . We hope to hear from you by early mail with an order.” Louisa soon placed an order and started selling washers, door-to-door perhaps but more likely by word of mouth among neighbors. She placed a second order and on April 12, 1894 wrote to Charles at Wilmurt Lake—“I don’t know just when I can come in there. I think I could do better outside this summer. I have had three things to sell and have had good luck selling them. I have sold quite a few washers and I like it much better than in the woods there and I know I could do well at it. And next year I am going to work at it altogether.”

She also received letters from other companies urging her to be their sales “agent”—for baking tins, for steam cookers, for Dr. Burkhart’s Vegetable Compound and other proprietary medicines, and for Australian Silver Table Ware. She was getting ready to open a store. She worked at the Wilmurt Club through the summer of 1894. After another winter in White Lake Corners she opened her store sometime in the spring of 1895. Mary wrote to her from Dart’s Camp on June 26, 1895—“I hope you will do well but you want to look out and not trust too much.” Old photos of the store show Louisa hung a sign over the middle of the porch that shouted “CASH STORE.”

The railroad brought not only goods to her store but a stranger from Vermont who had come to work in a granite quarry near White Lake. Without the railroad to haul the stone away, the quarry would not have opened and no man from Vermont would have showed up in her store. His time book shows he started work for the White Lake Granite Company on October 15, 1896, worked through the following year, and stopped work there on March 18, 1898 when it closed. He had only to walk a mile or so along the tracks to get to the store kept by Miss L. C. Kronmiller.

But by March 23, 1898 he was back in Vermont and wrote—“My Darling I did not think it would be so hard to part till I got four hundred miles from you and where I could not see you every night. But we must make the best of it for the time being. Better times is coming I hope and until then may God bless you and keep you in the prayer of your true friend. AECorliss.” His first name was Alvah and it was his first letter to Louisa. She wrote back to him on March 27th. She told him she had his letter and—“Oh it seems so long since you left here for all its only a few days but it seems more like months and Wednesday morning after you left I almost went wild. Couldn't go to sleep and such a deadly feeling that I thought I couldn't stand it till daylight.”

From then on the railroad quickly carried dozens of letters back and forth between the two during the year. But trains carried the letters more smoothly than letters carried the courtship. Some were long, made long by misunderstandings and Louisa's complaints about Alvah's failure to write soon enough or long enough or lovingly enough. On June 10, 1898 she wrote an angry and rambling letter to Alvah accusing him of “crawling out” of his marriage offer. “If there is anything wrong I won't get married but I will get where you won't see me or anyone else. I never will get married to a man and have him say he had to marry me. All I regret is that I didn't go upstairs that Tuesday night as I did Monday night. Then I would know everything would be right . . . and I wouldn't have to have suffered the anxiety.”

Their Tuesday night together happened at Christmas, which Louisa later complained of as his “Christmas racket.” But Alvah visited her for July 4th and after wrote—“I think your mother and sister are right. You have lived alone long enough. I am glad your mother and sister feel as they do about our getting married for it will be much more pleasant for both of us. . . . And now Louisa I am going to scold you just a little. You must be a little more careful of yourself, not work so hard and lift and lug stuff up from the station, for it is too hard for anyone to do. And if you are any worse I will come and see you if you think best.”

More letters followed through August and September. Louisa didn't want to get married until November. Alvah thought October would be best. Finally, Louisa agreed to the earlier date. They were married on October 6, 1898. Louisa was 42 years old. Alvah was a year older.

Bumps in the courtship were followed by bumps in the marriage. Alvah was a widower with three sons in Vermont, the baby of which died shortly after he married Louisa. He owned a house in Vermont, could find work as a blacksmith only in quarries there, and did not want to be a storekeeper. So Louisa sold off much of her stock and moved to Vermont in late 1899. But the very next spring she moved back to White Lake Corners. She had made up her mind to keep running the store. She bought Mary's half of the old farm, except for two acres that Mary wanted to keep in case she ever wanted to move back there some day.

Louisa wrote to her husband still in Vermont—“Alvah I see there can be money made here in the summer time if I get the house in shape, for the through train from New York to Montreal stops here every day 8 to 10 minutes and if I had a lunch room and temperance drinks and ice cream I could sell lots to them and make money at it. Monday morning now and before 9 o'clock. I sold enough that I have got over \$1 clear profit so it is a good start for Monday.” The lawyer was right after all. Trains stopping at White Lake Station were a “big thing” and Alvah finally made up his mind to join her in 1901 to take up farming.

Through the years Louisa seems to have done most of the work of running the store and keeping house for Alvah. Store and house were all one building, with the left half given over to the store—about 300 square feet out of a total of 860 square feet on the first floor. The second floor was the same size as the first and had three bedrooms. Though not big, the store carried a huge mix and number of items. I know this because Louisa not only kept all her letters but also all her suppliers' invoices, canceled checks, and bank deposit slips. Squirrels and mice tore up some for nests I'm sure, and we threw out some when we cleaned out the place in the 1960s. I've not looked at every piece of paper yet because another large box turned up only recently. The task seems endless.

But I've looked carefully at many invoices and know this: During a nine-year period in the early 1900s, feed grains added up to 33 percent of the total dollar amount on the invoices. Dry goods and notions were 21 percent, groceries 15 percent, shoes 10 percent, and hardware 9 percent. Tobacco and sporting goods were nearly 3 percent each; dairy products 2 percent; and candy, drugs, fuel oil, and toys were each about 1 percent of the total.

Grains were shipped by rail to Louisa in bags weighing 100 pounds or more. In the peak year of 1907 that meant about 480 bags to get over from the railroad station, perhaps 10 to 20 bags each delivery, and stored somewhere. Louisa had the dry house and may have put all the animal feeds in there. She also had two sheds connected to the back of the house and maybe kept large quantities of flour and corn meal in one of them and lesser amounts in the small store itself. One thing is certain, though. At age 51 in 1907 Louisa did not move hundred-pound bags of grain around. Alvah must have done it, perhaps helped by another man. Not only did they have to haul grain from the station to the store

but also handle it for customers who probably were buying it for horses and cows on farms in the area—20,000 to 48,000 pounds per year.

Other than grain, Louisa crammed many of the rest of her goods into the store itself. Shoes had a little room of their own off the main room. In 1899 when she wrote to Alvah about getting rid of her stock before moving to Vermont, she had almost 100 pairs of shoes on hand and almost as many pairs of rubbers.

From her own garden Louisa sold potatoes and possibly other vegetables. From her chickens she sold eggs plus the chickens themselves when their working days were over. She hatched and raised her own chicks. At one point she had over 150 chickens and wrote of getting up to 68 eggs a day. She sold some eggs a crate at a time—144 eggs. One summer, thanks to the railroad, she shipped a crate weekly to Dart's Camp and often 40 to 50 broilers at a time—a lot of heads to chop off and a lot of feathers to pluck.

In short, with or without Alvah's help in the store, house, and garden, Louisa worked long days. Her bank accounts are one sign she was making money. Loans to others including Alvah's two sons and credit given to her “trade,” as she called her customers, are other signs. And at some point too she built an addition to the house and store—360 square feet across the front of the house on the first floor and 200 square feet on the second with windows all around. In her later years, if she had the time, she could sit there in the sun and watch for trade coming up the long drive.

In 1910, she took possession of 100 acres (more or less) up the road close to her family's “old place.” It was owned by the Misner family and became Louisa's because the family owed her \$157 for credit at her store (“*CASH STORE*,” said the sign) and \$219 for a mortgage. Louisa wrote to the Misners, “When I commenced to figure up the account it was more than I thought but I think I ought to come whole at that price. If I can't I will try & sell it to some hunters or keep it for dry stock pasture.” Her husband Alvah ended up haying on the Misner place with the help sometimes of Louisa's nephew Fred Kronmiller, Charles' younger son. Fred also helped Louisa with her store. After his last year in high school in 1916, Louisa opened a “branch store” on White Lake and he ran it for her. He sold ice cream there, took orders for groceries from people around the lake and delivered them by boat.

In 1916 Louisa also bought back the 50-acre “old place” from the state. And at the same time, between it and the “Misner property” she bought 50 acres that in the 1870s had belonged to the Ripleys. Both had been taken by the state for failure to repay loans made in 1863. The sale of the lots was published in the Boonville paper, which Louisa would have known about at the time. But Fred who was a first-year student in Albany Law School that year at age 19 helped her with the purchase. In October Fred wrote to his father and Louisa to tell them how the sale would be handled. “If you think that I can be of any help to you up there I will get excused from lectures the third [of November] and come up.” Fred was ready to practice law without a license.

He found out that the mortgage on each lot had been \$200. But he also found out that the appraised value of the old place was \$150 because it had no buildings and the value of the second lot was \$350 because it had buildings. Expenses for the sale and appraising raised the cost for the old place to \$166 and the other to \$367. Under the law, the highest bids above these amounts would win the lots. Louisa was the winner—with bid amounts that I don't know. So at age 60, a mile up the road from her store and its 40 acres, Louisa had another 200 acres in her name, some of which had use to her as hayfield but little more. Maybe she was thinking about expanding Alvah's farming or maybe she was growing sentimental about the “old place”—the home she had been taken from to the Poorhouse over a half century before.

She kept running her store for another ten years. But she had trouble with some of her mail and supplies from wholesalers, because there were two White Lakes in the state. One troublesome supplier was Butler Brothers “Wholesalers of General Merchandise—by Catalog Only” of New York City. She wrote four angry letters telling them she was being billed for goods she never received—“You must have shipped the goods to White Lake, Sullivan County.” In one letter she pointed out a rubber stamp which they had supplied and which she used to stamp the top of her letters—“**Mrs. L. C. Corliss, White Lake Corners, N.Y., The Foot Rest Store.**” She wrote, “as I have your foot rest rubber stamp that tells plain where my store is without any more talk about it, & as I have wrote you that as soon as I received goods I would send pay for them & have always done this by all, so as soon as goods get here you will hear from me & not before.”

Other people also had problems with mail sent to the other White Lake near New York City—and many when they stopped at the store no doubt heard Louisa's tale of troubles with Butler Brothers. But it took until January 1924 for the name of White Lake Corners to be changed officially to Woodgate. And Woodgate it still is.

Louisa closed her store in 1926. She had made a living and more with it, thanks to the railroad delivering goods to her front door. But it was a front door that would not have been there if the canals had not opened the area to settlement. Without settlement on the trail to Woodhull Lake, the railroad would have done better to build its station a mile up the line closer to White Lake where many passengers were headed anyway. Canals and trains framed Louisa's life at White Lake Corners—canals that brought her parents to the area and made it possible for them to survive there and trains that made it possible for her to do the same. Without the canals and trains, the area might still be back woods today.

Notes

*The construction dates for the railroad and information about the White Lake station are from Michael Kudish, *Where Did the Tracks Go?*, Saranac Lake: The Chauncy Press, 1985, (pp. 85, 87, 89). The book also has the train schedules (pp. 114 and 115).

*Dates for grading the line and putting down track are in Henry A. Harter, *Fairy Tale Railroad: The Mohawk and Malone; From the Mohawk Through the Adirondacks to the St. Lawrence*, Utica: North Country Books, 1979, (p. 46).

*The *Boonville Herald* on January 7, 1892—"William Dart of Second Lake, North Branch, was out from his forest home recently. He is making many improvements to his already desirable camp, and will be prepared to take care of his friends next season better than ever." The article did not note that people would soon be able to get to Dart's Camp much more easily by rail than by wagon or stagecoach. They could get off at Big Moose Station.

*The *Boonville Herald* on January 14, 1892—"The first train will be run across the Black river bridge near Forestport, inside of two weeks. North from Black river there are but a few short fills to be made to complete the grade to Moose river."

*Ann Steele tells of the Davidson hotel in "Long Forgotten Hotels at White Lake Station," *Adirondack Trail Guide*, Woodgate Free Library, 2001 Edition. The *Guide* also contains a photocopy of the ad for the Thanksgiving Party at the hotel.

*Charles—the self proclaimed "old batch"—and Frances Wooley of Utica were married October 31, 1894 when he was 45 and she was 26. Frances replaced Louisa in running the dining room and kitchen so Louisa no longer had a job and went back to White Lake Corners to live with her mother and open her store.

*Regina Kronmiller died in 1899 at age 72. Her death allowed Louisa to move to Vermont to be with her husband Alvah.

*The change from White Lake Corners to Woodgate is described by Matthew "Joe" Conway, "What's in a Name?" in the *Adirondack Trail Guide*, 1995.

*The White Lake Granite quarry, which closed in 1898, exploded in the news in 2000 with a proposal to reopen. "Critics Blast Mines." White Lake Quarry. *Adirondack Explorer*, February 2001, vol. 3, no. 6 (p. 15, 33).

*Louisa wrote to Alvah with rumors about the quarry on August 14, 1898—"I haven't heard of anyone buying the quarry but it is to be sold at sheriff sale the 26 of this month if they don't settle. The sheriff was in the store and he told me it was for different ones and that there was \$1500 that he had against them. And he said that Dodge in Boonville would take it and settle all the bills."

*Ann Steele found the letter about Louisa and the Misner property in her family papers.

Office of

MRS. L. C. CORLISS,

Dealer in

**Drugs, Groceries, Dry Goods, Notions,
Etc., Boots and Shoes.**

White Lake Corners, N. Y., Dec 10 1901



From left to right: Unknown man, Alvah Corliss, Wilmurt and Fred Kronmiller, Frances Kronmiller, and Louisa Corliss. Photo is about 1905.

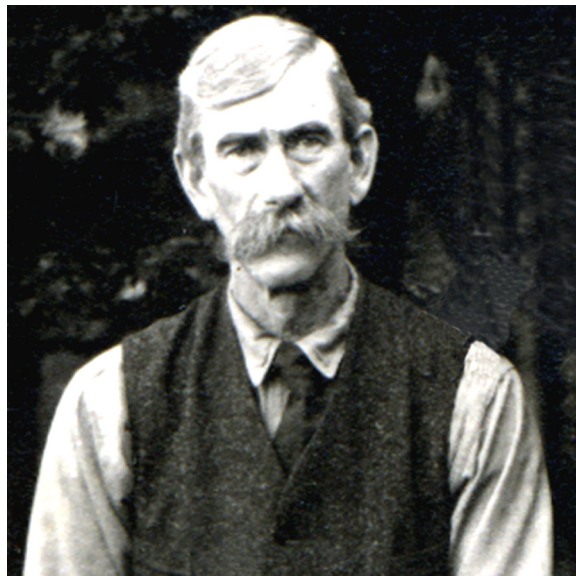


Looking north at the White Lake Station in about 1910. Louisa's Cash Store was to the left of the water tower.

Louisa Kronmiller Corliss 1856 - 1938



Alvah E. Corliss 1855 - 1927



Both photos were taken in 1911.

Charles & Frances Kronmiller & Sons



Fred in packbasket, Charles, Wilmurt, and Frances. Charles' rifle suggests one future for the boys. The boys' curls and their mother's look in another direction suggest a different future. Fred became a lawyer and Wilmurt became a dentist. This photo was taken about 1900 when the boys were 3 and 4 years old, perhaps on Charles' woodlot.

George Davidson 1864 – 1952

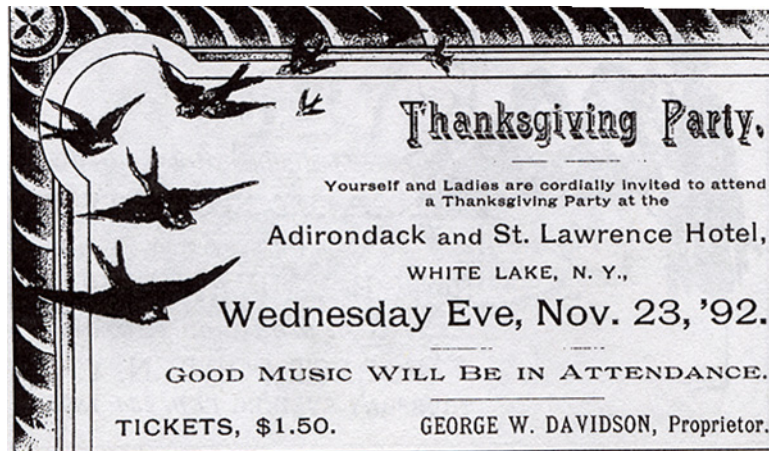


Photo taken about 1920

Frances Putney Davidson 1868 - 1907



Photo may have been taken in 1890s.



GEORGE DAVIDSON was the proprietor of the Adirondack & St. Lawrence Hotel located near the current Adirondack Railway tracks on Bear Creek Road. In 1892, Davidson was hosting a Thanksgiving party, as noted in this invitation from that time period.

This ad was copied from the Woodgate Free Library, *Adirondack Trail Guide*, 2001 showing several historical photos of the area.

The Glenmore Hotel on Big Moose Lake



George Davidson helped build this hotel.

Camp Adirondack



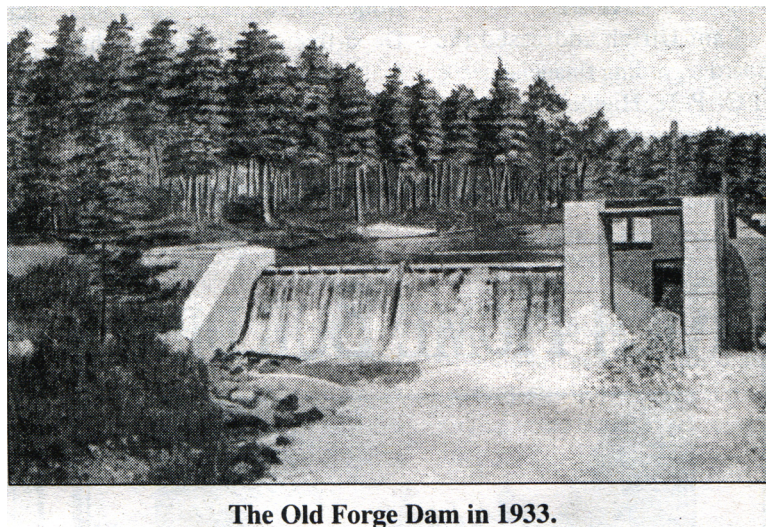
George Davidson built this exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.



Louisa Corliss' "branch store" on White Lake with nephew Fred Kronmiller in door in 1916.



Charles Kronmiller's log cabin on the north side of Bear Creek with his son Fred in 1915. The cabin no longer exists.



9 – Canals and the Adirondack Park

Engineers started digging the Erie Canal in the middle of its long course without knowing exactly how it would be finished in the end—without knowing how many problems they would have to solve and how much water they would need to keep the ditch from going dry. They dug into a darkness of unknowns much as cars now stab the night with headlights, seeing only a little of what is ahead at any one time.

Among all they could not see clearly, the Erie's constant need for water was surely its biggest unknown. Yes, they knew a canal would leak and its sides might break spilling water to lower ground along canal banks. They knew, too, that locks lost water as boats moved in and out. And they knew a summit lost lots of water at both ends. So they finally knew they needed more sources of water than just Lake Erie on the high end of the canal. To keep water flowing in the canal, they kept building "feeders" to it. By 1891 they had built 40.

Of all the feeders, though, the little Forestport Feeder Canal surely can claim "most important" because it fed the summit at Rome. Canal builders knew early they would need such a feeder. But they could not see in the beginning how far beyond the feeder canal they would have to reach for reservoirs of water. Nor could they see how long they would be in damming and tapping lakes and rivers of the southwestern Adirondacks in hopes they finally would have enough water for the Erie. Opening the feeder from the Black River in 1849 with a dam at Forestport wasn't enough, and the addition of dams in 1855, 1860, 1861, 1873, 1881, and 1882 wasn't enough.

Even the state constitution played a role keeping the feeder working for the Erie. In 1846, the voters approved an amendment that the Legislature should not "dispose of any canals of the State"—that they should remain the "property of the State and under its management forever." An 1873 amendment named the Erie and three other canals to be protected "forever" but not the Black River Canal. A law passed in 1877 provided for the disposition and sale of four canals but not the Black River Canal. Its water supply to the Erie was deemed "essential" and an 1882 amendment to the constitution finally added the Black River Canal to those to be protected "forever."

Furthermore, when canal builders took all the Black River water that they could for the Erie, they found they hadn't left enough downstream north of Boonville. They reached farther into the Adirondacks for more water. In 1881 they raised the Old Forge dam at the Fulton Chain of Lakes and built a dam at Sixth Lake and in 1887 dammed the Beaver River making the Stillwater Reservoir. How many streams, bogs, ponds, and lakes trickle into those lakes is yet another unknown. Finally in 1893 they built one more dam for the feeder canal and Black River creating Kayuta Lake. More than half a century passed as they tried to satisfy the thirst of the Erie Canal with Adirondack water.

It was half a century that also included rebuilding dams and canal banks. The dam at North Lake that broke in 1869 was rebuilt as well as 120 feet of the one at Forestport torn out by the flood of water and logs from North Lake. Then in 1897 after a break in the towpath bank of the feeder canal itself, 1,700 men were hired to rebuild it. But a second break in 1898 and a third in 1899 finally led to the conviction of area residents hoping for a government-sponsored work program. All the rebuilding testified to the Erie's continuing need for the Forestport Feeder Canal.

And when the Barge Canal finally replaced the Erie in the early 1900s engineers called for still another dam to be built just north of Rome. Hauling stone and sand to build that dam became the Black River Canal's last great task and the last boat went down to Rome in 1924. The new dam formed a reservoir on the Mohawk River for the summit level of the Barge Canal called Lake Delta—4 square miles of wet testimony to the everlasting need for water at the Rome summit and quiet testimony to the original vital role of the Forestport Feeder Canal. Today, the little feeder still carries Adirondack water down to Lake Delta for the Barge Canal. Furthermore, in 1915 a dam was finished on West Canada Creek to create Hinckley Reservoir in order to send more water through a short feeder to Nine Mile Creek into the present-day Erie Canal summit just west of Utica.

I can only wonder now—had canal builders known in the beginning how long they would be working at it, would they have even started? I can't know what their answer might have been, but maybe it would have been like Charles Kronmiller's after two days of walking through the North Woods to Dart's Camp, *"If I had known that it was such a distance, I don't think that I should have come."* Like Charles the canal builders could not see how far they would have to go.

Moreover, once the feeder canal was built they could not foresee how much more it would do other than carry water. They knew the Black River Canal would help those along the river ship their goods to market. But the Forestport Feeder Canal, too, became a highway to market for those willing to go into the woods around Forestport and White Lake to chop down trees. John Davidson and George Kronmiller went there trading roots elsewhere for woods full of unknowns. They could not see how many trees they would have to chop down to clear fields for food, to split shingles for trade, to haul spiles for docks, to saw timber for lumber, and to peel bark for leather. In the end they and their sons chopped and dragged thousands of trees from their lands alone—all because the Forestport Feeder Canal was there to begin with. The feeder canal took from the woods and in exchange gave them money with which they could buy land and live on it.

They could not see either how hard they would work and how winter cold and snow, thin soil and glacial rocks would work against them. Only after the Davidson family had been there for twenty years and moved away and saw something better could Libbie write of Lafayette—*"It looks like living around here*

to look at the big farms and there is not any snow here.” And the Kronmiller family could not see how the death of the father in the Civil War would send the mother and her small children to the Poorhouse, then split the family apart, and send Charles into the woods as a teenage boy. Only after he struggled for nearly twenty years following his father’s death could Charles write—*“I don’t like to see the snow come for it bothers me.”* And write of winter—*“I fairly hate it.”*

Then, with these reasons and more to quit the land, the families could not see how much they would want to hold onto it, how it would keep drawing them back no matter where they went. In 1870, teenage Louisa wanted only to be back in White Lake Corners with her own family, not some other family where however well treated she’d always be only a hired girl. White Lake Corners was her home always pulling her back from working for other families, in the mills, at Dart’s Camp, or at the Wilmurt Club. And White Lake Corners was the only place her mother wanted to go back to after living in New York Mills—*“My money is on that place.”* It became the place where one day both woke up to a railroad running through their side yard—one that in short time brought goods for a store that Louisa through the first half of her life never could have dreamed of if there had been no railroad. Railroad and store then filled the second half of her life with more than she ever could have hoped for—a husband thanks to the quarry that opened because of the railroad, steady trade from trains carrying people into the heart of the Adirondacks or letting people off for White Lake camps or hunting in nearby woods, and trade with Dart’s Camp where she could send store and garden goods by train to Big Moose Station.

Notably, too, the Davidson family moved back in 1880 and the railroad pulled George Davidson back from Schenectady in 1892 with hopes that a hotel near the station would be his ticket to a living for his new wife and first child. Three years later he found it wasn’t, but from White Lake Corners he started building hotels and camps in the Adirondack woods.

While Kronmillers and Davidsons had been chopping down trees on their lands during the 1800s, others had been doing the same north and east of them on even a larger scale. As early as 1873, Verplanck Colvin as a member of a state commission worried that cutting too many trees would reduce the Adirondack watershed—precious water feeding the Erie Canal and river to New York City. The state, in possibly its second greatest undertaking after the Erie Canal, tried to save trees still standing by declaring in 1885 that state lands of the Adirondack region were a Forest Preserve to be kept “forever wild.” But they soon found “forever wild” was not enough to protect trees forever. Logging continued and the state, as it had through decades earlier trying to dam enough waters of Adirondack lakes and rivers for the Erie Canal, started down another long path of unknowns trying to protect trees.

In 1892 the state declared the region the “Adirondack Park” in order to protect it further and even increase state lands within its borders. Then in 1894

voters approved an addition to the state's constitution hoping to chip "forever wild" in stone—

The lands of the State, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold, or exchanged, or taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold or removed, or destroyed. (Section 7 of Article VII, NY State Constitution)

Davidson and Kronmiller family papers do not show that they voted on this, but a 1902 map among family papers shows a "proposed boundary" of the Adirondack Park—in blue—that ran north and south right along the eastern side of the Davidson's 200 acres. It also was the line between Oneida County and Herkimer County, and it left the Davidsons just outside the blue line. Kronmiller lands all to the west of the Davidsons also were outside. So they knew about the blue line but did not know how it would touch their land and lives in the future. As it turned out, the proposed blue boundary was not fixed in law until 1912. By then the Park had grown from 2,800,000 acres to just over 4,000,000. And for the first time, private lands in the Park were mentioned in law—a move that one day would reach the Davidson and Kronmiller borderlands.

Throughout the 1900s, the blue line like water running off the mountains kept seeping outward soaking up more land. In 1931 it reached 5,600,000 acres—and finally some of the Davidson and Kronmiller lands. The new border cut the Davidson land in half taking in the northern 100 acres plus the Kronmiller 100-acre woodlot. The rest of their acres were on the border just outside the Park. In 1956 the Park grew to about 5,700,000 acres and in 1972 to the nearly 6,000,000 acres it is today—still a mix of more private than public lands. And I suppose it could seep outward again some day taking in the rest of the Davidson and Kronmiller land because it and wooded land around it are like the woods already in the Park.

Trees that have grown up again in the Park and along its borders strike me as one of the better things that happened during the last century. After all the trees taken by ax and saw in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, even more fell to man-made and natural disasters. The fire of 1903 burned 600,000 acres. The fire of 1908 burned 368,000 acres. The Blowdown of 1950 ripped across 800,000 acres. And the windblast of 1995 and the ice storm of 1998 were said to have flattened millions of acres. But worst of all, the Blowdown of 1950 tested the state's constitutional clause on "forever wild" lands—and the constitution failed. The state's attorney general ruled that fallen trees could be cleared to reduce the risk of fire, and the legislature approved issuing private contracts to do it—even though the constitution said "*nor shall the timber thereon be sold or removed, or destroyed.*"

It was a new answer for how wild "forever wild" should be. As one scholar rightly observed later, "The New York State Constitution bestows on 'forever'

about as much longevity as we are likely to see in a democracy. But a new generation may interpret its stewardship in other terms." It's a point well taken and already proven in the 1800s by canals that were no longer protected by the constitution's "forever." And in 1959 a new generation of voters approved a constitutional amendment to take 300 acres of "forever wild" Forest Preserve for a 175-mile superhighway between Albany and Montreal on the eastern side of the Adirondack Park. When finished in 1967 the Northway not only carried larger numbers of people by car into the Park but created more demand than ever for second homes on mountains or lakes or golf courses.

For some, use of private lands in the Park for vacation homes or condos on manicured sites is a good thing for a regional economy that always needs help. For others, such places are an attack on Adirondack wilderness and the constitution's "forever wild" intent. Use of private lands also became an issue in Laurance Rockefeller's unpopular 1967 proposal to take 1,100,000 acres of state land and 600,000 acres of private lands and make them into the third largest national park in the country.

Ultimately, such issues led to the creation of the state Adirondack Park Agency in 1971 with authority to plan the use of state lands in the Park, a plan that became law in 1972. Much more controversial, the Agency also was given authority to plan the use of private lands in the Park and that plan became law in 1973. With these laws, the Park became something more than just a name 100 years after Verplanck Colvin started mapping it and 80 years after it was created in law.

The 1972 law created 7 categories of state lands until then all equally declared "forever wild"—Wilderness, Canoe, Primitive, Wild Forest, Intensive Use, State Administrative, and Historic. In a sense, each area now is defined by how wild it is or should be. And the most striking differences can be seen between the definitions of Wilderness and Wild Forest areas. In part, "a wilderness area, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man—where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." On the other hand, "a wild forest area is an area where the resources permit a somewhat higher degree of human use than in Wilderness, Primitive or Canoe areas, while retaining an essentially wild character . . . an area that frequently lacks the sense of remoteness of Wilderness, Primitive or Canoe areas and that permits a wide variety of outdoor recreation." And the river that gave its name to a canal has now given it to one of the Park's wild forest areas—the Black River Wild Forest.

Davidson/Kronmiller lands outside the Adirondack Park border the Black River Wild Forest. Davidson/Kronmiller lands in the Park are part of private lands that under the 1973 law are now divided into 6 categories—Hamlet, Moderate Intensity Use, Low Intensity Use, Rural Use, Resource Management, and Industrial Use. The whole White Lake area is now officially labeled "Rural

Use”—even though now too many trees have grown up for anything but a small potato patch. No cows are looking over neighbor's fences. No hop poles are bristling in summer fields.

In my view, a big question over all of the classifications of land is how much more the "forever wild" clause might be watered down as the state tries to manage use of state lands in the Park. Wild Forest areas are less wild than Wilderness areas. Motorized vehicles have been used on designated trails in Wild Forests but not in Wilderness. In the Black River Wild Forest such trails have grown wider and their mud holes deeper. Vehicles have gone around big, yellow-painted iron barricades and run down plant life—leaving scars in "forever wild." Fortunately, as of 2004 all-terrain vehicles have been banned from all parts of the Forest Preserve and the scars will have a chance heal and perhaps disappear.

Jetskies on Park lakes—first cousins of all-terrain vehicles—endanger human life, ruin shore line habitat, and pollute air and water. Snowmobiles may not be as hard on the woods as they are on human life but like their motorized cousins are hard on the ears of those who might be listening for quiet in the woods. Yet the machines bring needed dollars into the Park's economy, which further muddies issues and answers about what to do.

How quiet should the Park be? How open should it be? How wild should it be? All have become questions with no easy answers for the Adirondack Park Agency and the state. Like canal builders of yesteryears faced with how to get water for the Erie Canal, they don't know how far they will have to go for answers.

Much closer to the White Lake area in the summer of 2000 new owners proposed to reopen the White Lake Granite Quarry—the same quarry that first brought Alvah Corliss to Louisa Kronmiller's store in 1896 but closed in 1898. The quarry covers 60 acres of private Rural Use land—a slice of land stretched along Route 28 into the Park between portions of the Black River Wild Forest. Those against reopening the quarry talk of air and water pollution, noise and disturbance of the ground from blasting, heavy truck traffic in and out of the quarry, and devaluation of vacation property. My biggest worry is the heavy truck traffic to be added to Route 28 that winds around White Lake and is the main route into the Park from the southwest. It's only a two-lane road that many families with children must walk across to get to the lake in the summer and that already is heavily used by people driving in and out of the Park.

Elsewhere in the Park emotions like forest fires of old have flared up over other issues—overuse of popular trails, loss of private lands from local economies because of sale to the state, canoeing through private lands, limited public access and facilities, increased taxes for schools that only Park residents may vote on, reintroducing wolves in the Park. The Adirondack Park Agency and other state officials have nothing but thickets of issues ahead of them, some beyond the glare of their headlights stabbing dark unknowns. Seemingly behind

them in the clear print of law are all the classifications of both public and private land uses in the Park. But those classifications have given us a map of 13 kinds of land in the Park each with its own color—a multicolored patchwork quilt which may invite only more rules and laws in the future that will only add more and smaller colored patches to the map.

Over everything, hanging like an uncertain cloud, is the question—how wild do we want it to be? And even worse for the wildness of the Park are real clouds over it filled with acid rain and acid snow. A Little Long Lake writer has shown the ways acid already has taken wild life out of the Adirondacks and threatens human health elsewhere, how state and national laws have failed to cut down the levels of the deadly stuff, how he found from snorkeling in the lake "most of the animal life had vanished." The same is said of another 500 Adirondack lakes.

"Forever wild" is a cry growing weaker with passing years, muffled by motorized vehicles and the voices of democratic dispute, and perhaps only faintly heard by those who are making decisions for the Park's future. "Forever wild" has not settled anything forever. It has only started us down the path of forever asking—What does wild mean? How wild do we want the Adirondack Park to be? And for Davidson/Kronmiller descendants, how wild should their borderland legacy be?

To its credit and the benefit of many, the state's constitution not only protected the Erie Canal but it has given us about a century of steady forest growth. And because many trees on state lands and some private lands like those of the Davidsons and Kronmillers have grown and fallen as "forever wild" meant them to, the look of many such areas today is wild despite motorized traffic of all kinds and the killing effects of acid rain and snow. The woods are dark and deep with tangled forest floors that may even have a bear in them—which may make them as wild as most people will want them to be.

Notes

*Langbein reports the number of feeders in 1891 from a state engineer's report as well as problems with supplying enough water to the Erie Canal.

*Thomas reports on the effects of the 1869 flood (p. 137).

*O'Donnell tells of the breaks in 1897, 1898, and 1899 in *Snubbing Posts* (p. 91).

*Frank Graham, *The Adirondack Park: A Political History*, Syracuse University Press, 1984 noted Colvin's worry about the watershed in 1873 (p. 76), the need for the water for the Erie (p. 96), that private lands were first mentioned in the 1912 state law (p. 168), and the likely longevity of "forever" (p. 276).

*Whitford in Chapter 23 describes the state's constitutional amendments about canals and the ones that were "abandoned."

*The Forestport Feeder Canal has been threatened in recent decades by a proposed dam on the Black River north of Hawkinsville that would create a reservoir back to Forestport and likely flood portions of the canal. An engineer for the Hudson River – Black River Regulating District states it is not planning to build the dam "at this time."

*David H. Beetle, *West Canada Creek*, Utica: Utica Observer Dispatch, 1946 reports that the Hinckley dam was finished in 1915.

*Norman Van Valkenburgh, "The Forest Preserve--A Chronology," *The Conservationist*, v. 39, no. 6, May-June 1985, cites acres in the Park in 1912, 1931, 1956, and 1972 (pp. 5-9).

*State of N. Y. Adirondack Park Agency, "Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map 1996" shows the Black River Wild Forest areas and other types of areas in the Park.

*Donaldson describes the 1903 fires (v. II, p. 214) and the 1908 fires (v. II, p. 223).

*McMartin in *The Great Forest of the Adirondacks* cites the acres in the 1950 Blowdown (p. 164).

*Jerry Jenkins with Andy Keal, *The Adirondack Atlas: A Geographic Portrait of the Adirondack Park*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press & the Adirondack Museum, 2004 reports the damage of three "Big Storms" (pp. 108-110) and shows that together they affected 30% of the Park (p. 111).

*Grady notes that Henry Davidson was foreman of the hatchery at Old Forge in 1902 (p. 296). He also notes that the Glenmore Hotel, which George Davidson helped to build, was where in 1906 Chester Gillette and Grace Brown registered before their boat ride on Big Moose Lake and Brown's murder (the source of *An American Tragedy*, p. 229).

*Bill Dart was called for the trial of Gillette in Herkimer but pleaded having a camp full of guests and was let go, as his daughter Emma J. Dart Lesure notes in *Tales of an Innkeeper's Daughter*, MacLean, Virginia, 1977 (p. 9).

*The *Adirondack Explorer*, Saranac Lake, New York regularly reports on issues related to use of the Park.

**N. Y. Times*, "Acid Rain Law Found to Fail in Adirondacks," March 27, 2000 reports on the sulfur and nitrogen in 52 lakes.

*John Slade, *Acid Rain, Acid Snow*, Woodgate International, 2000, writes of the effects of acid rain on Little Long Lake (pp. 5, 11-14).

**The Park Report* of The Resident's Committee to Protect the Adirondacks, vol. 9, no. 3, October 2004 describes it's 4-year effort to win a settlement with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) to close the Adirondack Forest Preserve to ATV use (pp.9-11).

10 – Postscript

A few years ago I stood with my five-year-old grandson on the bank of Bear Creek throwing sticks in the water and watching them float swiftly away between the rocks. “But where does the water go?” he asked.

“Down to Woodhull Creek, then into the Black River, and from there into Lake Ontario, then into the St. Lawrence River, and finally the Atlantic Ocean.” He knew about the ocean and I thought my answer was a good factual one for an inquiring young mind. But I didn’t know then that I had given him only part of the answer. I didn’t know then what I’ve tried to explain in this book—that the Bear Creek we’ve watched flowing through our land for all these years also is part of the water joining the Black River to flow through canals to the great Erie.

And thanks to the first settlers on Bear Creek Road my family’s summers there also are part of the Erie Canal’s reach into the Adirondacks—one that stretches over seven generations to my grandchildren. None of the earlier generations could see what kind of legacy their land at Woodgate would become.

Among all that Louisa could not foresee was what would happen to her store and land along Bear Creek Road. In 1925 her husband Alvah was hospitalized in Utica and then moved to Massachusetts to be cared for by his oldest son. He died there two years later. Louisa closed her store in 1926 at age 70. In January 1927 she went to Florida, maybe for the first time, to visit the Darts who had wintered there for many years. She ended up staying—but whatever money she took with her to Florida was lost in a bank there that failed during the Great Depression. She still had her Woodgate property, though, and before she died in 1938 at age 82 she deeded it over to her nephew Fred Kronmiller.

Fred’s father had died in 1926 leaving his 100-acre woodlot to his wife. The following year Fred married Margaret Jane (Jenny) Davidson (John Davidson’s granddaughter) and Fred’s mother gave them one acre of the woodlot on which they built a camp or “honeymoon cottage,” as it’s named on an old fungus sketch of the place. A few years later George Davidson, Jenny’s father, built a small camp nearby on Davidson land for his unmarried daughter Isabelle.

Fred and Jenny’s marriage became the key to bringing all the Davidson and Kronmiller land together for present-day generations. Through the years John Davidson’s 200 acres passed to his wife and son James, a bachelor. James in turn deeded it to his nephew George Scanlon, a grandson of John Davidson’s. George then deeded life use to his brother Jim and upon Jim’s death to Fred and Jenny’s three girls—Ruth, Jane, and Catherine Kronmiller (John Davidson’s great-granddaughters). Fred’s mother also deeded the old woodlot to the three girls. Only a lawyer’s hand could have guided ownership through so many names and deeds through the years.

Fred's death in 1979 left all the land in his name to Jenny who when she died in 1992 left pieces of it to her three daughters. Today all 540 acres of the original Davidson and Kronmiller land are still held by some generation of the family, either the great-granddaughters of John Davidson and George Kronmiller or some of their great-great grandchildren—namely, Duane Frymire, Jeff Huther, Eric Huther, and Melissa Huther.

My first memories of going to Woodgate stretch back more than 50 years. I went with my family on Sunday afternoon drives, always a scenic treat going over hills to get there. For me the first sign we were getting close was the bridge over the Black River at Forestport. At the time I didn't know about the start of the feeder canal to the west of the bridge or that my mother was born in Forestport. Her parents Charles and Cora Chandler Folts are buried in the Woodgate Cemetery, as are her grandparents Nelson and Uretta Moon Chandler. They are buried on plots owned by Charles Kronmiller in the 1870s, as I learned only recently. My first trips to Woodgate were to visit surviving relations of these families, which I was too young to be told about or remember.

Firmly stuck in memory, though, is my visit to the Kronmiller camp as a high school senior on a cold January day in 1951. Catherine ("Katie") Kronmiller led five of us on a hike across the road through knee-deep snow on the Davidson homestead and into the woods. There we frolicked through part of the Great Blowdown of 1950 crawling under and over trees sprawled in every direction, each leaving a trail in the snow. At the end of daylight we found we were lost and couldn't retrace our erratic trails in the snow. We built a fire with the last of a few matches, huddled together in more cold than heat with noses dripping, and waited. George Scanlon living in the Davidson homestead at the time later wrote to a cousin that a search party led by George Moon started out about 9:30pm and found us about midnight. We had wandered off Davidson land onto state land—now the Black River Wild Forest—to the east toward Gull Lake.

George wrote, "It was a cold night and no doubt some of them would have suffered with the cold before morning. It was just about 15 or 20 above zero when they got out here and it was just 10 above the next morning at 8am when I looked." But we had not suffered, and we plodded back to the Kronmiller camp to find it filled at 2am with neighbors waiting to hear our fate. Among those waiting was George Moon's young son Jim who still lives on Bear Creek Road and clearly remembers sitting up and waiting for us. It was not a proud affair for Katie as a descendant of early settlers including Charles Kronmiller, an Adirondack guide. Nor was it a proud affair for me as a descendant of Nelson Chandler, the "Woodsmen of White Lake" and also an Adirondack guide. And it hasn't been a point of pride for me to have printed forever under my high school yearbook picture—"When a girl is lost or in danger, just call upon our forest ranger."

I never became one or anything like a man of the woods. But Katie and I warmed up to each other enough to marry in 1956 and we've been summer

visitors—"unresidents"—at Woodgate nearly every summer since. Much like the early settlers of this book we too were drawn back there from our homes elsewhere in the states of Washington, New York, Michigan, North Carolina, and now Illinois. Like them too we could not foresee all that Woodgate would come to be in our lives. Life with all its day-by-day chances and choices carried us along seemingly always moving forward, rarely looking backward. Like life for many in America—moving ever onward, hoping upward. Moving onward, not surprisingly, like ancestors who first came to America and moved along the Erie Canal.

Now, the events of my 70 years like stars in a night sky are too many to see all at once, most none too bright at that, some too dim to see at all. Separate and far away as most are now, they take shapes or make pictures only when I'm able to see little lines that join them. Among those lines are all the summers spent at Woodgate, most without thinking about the first Davidsons and Kronmillers there. Without thinking about events in their lives that led to their Woodgate legacy.

The legacy was never a legacy in our thinking. Perhaps my in-laws didn't talk of it as such because they could see only to the horizon of their own lives and thought that was as far as they, or anyone, should try to see. I never heard them say what should be done to keep the land for our children and their children. I never heard, "You'll have to work to keep it together and pass it along." But work—not the play of Adirondack heartland camps and hotels—is a big part of the legacy. Fred Kronmiller didn't talk about it, just showed how he patched roofs, mortared foundations and chimneys, glazed windows, and replaced boards to keep buildings together; how he cut and split wood for warmth and cooking; how he put in wires to have lights glowing and water flowing inside. Quietly showed. Somewhat wearily, it seemed to me. And now I know why. When I began spending summer vacations at Woodgate with my little family and he started showing me how he did things there, he was the age I am now. It's an age when energy for a full day of work is no longer a sure thing.

For the first Davidsons clearing and farming the land was hard work, for Charles Kronmiller harvesting woods and fields was hard work, and for Louisa keeping a store and garden was hard work. Fred learned of the work as a boy helping his aunt with her store, helping his uncle with haying and other farm chores, and helping his father chop wood for his log cabin on Bear Creek. Though not as hard, keeping what they started also has been work, patchwork of all kinds. And those times when the work piled up or the time to do it ran out, Woodgate seemed to me more millstone than gift.

The legacy is earned each year by fixing and updating buildings and cutting back brush and trees creeping up to the front door. With others I worked to pay that yearly fee—cleaning out cellars and sheds, jacking up sagging buildings to fix foundations, putting up sheetrock and plastering, putting in electric wires and fixtures, painting, and cutting brush. If nothing else, painting and

cutting are always waiting, as certain as yearly taxes. I brought no skills to the work other than a few taught by my father—how to saw a line nearly straight, pound a nail without bending it much, and paint without splattering. But I learned how to patch, plaster, mortar, wire, glaze, and fix plumbing from Fred Kronmiller. Such skills—not part of his training for the law—came directly from his father. So some of what I know about such things I owe to Charles Kronmiller and that too is part of the shape of my life.

Usually, I worked beyond the limits of my skills. Even so, I had moments of pride in some things done with my hands and I know how Charles felt after his dry house was raised—*"The frame went together like a charm. I never saw a frame go together better. This is the first building I ever framed. Nor I never helped to frame a building before."* Pride like that is close kin to self-reliance—without which people would not have lasted on the many frontiers of this country. Without which the first Davidsons and Kronmillers would not have lasted on Adirondack borderland. Some of that self-reliance also is part of what has been passed on by Charles and Louisa to Fred and by him to us.

And there are all the old letters and notebooks passed on as well. Little did I know that in tearing out the kitchen walls of the Davidson homestead I would find a packet of love letters that would lead me to finding so many other letters, memoranda books, diaries, and assessors' books in Kronmiller attics. I did not foresee that I would work for ten years reading them and transcribing them into my computer—did not foresee that I could write a book about them (*Adirondack Borderland: A Woodgate, N.Y. Legacy from the 1800s*) and that book then would lead me to writing this one.

Woodgate is firmly rooted on a border between the Adirondack Park and our city life. As much as our life has been like that of other Americans, our Woodgate summers have kept us from surrendering totally to easy ways of the late 20th century—looking to others for services, packaged goods and packaged pastimes, styles and designs to live and play by. We went back to Woodgate and now it's a place where our children and their children gather from their homes scattered around the country.

We cannot see clearly how this legacy should be handled by the next generations, how pieces of the land should be further divided if at all. Lot lines are not equally and easily laid down through trees, over boulders, along roads and creeks. As an Adirondack borderland legacy, it becomes like many other private Adirondack holdings—likely prey to further dividing or building or wrangling.

Unlike much of Adirondack heartland though, this part of the borderland is not scenic prey. No lake is steps away from a big porch framed by a pine tree and dock in the foreground, maybe a canoe or loon in the middle of the lake, and beyond the far shore a wavy line of low mountains. No long or broad views of any kind—but plenty of trees.

The trees are what we go back to. Great white pines and maples around our old house, some from the time of the first Davidsons. Woods all along the road are filled with beech, cherry, maple, spruce, balsam, yellow birch, a few tamarack and hemlock—a few hemlock more than two feet wide and perhaps several hundred years old. Our woods are filled with trees young and old, tall and fallen. We go back to the smell of pines and woodsy rot.

The woods around us are nature's wall between neighbors and us. The woods make us feel alone, away from others even though a few are within a mile of us. The woods wall us in or, maybe, wall others out. Unlike Charles' time, we don't go visiting neighbors and they don't visit us. The woods speak quietly of privacy.

Trees also shutter our views of the sky. We must look up through them to see it. Nothing seems more peaceful to me than to sit on our screened porch looking through long green needles and branches of white pines to a high blue sky with a few white clouds drifting by. And at the same time to hear nothing more than a distant bird and slight breeze through the pines—to hear quiet. We don't know what quiet is until we get there away from city noise, and we don't know how much we've been walled in by trees until we drive back to Illinois prairie. Once there we look across flat fields of corn and soybeans stretching to far horizons with sky arching over them. Big sky and big sunsets—sunsets we never see from the woods. In the woods at day's end, the sun sets leaving only small patches of rays touching trees here and there. Then the sun sets in the blink of an eye.

The first Davidsons and Kronmillers cut back the walls of trees. But now they are close in again and so are deer and wild turkey. Deer browse right up to the house on daily feeding rounds. Turkey hens and chicks peck their way through nearby brush. Back in the woods bear prowl and leave their scat, and owls hoot and coy dogs howl at night. At least I think they're coy dogs. They could be wolves for all I know.

Our borderland legacy, after all, is woods rooted in thin soil among rocks and boulders left by long-ago glaciers. Land left by people who worked hard and made their way there—thanks to the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals carrying water to the Erie from the surrounding woods. After the early settlers cleared so many trees I'm sure they'd be surprised to see it as a place worthy of its name as a way into the Adirondack Park—Woodgate, an entrance with woods but no gate.

"Why do we call this Woodgate?" the five-year old asked. "Because of the woods," I answered as we walked hand-in-hand up to the old house.

The End



The Old House in 2003



Marker for Davidson Burial Site

SOURCES

A Gazetteer & Directory of the County of Oneida 1884, Utica: Compiled & Published by Chas. N. Gaffney, 1884.

Ted Aber and Stella King, *The History of Hamilton County*, Lake Pleasant NY: Great Wilderness Books, 1965.

Ralph K. Andrist, *The Erie Canal*, NY: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1964.

David H. Beetle, West Canada Creek, Utica: Utica Observer Dispatch, 1946.

Harvey Chalmers II, *The Birth of the Erie Canal*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1960.

Harvey Chalmers, *How the Irish Built the Erie*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1964.

Matthew "Joe" Conway, "What's in a Name?" *Adirondack Trail Guide*, Woodgate Free Library, 1995 edition.

"Critics Blast Mines. White Lake Quarry." *Adirondack Explorer*, February 2001, vol. 3, no. 6.

Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Oneida County, N. Y. for 1869*, Syracuse: Journal Office, 1869.

Emma J. Dart, *Tales of an Innkeeper's Daughter*, no date.

Dart's Camp, Auburn, New York: The Fenton Press, brochure, no date.

Erie Canal Museum: Photos From the Collection, Syracuse: Erie Canal Museum, 1989.

William F. Fox, *History of the Lumber Industry in the State of New York with an Appendix; the Role of the Pioneer Lumberman*, Reprint Harrison, NY: Harbor Hill Books, 1976 was originally published in the 6th annual report of the New York Forest, Fish, and Game Commission, 1901.

Tharratt Gilbert Best, *Boonville and Its Neighbors: The Chronicle of an American Community*, Boonville: Herald-Willard Press, 1961.

Alfred L. Donaldson, *A History of the Adirondacks*, Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, reprint of the 1921 edition, 1996.

Richard Garrity, *Canal Boatman: My Life on Upstate Waterways*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984.

Joseph F. Grady, *The Adirondacks: Fulton Chain-Big Moose Region, The Story of a Wilderness*, Little Falls: Press of the Journal & Courier Company, 1933.

Frank Graham, Jr., *The Adirondack Park: A Political History*, Special Research by Ada Graham, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.

Henry A. Harter, *Fairy Tale Railroad: The Mohawk and Malone; From the Mohawk Through the Adirondacks to the St. Lawrence*, Utica: North Country Books, 1979.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Canal Boat," *New England Magazine*, No. 9, December, 1835, pp. 398-409, www.history.rochester.edu/canal.

John Huther, *Adirondack Borderland: A Woodgate, NY. Legacy From the 1800s*, self-published, 2001.

John Huther, *Charles Kronmiller's Memoranda Books 1874-1880: Notes about White Lake Corners—now Woodgate, in the Town of Forestport, County of Oneida, State of New York*, transcribed and edited, Woodgate, 2003.

John Huther, *John Davidson's Book of Accounts: Personal Notes About Work in the Woodgate Area Starting in 1855*, transcriptions and summaries prepared from the original, 2001. A copy is in the Woodgate Free Library.

Floy S. Hyde, *Adirondack Forests, Fields, and Mines: Brief Accounts and Stories Concerning Lumbering, Forest-Related Products, Farm Specialties and Mining Yesterday and Today*, Lakemont, NY: North Country Books, 1974.

Images of America: Erie Canal, Erie Canal Museum, Martin Morganstein and Joan H. Cregg, Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2001.

Jerry Jenkins with Andy Keal, *The Adirondack Atlas: A Geographic of the Adirondack Park*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press & The Adirondack Museum, 2004.

Jane Eblen Keller, *Adirondack Wilderness: A Story of Man and Nature*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980.

Michael Kudish, *Where Did the Tracks Go?*, Saranac Lake: The Chauncy Press, 1985.

W. B. Langbein, *Hydrology and Environmental Aspects of Erie Canal (1817-99)*, Geological Survey Water-Supply Paper 2038, Washington: United States Printing Office, 1976, www.history.rochester.edu/canal.

F. Daniel Larkin, *New York State Canals: A Short History*, Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 1998.

Frank Lesure, "Dart-Lesure Mailbag," Christmas 1988 edition.

E. Meeker, *Hop Culture in the United States*, Puyallup, Washington Territory: E. Meeker & Co., 1883.

Barbara McMartin, *The Great Forest of the Adirondacks*, Utica: North Country Books, 1994.

Barbara McMartin, *Hides, Hemlocks, and Adirondack History: How the Tanning Industry Influenced the Growth of the Region*, Utica: North Country Books, 1992.

William H. H. Murray, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, edited by William K. Verner with Introduction and Notes by Warder H. Cadbury, Adirondack Museum/Syracuse University Press, 1970 includes *Adventures in the Wilderness; or Camp-Life in the Adirondacks*, Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869.

New York Times editorial of 1864 is printed as Appendix D in Donaldson (v. II, pp. 280-282).

New York Times Magazine, August 27, 1995.

New York Times, "Acid Rain Law Found to Fail in Adirondacks," March 27, 2000.

"Notes on a Tour through the Western Part of the State of New York" was published in *The Ariel*, in 1829-30, www.history.rochester.edu/canal.

Thomas C. O'Donnell, *Birth of a River: An Informal History of the Headwaters of the Black River*, Boonville: Black River Books, 1952.

Thomas C. O'Donnell, *Snubbing Posts: An Informal History of the Black River Canal*, Old Forge: North Country Books, 1949, 2nd ed. 1972.

Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks, "RCPA Campaign Shuts Down ATV Use on the Forest Preserve," *The Park Report*, Vol. 9, No.3, October 2004.

Ronald E. Shaw, *Erie Water West: A History of the Erie Canal 1792-1854*, Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1966.

Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress 1817-1862*, NY: Hill and Wang, 1996.

John Slade, *Acid Rain, Acid Snow*, Woodgate International, 2000.

Charles B. Sperry, *North Lake: The Jewel of the Adirondacks*, Whitesboro, NY, 1981.

G. Martin Sleeman, ed., *Early Histories and Descriptions of Oneida County New York*, Utica: North Country Books, 1990, contains the "Journal of DeWitt Clinton for 1810" [From *The Life and Writings of De Witt Clinton* by William W. Campbell, NY: Baker and Scribner, 1849].

State of N. Y. Adirondack Park Agency, "Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map 1996."

Ann Steele, "Earliest Woodgate Frame Houses" with a map of 11 houses appears in *Adirondack Trail Guide*, Woodgate Free Library, 1998 edition and 1999 edition.

Ann Steele, "Long Forgotten Hotels at White Lake Station," *Adirondack Trail Guide*, Woodgate Free Library, 2001 Edition.

Thomas Summerhill, "Farming on Shares: Landlords, Tenants, and the Rise of the Hop and Dairy Economies in Central New York," *New York History*, April 1995, pp. 125-152.

Howard Thomas, *Black River in the North Country*, Utica: North Country Books, Inc., 1963, 4th printing 1985.

Norman Van Valkenburgh, "The Forest Preserve--A Chronology," *The Conservationist*, v. 39, no. 6, May-June 1985.

Daniel E. Wager, *Our County and Its People: A Descriptive Work on Oneida County, New York*, Boston History Company, 1896.

White Lake Burying Ground Co. Journal 1851-1885, Woodgate Free Library.

Nobel E. Whitford, *History of the Canal System of the State of New York*, 1906, www.history.rochester.edu/canal.

Lionel D. Wyld, *Low Bridge! Folklore and the Erie Canal*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962.

About the Author . . .

John Huther is married to Catherine Louise Kronmiller—the granddaughter of Charles and Frances Kronmiller and great-granddaughter of John and Jane Edgar Davidson who are described in this book. John is a great-grandson of Nelson and Uretta Moon Chandler who lived in Woodgate.

John and Catherine's summer residence is the Davidson homestead on Bear Creek Road, Woodgate. They have summered at Woodgate for over 40 years. Their current winter residence is Springfield, Illinois. They have three children and four grandchildren (so far).

Other works by the author available in the Woodgate Free Library are *Letters for My Grandsons* (1996 and 1997), *Adirondack Borderland: A Woodgate, N.Y. Legacy From the 1800s* (2001), *John Davidson's Book of Accounts: Personal Notes About Work in the Woodgate Area Starting in 1855* (2001), and *Charles Kronmiller's Memoranda Books 1874-1880: Notes about White Lake Corners—now Woodgate, in the Town of Forestport, County of Oneida, State of New York* (2003).

The author is a graduate of Utica Free Academy and has degrees from Colgate University, the University of Washington, and the University of Michigan.

About this Book

The story of New York State's Erie Canal has been often told—but not that of how the Erie reached into the Adirondacks through the Black River Canal and Forestport Feeder Canal. Among all the branch and feeder canals sending water to the Erie, these two supplied water like no others. Moreover, in doing so they opened the southwestern part of the Adirondack region to settlement in the 1850s.

These canals in turn made it necessary to build dams on the Moose and Beaver rivers to keep the Black River flowing north of Boonville. The long reach of the Erie Canal includes these projects and settlers in the woods of the Adirondacks.

Two families that settled in the White Lake area on the edge of the Adirondacks did so because of the canals. As early settlers in the area, their notebooks, diaries, and letters are eye-witness accounts of the hard work of living there—voices speaking of a past before the time of “Adirondack” Murray, outdoor sport, camps great and small, and summer vacations. But they also tell of how they too are part of the more recent past of the Adirondack Railroad, Dart's Camp on Dart Lake, and the Wilmurt Club in Hamilton County.

Their words show how the Black River and Forestport Feeder canals—which they never mentioned—were essential to making their land pay for itself and essential to passing it on to their descendants.

Thanks in part to the Feeder Canal the southwestern route into the Adirondack Park today follows state road 28N through Forestport and Woodgate, past White Lake and Otter Lake, over the Moose River at McKeever, on to Old Forge and Blue Mountain. But today on 28N you see only the bridge over the Black River at Forestport—not canal boats or the village itself. And at Woodgate you see only a blinking caution light—not Bear Creek Road running east from the light where the people of this book settled in the 1850s.

If you're heading north eager to be in the Adirondack woods or on the water, you're not likely to think about this area's past. And you may never have time to stop and look for it for yourself. But in these pages you'll find a glimpse of some of the past beneath your feet (or seat) as you enter the Park at Woodgate. Have a look.