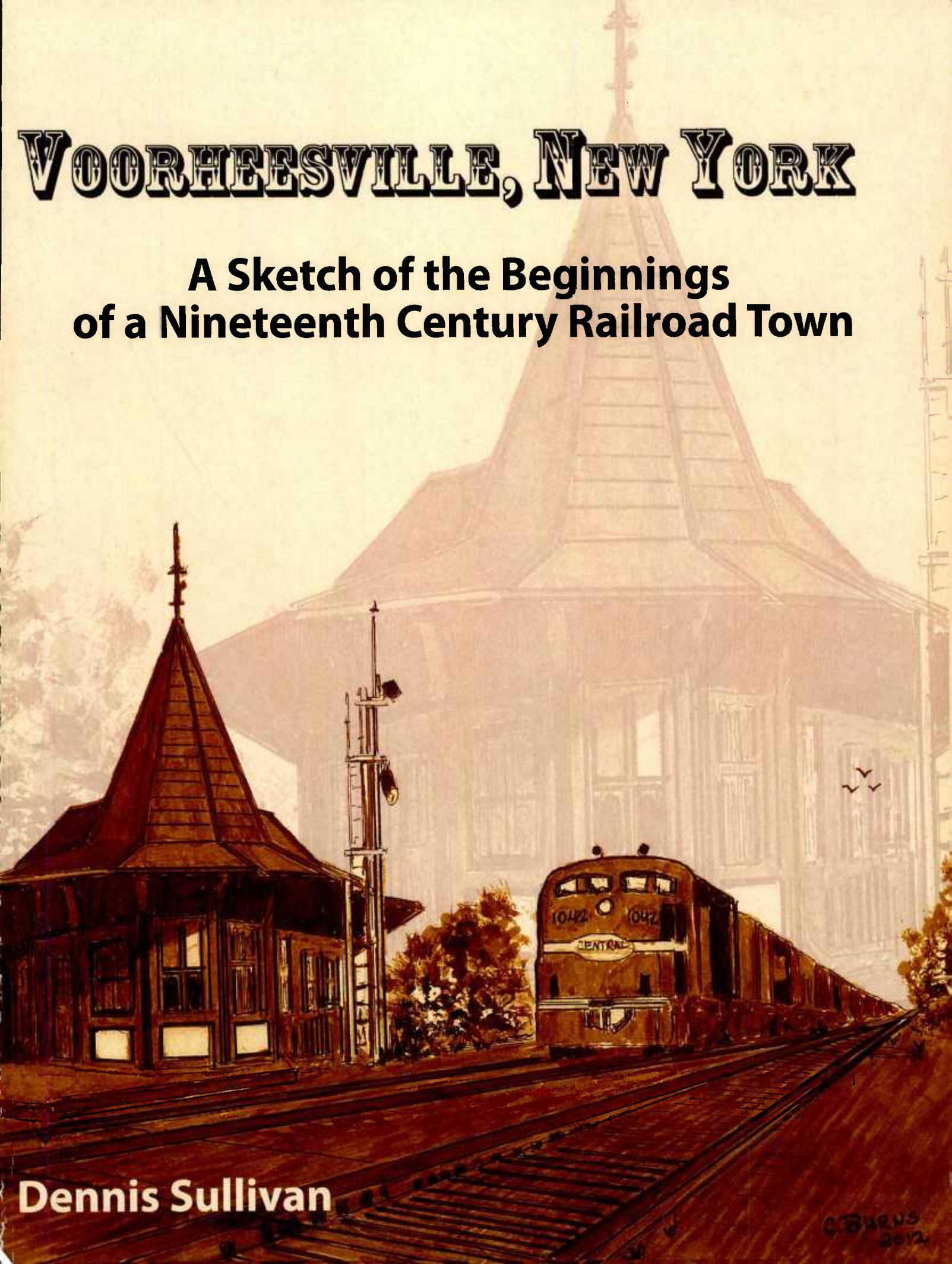
Voorheesville, New York

A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town



Dennis Sullivan

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Dedicated to

Arthur Gregg
19th c. Voorheesville resident,
author, historian, journalist,
who unfailingly cherished through deed
his love of Voorheesville's history

E. Dayton Joslin
hardwareman, teacher
originator of the first library,
school principal and trustee,
inspirer of students,
among them Arthur Gregg,
to delve into history

and

Mary Vosburgh
who through her kindergarten
on High Street
kept open the eyes of the young
for a quarter of a century

Preface

When the Polish-American poet Czeslaw Milosz gave his Nobel Lecture for his prize in poetry in 1980, he surprised many people by saying as much about history as he did about poetry. Speaking about a vision of history, Milosz said that, even though our planet gets smaller each year through the fantastic proliferation of mass media, we are witnessing what he described as a "refusal to remember."

The poet went on to say that in the past one might expect a society's illiterates to know little about their country's past. But today, he added, there's a group of oftentimes highly educated people for whom history is a confused blur. They have little sense of which people lived in which century and consequently are at a loss as to how history's actors helped shape different historical events. Milosz revealed that his biggest fear was that "history will be reduced to what appears on television."

Anyone who has shown the least bit of interest in history will find more than a grain of truth in what Milosz says. And when searching for reasons to explain the "confused blur," what immediately comes to mind is civilization's great romance with mobility—upward mobility, over-there-mobility, another-time mobility. People throughout the globe seem increasingly driven to be in some other place or state of being than where they presently are.

This way of life has had great ramifications for people's commitment to the local, to the place they currently live in. This includes the history of a place as well, the people and events that helped shape that place in earlier times. Why expend energy here if one is just passing through?

For a Voorheesville resident just passing through the village, what would be the value of knowing that our first library was arranged for by E. Dayton Joslin in 1901 and set up in the back of Al Borst's restaurant near the depot? Or that the Ferguson Brothers had a cider mill at the northern end of Voorheesville Avenue that produced some of the best sparkling Baldwin cider on the East Coast? Or that toward the end of last century the creek rose so high some years, the swelled waters forced school to be canceled, the kids unable to get across the bridge?

But whether a person has lived in the village a day or for 93 years, as in the case of Gertrude Coughtry, care must be taken with whatever facts come along. They are too often easily treated as cute little artifacts, quaint aspects of a quaint railroad town in days gone by. And to treat history this way is not only to make of the past an abstraction, but to simultaneously sever ourselves from the present. Community-making becomes impossible or at the very least extremely difficult when people lack a sense of place. Sooner or later life becomes haphazard; anything can go.

But, even when people do show a sincere interest in their roots, those roots are not always as open to scrutiny as they might be. The job of the local historian, therefore, is to search for those roots, to bring them to light and to invite the community to make a connection with them. To do this successfully, the historian must be able not only to round up the critical actors of the past but to allow them to speak for themselves, as it were, to interact on the historical stage as they once did in real life. Supposedly the freer they are in doing so, the clearer will a community's picture of itself be.

I have made an attempt to create that stage here and to allow our ancestors to walk across it as boldly as they did years before. To the extent that they breathe here the way they did times before, this little history will be a success.

The reader should keep in mind, however, that this is not a scholarly work, though I have gone to primary sources whenever possible. Nor have I attempted to provide a detailed history of every aspect of the life of the village but rather a feel of what went on. Consequently I am calling this narrative a sketch and am limiting it basically to the period when the railroad came to town and a village grew up around the tracks in leaps and bounds. It's an arguable point but I have described this period as the golden era.

When I began this history I thought I would be able to avail myself of the short histories that some residents and schoolchildren had compiled at various times. But these accounts were filled with so many contradictory facts and dates that I decided I needed to go deeper to straighten out as much as I could. In the face of new data, some old-timers still seem to prefer the myths. So be it.

I also need to mention that I have not included much information about the school system, in large part because presently two teachers at the high school are compiling a history of the school district. Before moving in that direction I first want to see their work. There is so little time and so much to be done that it's a waste to duplicate the efforts of others.

Moreover, I would add that when I began this work I had considerably more time at my disposal. By the time I began organizing the materials for publication, I

had considerably less to devote to the project. It became clear to me that town and village historians who do little writing about their communities are not lazy or uncaring. Most simply do not have the required time.

Finally, I would like to make special mention of those older citizens of the village—former and current residents—who have shed light on this project. Never have I spoken to or corresponded with by letter so many men and women in their late 60s, 70s and 80s who are so bright and keen-witted. Despite all our supposed technological advances over former times, I am convinced they had much that was better. And for all our current world's worry about staying young forever, theirs was a much deeper drink at the fountain of youth.

Acknowledgments

It seems as though a cast of thousands from both within and outside Voorheesville has shared in making this book a reality from start to finish. I am grateful to all who have helped in their unique ways, particularly to Bill Gray for his generous sharing of materials and support in seeing this project to completion; Doug Barron for photos, materials and an introduction to the railroad world; John King for a mountain of work and gifts of materials on the railroad; Tim Albright for use of materials.

There is also Marguerite Joslin, Gert Smith, Virginia (Smith, Pitcher) Maxwell, Mildred Guffin and Frank Bloomingdale who contributed greatly with interview time and loaned materials; Judy Gray for preparation of village chronicles; Bernie Pafunda, Bob Parmenter and Roger Keenholts for loan of materials; the Rev. Richard Hibbert for making church records available; Marion Vosburgh, Phoebe Linne Ziehm, Marjorie Hayner and Martha Slingerland for letters and conversations, Bob Staph for help with maps and surveys.

In other ways I have received help from the Rev. Gregory Pike, Esther Schultz and Lois Alkenbrack; Linda Dame and her fellow workers at the County Clerk's Office and Robert Hilton who provided a generous file of materials on the Hilton farm and family.

John McCashen, Jean Anderson Banta, Paul Brustman, Don Barbeau, Jim Shaughnessy and Raymond Becher have also been generous with materials and information and those associated with The Mohawk and Hudson Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society are the epitome of generosity.

I also received a great deal of assistance from various libraries and librarians: those in the manuscript room of the New York City Public Library, at the New York State Library, at the Bethlehem, Guilderland, and Voorheesville libraries, the Albany Institute of History and Art, the City of Albany Library. A special note of thanks belongs to librarians Karen Levi-Lausa of Bethlehem and Nancy Hutchinson of Voorheesville.

In addition, gratitude is due Mayor Edward Clark who has shown great concern that this project see swift completion; to village trustees Richard Langford, Edward Donohue and Daniel Reh and village legal counsel Donald Meacham; also to village trustee Susan Rockmore who knows what's involved in putting out a history and helped move this project along with care. A village historian could not ask for more encouragement from his public officials.

I am also indebted to Bob Arnold, Edie Probst; Lauren Tedesco, Phyllis Robillard; Carol of C&J Variety; Wayne Raynesford and Kathryn Raynesford for donated materials, Evelyn Berger, Margaret Barrowman, Mrs. George Vunck, Phil Pettinger, Mike Ricci, Joe D'Arpino, Julia Fields, Marian Griesman Campbell for generous loan of materials; Rebecca Flansburgh for her donation of village-related materials; Dr. Robert Friedman, Stella Severson, Louella Van Alstyne, Mary D'Arpino, Tom Roe, Rachel Harvey, Allison Bennett, Mary Tork, Dominick Tork, Jane Cummings Bowerman Harris, Olive Kling, Doris Relyea and Wes Jacobson.

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Unless otherwise noted, anytime "the paper" or "the newspaper" is mentioned, reference is to The Altamont Enterprise.

I would also like to thank Georgia Gray, Tim Albright, Bob Hagyard, Bill Gray, Susan Rockmore, Marguerite Joslin, Roger Keenholts and Judy Gray for reading various drafts of the manuscript for this book.

Foreword

The task of a community historian may be getting more difficult as we become a more heterogeneous people. Perhaps we were always diverse but, so wrapped in the mythologies evolved about our figurative ancestors, that we took for granted that we were, at some point, in some golden nimbus of a past, set in a bucolic and simpler era, a la Irving Bacheller, Norman Rockwell, or Theodore Cleaver.

A French Jesuit in New Netherland in the 1640s noted eighteen languages spoken there, and during much of our area's history prior to the opening of the Erie Canal, our population was ten to fifteen per cent Black. Early on, we had our Palatine and Swiss Germans, our Scots-Irish and our Irish, our Lutherans, Calvinists, Catholics and Jews. We received a healthy injection of Slavic and Mediterranean immigrants and, more recently, South East Asian, Chinese and Indians. Our tradition has long been one of cultural pluralism, fraught most likely with imbalances, intermarriages, competition, rivalries, grudges and alliances, sometimes all at once.

Our community histories always are more than segments punctuated by wars, Dutch settlement to English takeover to American Revolution to Civil War, golden homespun epoch giving way to Gilded Age to Modern Times. Our communities are too rich, also, to let our history deteriorate into lists of 'firsts':first automobile, first Mayor, first creamery, first blacksmith, first tavern, first newspaper. We are more than those things; we are their sum and total, at once descended from and informed by all the elements of our community. Our history could not occur in a vacuum.

To understand fully the past of Voorheesville, Altamont, Sante Fe, or Talinn, Estonia, is probably impossible. We can never live as did the citizens of 1870 or 1950; the world has moved on, Voorheesville moved with it, and so did we. The History of Voorheesville happened as part of, because of, this wider world—without Henry Ford, there would have been no first automobile in the village. Too often, local history has been treated as a finite universe which ends at the city limits.

The most important things a community historian can do are to contribute a solid local history leading to a sense of place for an increasingly transient American population, to, in turn, offer a sense of the community's place in a wider world, and to demythologize the past. Too frequently generations of local historians have repeated error as fact, like medieval copyists uncritically passing on what they saw in front of them. What really were the forces of change and through what mechanisms of local society were they manifested? How did Voorheesville become Voorheesville?

Why is that sense of place, that recovery of a useful past, important? The work of the historian should contribute to the quality of life, build awareness of what defines the community as such, how it is different and how the same as other places. In the schools, the idea of community is a manageable, attractive and comprehensible way to introduce the concept of history to younger students, who later can make more intelligent choices about the community's future, understanding how Voorheesville's past is really its prologue.

We leave few legacies which must survive us. Dennis Sullivan has produced an accessible history as a community resource, helping to nurture that all-too-elusive sense of place, and perhaps to recapture that even more frail and shy reality that so nimbly avoids us when we confront the past. As one of my last acts as Albany County Historian, I am honored to provide an introduction for it.

Robert W. Arnold III
Albany County Historian
November 21, 1988

"On Sundays we'd go to church in the morning and get together in the afternoon. We'd say we'll come over today and we'd get together. We'd eat and have card games, ball games, we'd have a hell of a time, play cards for drinks. We all had chickens in the back yard, if someone came over from Green Island, my mother would knock the heads off a few and feed sometimes 25 people. We had maybe 500 or 600 cans of fruits and vegetables in the cellar. When I came home from the war my mother would bake over 200 loaves of bread a week in the oven outside and pizza too. She'd sell the bread for 30 cents and a large slice of pizza for 50 cents. That's the truth. It is."

— Michael Ulion

CHAPTER ONE

The Beginnings of A Railroad Town

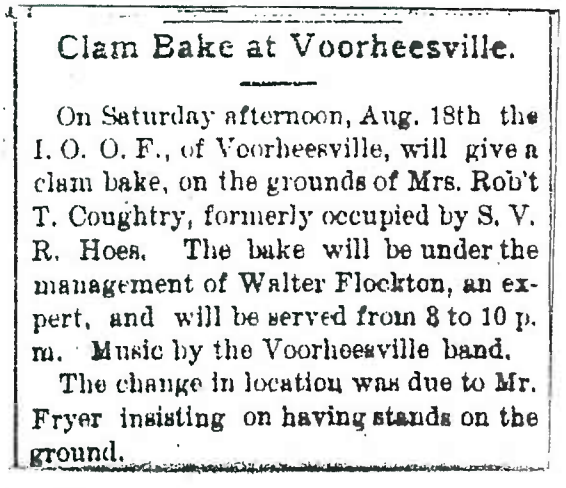
1. The Railroad Arrives

On July 4, 1893 shortly after two in the afternoon, a procession of paraders and horse drawn floats was set in motion at John Joslin's house on Maple Avenue for the annual Independence Day celebration. All morning long visitors from surrounding areas had begun to trickle into Voorheesville to share in the day's festivities.

On one of the floats John Houghton stood portraying Columbus. On another an "Old Log Cabin" scene was enacted. Norton Zeh, dressed in a highly colored plantation outfit, played a fiddle while a dozen or so children in black face danced merrily to his tunes while eating chunks of watermelon from a large barrel on the float.

The parade slowly made its way down Main Street to its intended destination, Fryer's Grove Hotel situated to the northeast of the train depot. As the parade disbanded, the celebrators gathered in the large grove in back of the hotel to hear George Addington, Albany lawyer, justice and longtime friend of Alonzo B. Voorhees, give an address following a short opening prayer by the Methodist minister of Voorheesville, the Rev. John C. Fisher.

At 4:30 a crowd of cheerers-on gathered along the trotting track in the grove to watch the more daring compete in potato races, two foot races and a bicycle race. Voorheesville athlete and premier wrestler Frank Reid won the 200-yard race, an Albanian by the name of McHarg took the honors in the 100 while native Charles Van Auken finished first in the bicycle race. A Mr. Searles of Albany won the potato race.



Clam Bake at Voorheesville.

On Saturday afternoon, Aug. 18th the I. O. O. F., of Voorheesville, will give a clam bake, on the grounds of Mrs. Rob't T. Coughtry, formerly occupied by S. V. R. Hoes. The bake will be under the management of Walter Flockton, an expert, and will be served from 8 to 10 p. m. Music by the Voorheesville band.

The change in location was due to Mr. Fryer insisting on having stands on the ground.

Notice in The Altamont Enterprise of upcoming clambake in 1894. Over 2,000 attended.

Despite the valiant efforts of Walter Flockton, overseer of the day's events, to run the program according to schedule, the afternoon was not without incident. During the parade Charles Winne, the snare drummer in the Voorheesville brass band was run down by the unmanageable horse of one of the cowboys in the parade. Fortunately Winne was not seriously hurt.

But Flockton himself, while attempting to move the crowd back at the beginning of the bicycle race, was struck down by the paddle of the wheel ridden by Henry Wynkoop. Flockton didn't fare as well as the snare drummer, having suffered a four-inch laceration near his thigh. Wynkoop was thrown from his wheel so hard that he had to withdraw from the race.

After the excitement of the races had quieted down, food was served in the large grove behind the hotel. This was followed by dancing and drinks and more music by the village band beneath the shade of the large trees that had made the Grove a famous place for picnickers throughout the county. Those who stayed to the end were rewarded by seeing the evening capped off with a wonderful display of fireworks.

This Fourth of July celebration in Voorheesville in 1893 was not unlike those held in thousands of rural villages around the state as the century was drawing to a close. What distinguished the festivities in Voorheesville, a village with a population of barely 300, was that between 2,000 and 3,000 people showed up to celebrate the day.

Nor was this the only occasion when a crowd of this magnitude would descend upon the little village. There were numerous other occasions for by the 1890s this little industrial-business-shipping-resort community had become a kind of focal point for social gatherings. Not only did large numbers of vacationers flock to Voorheesville during the summer months each year, but agricultural, teacher and church groups traveled by train to hold their annual conventions and institutes in the village during the winter months. It was not uncommon for several hundred farmers or several hundred teachers from their respective countywide organizations to hold their annual institutes in the village, or for nearly 1,000 to show up to cheer on the Voorheesville baseball team when it toughed out games with neighboring Slingerlands. Toward the middle of August, the year following the Independence celebration mentioned above, the newly-established Voorheesville Odd Fellows Lodge held a clam bake which 2,000 attended. In late August 1901 the Patrons of Industry

Harvey Baker, Esq

Dear Sir:

A section of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad being about to be opened to the business of the community, the Directors solicit the favor of your company, in making a trip over it, on the 15th inst. The cars will leave the Station, corner of Church and Lydius streets, at 9 o'clock, A. M., and return about 5 o'clock, P. M.

Please present the enclosed Ticket upon entering the Cars.

By direction of the Board,

E. P. PRENTICE, President.

Albany, September, 1863.

Invitation to the official opening of the Albany and Susquehanna to Central Bridge. (Jean Banta Collection)

held their annual picnic in the village and 4,000 came. This was only the tip of the iceberg.

Forty years earlier, before the first trains of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad Company had cut through the farm lands that were to comprise Voorheesville one day, it would have been difficult for the farmers in the area to imagine a village emerging able to attract so many from so far to celebrate such events. But the railroad would and did change everything, turning the small off-the-beaten-path settlement on the way to the Helderbergs into a bustling little town.

For a time, however, it appeared as though the railroad might not become a reality at all. Since the groundbreaking for the Albany and Susquehanna in September 1853, the railroad had suffered numerous setbacks due to lack of money, work delays and legal disputes, so that many who watched its progress doubted it would ever see completion.[1]

But on Tuesday September 15, 1863 any such doubts were dispelled forever.[2] At 9 a.m., two excursion trains consisting of four passenger and four freight cars conveniently fitted with seats for the occasion left the Albany and Susquehanna depot at the corner of Lydius and Church streets in the city of Albany headed west for Central Bridge.

Those who had assembled to see the trains off were wild with excitement, despite the fact that the country was still being ravaged by civil war. This day was too long in coming. The cars were pulled by the E. R. Ford and E. P. Prentice, two engines beautifully decorated for the occasion with flags, evergreens and flowers by Mrs. E. P. Prentice, the wife of the president of the road.

The two trains with their entourage of well-wishers, chugged their way through the towns of Bethlehem, New Scotland, and Guilderland passing the Helderberg Mountains along the northern spur of the range and then ascended into the valley of the Bozenkill. After speech-making stops at Quaker Street and Esperance crossroads, where the first passengers ever carried on the road were said to have gotten on, the trains finally reached the end of the line at Central Bridge. That was about one in the afternoon. The total distance travelled was the length of the road completed to date, 36 miles.

Newspaper accounts of the A & S's maiden voyage tell how all along the road people turned out in groups to greet the arrival of the first trains with celebratory cheers. For many farmers along the route, particularly those along the upper Susquehanna valley who felt excluded from the world of commerce, the arrival of the railroad was considered a godsend. They would now be able to ship crops to Albany markets and become competitive with those farmers who had access to the railroad on their eastern (New York Central) and western (Erie Railway) sides.[3]

The track of the new road had been laid with 60-pound iron on six-foot gauge. The wider than standard gauge had been used because it was the intention of the road's builders to have the Albany and Susquehanna stretch a full 142 miles into Binghamton and there connect with the Erie, which also rested on six-foot gauge. But that connection would not be made until the last day of 1868.

Those with interests in the coal industry also awaited the new road with impatience. Once linked with the Erie, the A&S would become the means by which anthracite coal from the great coal beds of Pennsylvania would reach Albany and from there be distributed north to Canada and to the New England states. Voorheesville itself would become a minor coal center, residents coming from as far away as Berne down to the Normanskill area to buy coal from the several dealers in the village. With large profits to be made from coal, it's no surprise that prior to the 1869 election of the A& S's board of directors, a fierce contest arose between competing business factions to take control of the board. The violence that grew out of that contest and the reasons for it is a story unto itself.[4]

But on the 15th of September six years earlier, as the trains passed through the midpoint of the Town of New Scotland, the passengers peering out the windows saw no coal sheds or stores along the track, only peaceful farm fields. Along the road where the little industrial village of Voorheesville would one day sprout, they saw fields of Indian corn and acres of potatoes ready to be dug on the Frederick Joslin farm. After that, as the trains crossed the narrow bridge stretching over the Vly Creek, there were the farms of Conrad Fryer, Peter Martin and William Relyea which stretched into

Albany and Susquehanna Railroad.

TIME TABLE No. 3.

Takes effect June 13th, 1864.

MOVING WEST.

STATIONS.	Miles.		No. 1, TIME.	No. 2, TIME.
			A. M.	P. M.
Albany,			Leave 7.15	Leave 2.00
Slingerlands,	7	7	" 7.36	" 2.25
New Scotland,	3	10	" 7.44	" 2.36
Guilderland,	4	14	" 7.54	" 2.50
Knowersville,	3	17	" 8.03	" 3.01
Knox,	5	22	" 8.18	" 3.20
Duanesburgh,	3	24	" 8.26	" 3.29

MOVING EAST.

STATIONS.	Miles.		No. 1. TIME.	No. 2. TIME.
			A M	P M
Schoharie,			Leave 9.50	Leave 5.15
Esperance,	4	4	" 10.02	" 5.31
Quaker Street,	4	8	" 10.12	" 5.46
Duanesburgh,	2	10	" 10.18	" 5.55
Knox,	3	13	" 10.26	" 6.05
Knowersville,	5	18	" 10.41	" 6.2[illegible]
Guilderland,	3	21	" 10.50	" 6.39

Time table and fares for 1864.

Guilderland. The Martin and Fryer farms would later comprise a good part of the future incorporated village of Voorheesville.

But in the fall of 1863 there was no evidence of such a village, incorporated or not. Frank Bloomingdale, who would be elected the first president of the newly incorporated village in 1899, was a schoolboy of 11 sharing the chores on the family farm in Guilderland. And Alonzo B. Voorhees, after whom the village would one day be named, was still practicing law in Albany and residing at 375 Lydius Street in that city. Perhaps Voorhees, a prominent attorney in Albany, was among the invited guests peering out the windows of the trains as they cut through the solitary farm lands. If so, all he would have seen to mark his future namesake station was a small shack standing on the southwestern line of Conrad Fryer's farm. Only in the following year would a more substantial combination passenger and freight station be erected. That relatively small building would serve as the area's shipping center to markets in Albany and from there points west and north and south to New York City.

Because Voorhees had not yet moved to the area, there was no such name as Voorheesville at this time. The little station was called New Scotland. This would be the case for at least the first decade of the railroad's operation. Indeed, well after Voorhees had moved into town and the little outpost was given its first post office and called Voorheesville, the stop would still be listed on railroad timetables as New Scotland. On some maps, timetables and directories this would be the case even into the early 1880s.

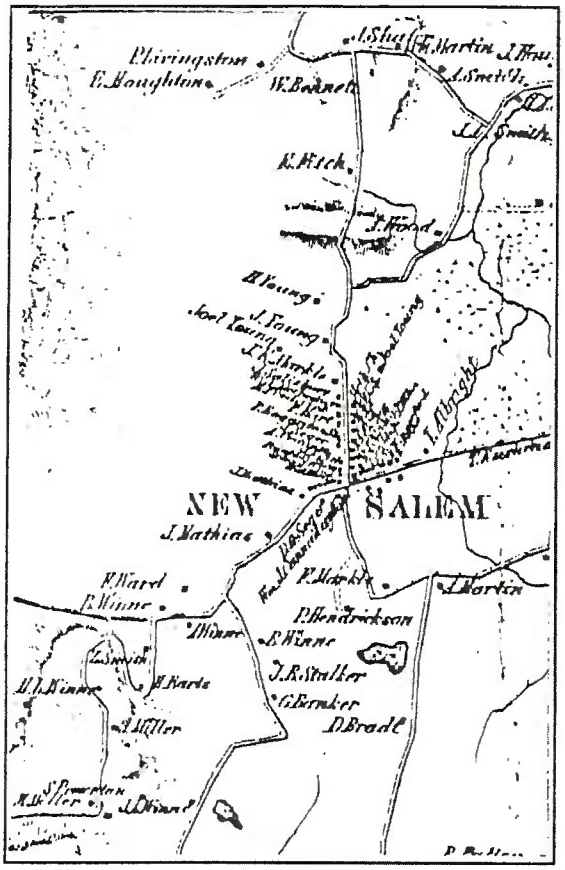
FARES.

ALBANY AND SUSQUEHANNA RAILROAD.

Adopted July, 1864.

Albany.	20	25	30	45	55	70	75	85	100	110
	Adamsville.	5	15	25	35	50	55	70	80	90
		Slingerlands.	10	25	30	50	55	65	75	90
			New Scotland	15	25	40	45	55	65	80
				Guilderland.	10	25	35	40	55	65
					Knowersville.	20	25	35	45	60
						Knox.	10	15	30	40
							Duanesburgh.	10	20	35
								Quaker Street.	15	25
									Esperance.	15
										Schoharie.

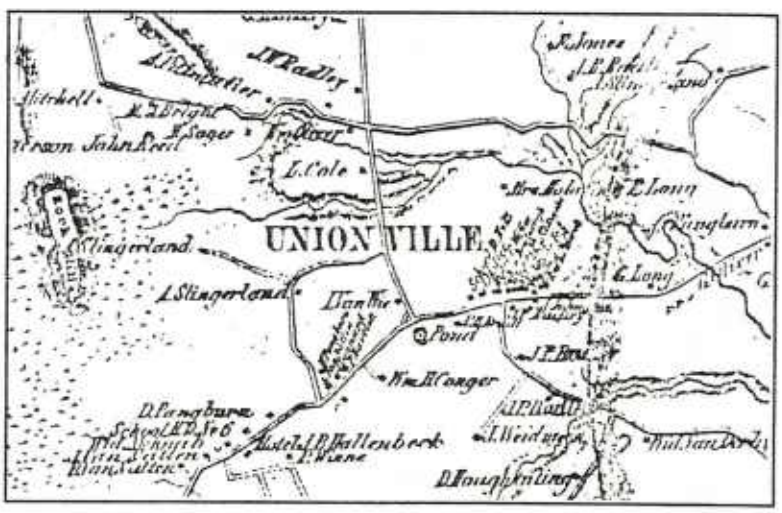
The delay in the changing of the name of the new railroad stop to Voorheesville might be looked upon as symbolic of the new entity's struggle for its own identity in a town that seemed to pay little attention to that area. Until the railroad came, the hub of the town's political and economic activities was located toward its central and southern parts, in the hamlets of New Scotland, New Salem, Unionville and Clarksville. In and through these hamlets ran turnpike and plank roads, which gave farmers better access to the Albany markets and thereby fostered greater development in those areas. A good sense of the development of these hamlets in comparison to the Voorheesville-to-be area can be gotten



New Salem

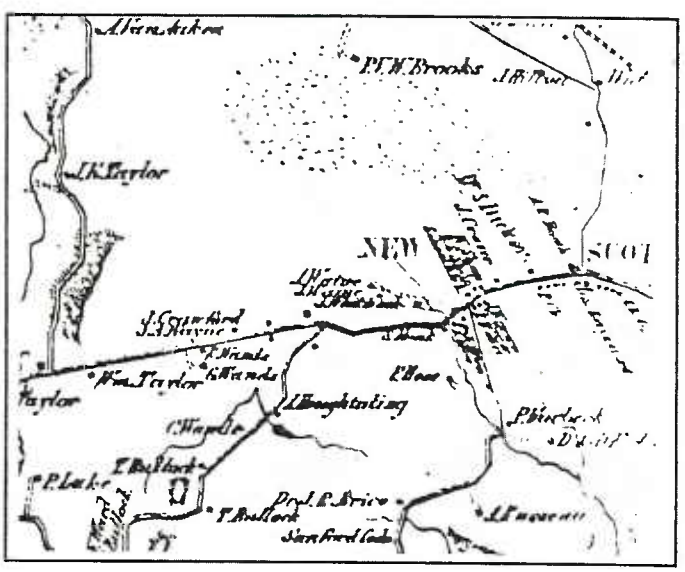
Clarksville

Sections from Jay Gould map of Albany County for 1854.

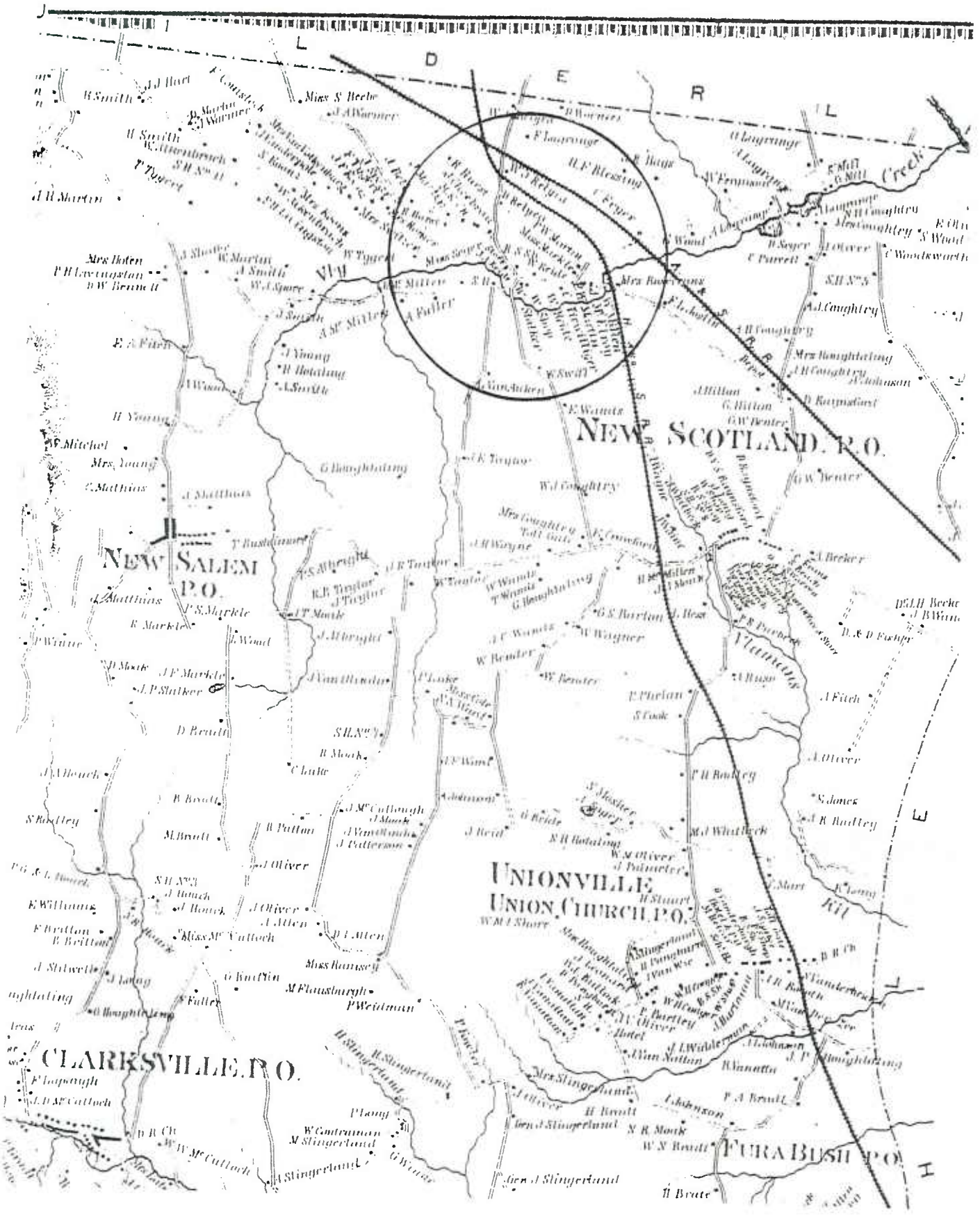


Unionville

Voorheesville-to-be area



New Scotland



Sections of the Town of New Scotland from the 1866 Beers Map of Albany County. The circled area is Voorheesville. The hamlets of New Scotland and Unionville are still more populated than Voorheesville but the latter has grown significantly since 1854.

A D&H train arrives at Voorheesville station. Because the depot stood at the junction of the D&H and West Shore tracks it was sometimes referred to as "Union Depot."

from the Gould map of 1854.[5] In the areas to the south of Voorheesville, small villages and hamlets were already in full bloom.

With greater development comes greater political clout. Therefore, from the central and southern parts of the town came the principal officials who administered town affairs. A quick run down the list of the town's supervisors from its incorporation in 1832 to the arrival of the railroad shows that only James Reid, the first supervisor of the town, was elected from the area that would become Voorheesville. Ironically, the next supervisor to be elected from the village area after Reid was non other than Alonzo B. Voorhees. That was in 1870 and Voorhees was in every respect a newcomer to the town when compared to the Relyeas, LaGranges, Martins, Terwilligers, Veeders and other early families. Some of these families had been in the area for over 150 years while Voorhees had moved into town only three years prior to being elected and then moved out.

But in retrospect, Voorhees' election was clearly a harbinger of things to come. The new railroad stop in the north central part of the town would effect major changes in the economic and political composition of New Scotland that would last for well over half a century.

In 1865, however, two years after the A&S arrived, there was hardly a body of voters to make such a political statement even in its imagination. The New York State census for 1865 lists 600 dwellings in the town containing 649 families. The Beers map of a year later shows fewer than 25 of these houses to be situated in the immediate Voorheesville area, most of which were farmers scattered here and there. Except for the small settlement along the Indian Ladder Road, which comprised the Black Creek Methodist Church, there was no sign of a cohesive community in the area. But the numbers began to change and the cohesiveness began to appear. Within five years, the railroad's impact was already felt, even if only the number of jobs brought by the railroad is considered.

For example, the federal census of 1870 indicates there were 25 residents employed by the railroad with Henry Lent as station master and Casper Louer section foreman. Moreover, in 1870 the newly-defined village

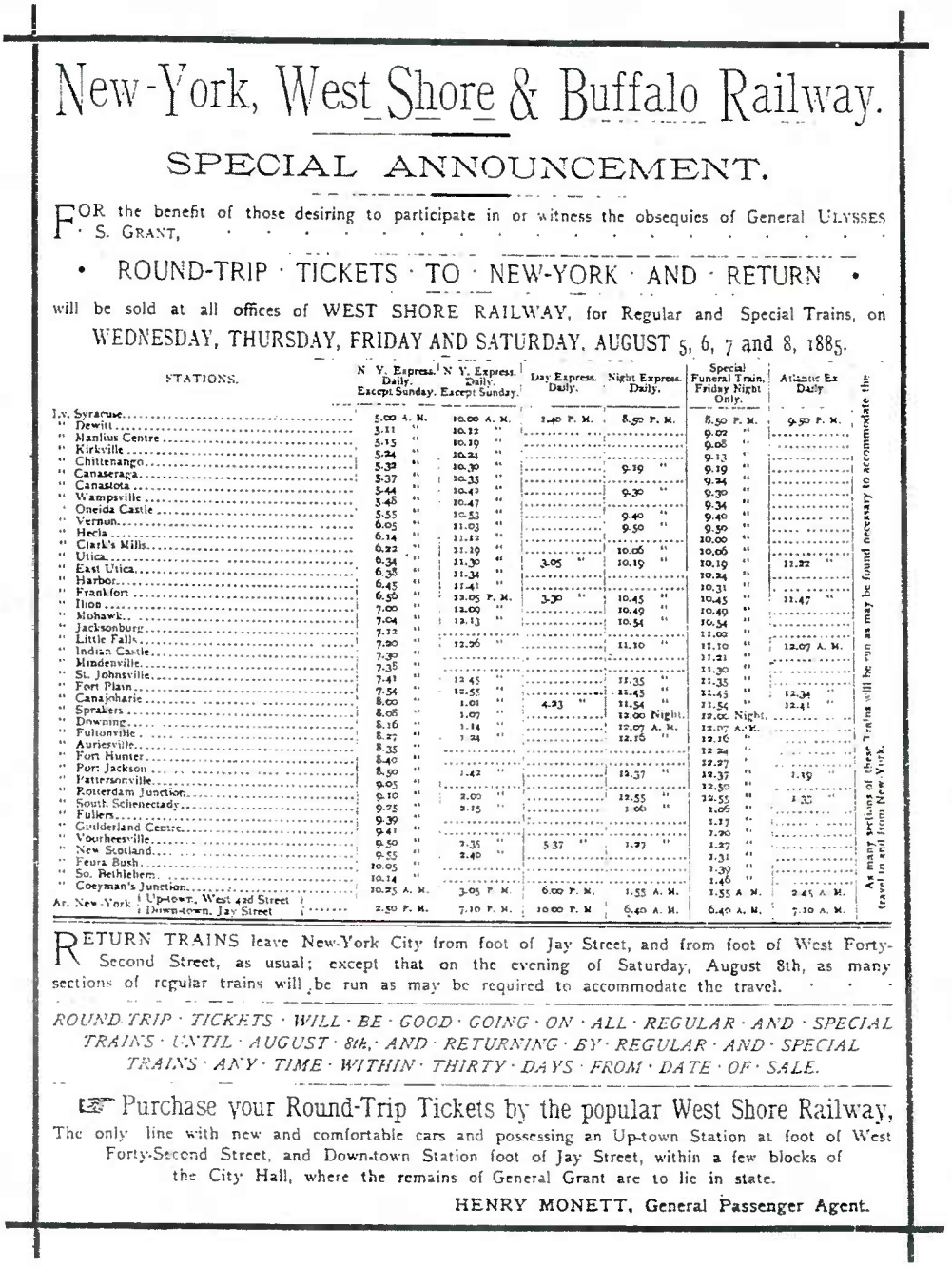
Looking down West Shore tracks after a snow. A good view of how cars sat on switches on both sides of tracks. The small building to the far right is the freight house; behind that, Joslin Brothers buildings.

had a lawyer (Voorhees), a physician (also by the name of Voorhees), two carpenters, two painters, at least two blacksmiths, a stone mason, two school teachers, two general stores and two boot and shoe makers. The little village was beginning to look the way New Salem did a decade earlier, a strong indication that the village was beginning to stand on its own two feet.

It is difficult to say what the economic and social impact of the Albany and Susquehanna, later the Delaware and Hudson,[6] would have been on this small nondescript stop of New Scotland, had it remained the only railroad to run through the town. But it wasn't. In two years time a second line, the Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad, had opened and crossed the Albany and Susquehanna at the western end of the Conrad Fryer farm. An entry in the diary of Vanderzee Lagrange, through whose farm the railroad went after leaving Voorheesville, indicates the first cars went through on November 3, 1865.[7] Thus Voorheesville became a railroad junction town.[8]

The Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad project was spearheaded by Daniel Drew and Cornelius Vanderbilt and built at a time when Athens in Greene County was the end of the deep-water navigation of the Hudson. At Athens freight and passenger traffic that came up the Hudson in two steamboats, the Erastus Corning and the John Taylor, was switched to railroad cars. From there the road ran to Schenectady where it connected to the Schenectady and Saratoga and the New York Central for points west. Along the 26-mile run to Schenectady the trains made four stops, at Coeymans, Feura Bush, New Scotland (Voorheesville) and Guilderland. When the trains reached New Scotland, some materials were switched to the Albany and Susquehanna cars.

In his later years, George E. Wood, a former resident of the village, wrote a letter to Enoch Squires of WGY radio about his recollection of the trains at the junction. Wood, whose father's farm was only a short distance from the station, recalled seeing the wood-burning locomotives switching cars from one road to the other at the junction. Wood was correct when he said he saw cars being switched, for the six foot gauge of the A&S



New-York, West Shore & Buffalo Railway.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.

FOR the benefit of those desiring to participate in or witness the obsequies of General ULYSSES S. GRANT,

• ROUND-TRIP · TICKETS · TO · NEW-YORK · AND · RETURN •

will be sold at all offices of WEST SHORE RAILWAY, for Regular and Special Trains, on

WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 6, 7 and 8, 1885.

STATIONS.	N. Y. Express. Daily. Except Sunday.	N. Y. Express. Daily. Except Sunday.	Day Express. Daily.	Night Express. Daily.	Special Funeral Train. Friday Night Only.	Atlantic Ex. Daily.
Lv. Syracuse	5.00 A. M.	10.00 A. M.	1.40 P. M.	8.50 P. M.	8.50 P. M.	9.50 P. M.
" Dewitt	5.11 "	10.12 "			9.02 "	
" Manlius Centre	5.15 "	10.19 "			9.08 "	
" Kirkville	5.24 "	10.24 "			9.13 "	
" Chittenango	5.32 "	10.30 "		9.19 "	9.19 "	
" Canaseraga	5.37 "	10.35 "			9.24 "	
" Canastota	5.44 "	10.42 "		9.30 "	9.30 "	
" Wampsville	5.48 "	10.47 "			9.34 "	
" Oneida Castle	5.55 "	10.53 "		9.40 "	9.40 "	
" Vernon	6.05 "	11.03 "		9.50 "	9.50 "	
" Hecla	6.14 "	11.12 "			10.00 "	
" Clark's Mills	6.22 "	11.19 "		10.06 "	10.06 "	
" Utica	6.34 "	11.30 "	3.05 "	10.19 "	10.19 "	11.22 "
" East Utica	6.38 "	11.34 "			10.24 "	
" Harbor	6.45 "	11.41 "			10.31 "	
" Frankfort	6.50 "	11.05 P. M.	3.30 "	10.45 "	10.45 "	11.47 "
" Ilion	7.00 "	12.09 "		10.49 "	10.49 "	
" Mohawk	7.04 "	12.13 "		10.54 "	10.54 "	
" Jacksonburg	7.12 "				11.02 "	
" Little Falls	7.20 "	12.26 "		11.10 "	11.10 "	12.07 A. M.
" Indian Castle	7.30 "				11.21 "	
" Mindenville	7.38 "				11.30 "	
" St. Johnsville	7.41 "	12.45 "		11.35 "	11.35 "	
" Fort Plain	7.54 "	12.55 "		11.45 "	11.45 "	12.34 "
" Canajoharie	8.00 "	1.01 "	4.23 "	11.54 "	11.54 "	12.41 "
" Sprakers	8.08 "	1.07 "		12.00 Night.	12.00 Night.	
" Downing	8.16 "	1.14 "		12.07 A. M.	12.07 A. M.	
" Fultonville	8.27 "	1.24 "		12.16 "	12.16 "	
" Auriesville	8.35 "				12.24 "	
" Fort Hunter	8.40 "				12.27 "	
" Port Jackson	8.50 "	1.42 "		12.37 "	12.37 "	1.19 "
" Pattersonville	9.05 "				12.50 "	
" Rotterdam Junction	9.10 "	2.00 "		12.55 "	12.55 "	1.32 "
" South Schenectady	9.25 "	2.15 "		1.00 "	1.05 "	
" Fullers	9.39 "				1.17 "	
" Guilderland Centre	9.47 "				1.26 "	
" Voorheesville	9.50 "	2.35 "	5.37 "	1.27 "	1.27 "	
" New Scotland	9.55 "	2.40 "			1.31 "	
" Feura Bush	10.05 "				1.39 "	
" So. Bethlehem	10.14 "				1.46 "	
" Coeyman's Junction	10.25 A. M.	3.05 P. M.	6.00 P. M.	1.55 A. M.	1.55 A. M.	2.45 A. M.
Ar. New-York { Up-town, West 42d Street / Down-town, Jay Street	2.50 P. M.	7.10 P. M.	10.00 P. M.	6.40 A. M.	6.40 A. M.	7.10 A. M.

As many sections of these Trains will be run as may be found necessary to accommodate the travel to and from New York.

RETURN TRAINS leave New-York City from foot of Jay Street, and from foot of West Forty-Second Street, as usual; except that on the evening of Saturday, August 8th, as many sections of regular trains will be run as may be required to accommodate the travel.

ROUND-TRIP · TICKETS · WILL · BE · GOOD · GOING · ON · ALL · REGULAR · AND · SPECIAL TRAINS · UNTIL · AUGUST · 8th, · AND · RETURNING · BY · REGULAR · AND · SPECIAL TRAINS · ANY · TIME · WITHIN · THIRTY · DAYS · FROM · DATE · OF · SALE.

☞ Purchase your Round-Trip Tickets by the popular West Shore Railway,

The only line with new and comfortable cars and possessing an Up-town Station at foot of West Forty-Second Street, and Down-town Station foot of Jay Street, within a few blocks of the City Hall, where the remains of General Grant are to lie in state.

HENRY MONETT, General Passenger Agent.

West Shore timetable for special event in honor of General Ulysses S. Grant. From: "Timetable Pictorial of the West Shore Railroad," by Ed Gardner, 22 Garden Ave., P.O. Box 199, Mountain Top, PA. 18707.

had been changed to standard shortly after the D&H leased the road on February 24, 1870.[9]

Why the Athens Branch was built in the first place remains one of the great unsolved puzzles of the railroad world. Because it never materialized any great gains for its promoters, at one point it was given the name The White Elephant. The branch was leased to the New York Central in the spring of 1867. In November 1881 it was leased by the New York Central to the West Shore and Buffalo Railway, which four years later would be reorganized into the West Shore Railroad Co. The West Shore succumbed and in 1886 was leased by the New York Central. As part of the WSRR, the stretch once known as the White Elephant was referred to as the Athens Branch.[10]

With the crossing of the two roads in the very heart of the village, Voorheesville was on its way to becoming a bustling mini-industrial community. And because of its proximity to the Helderbergs, the village was to become a sought-after resort town that droves of vacationers

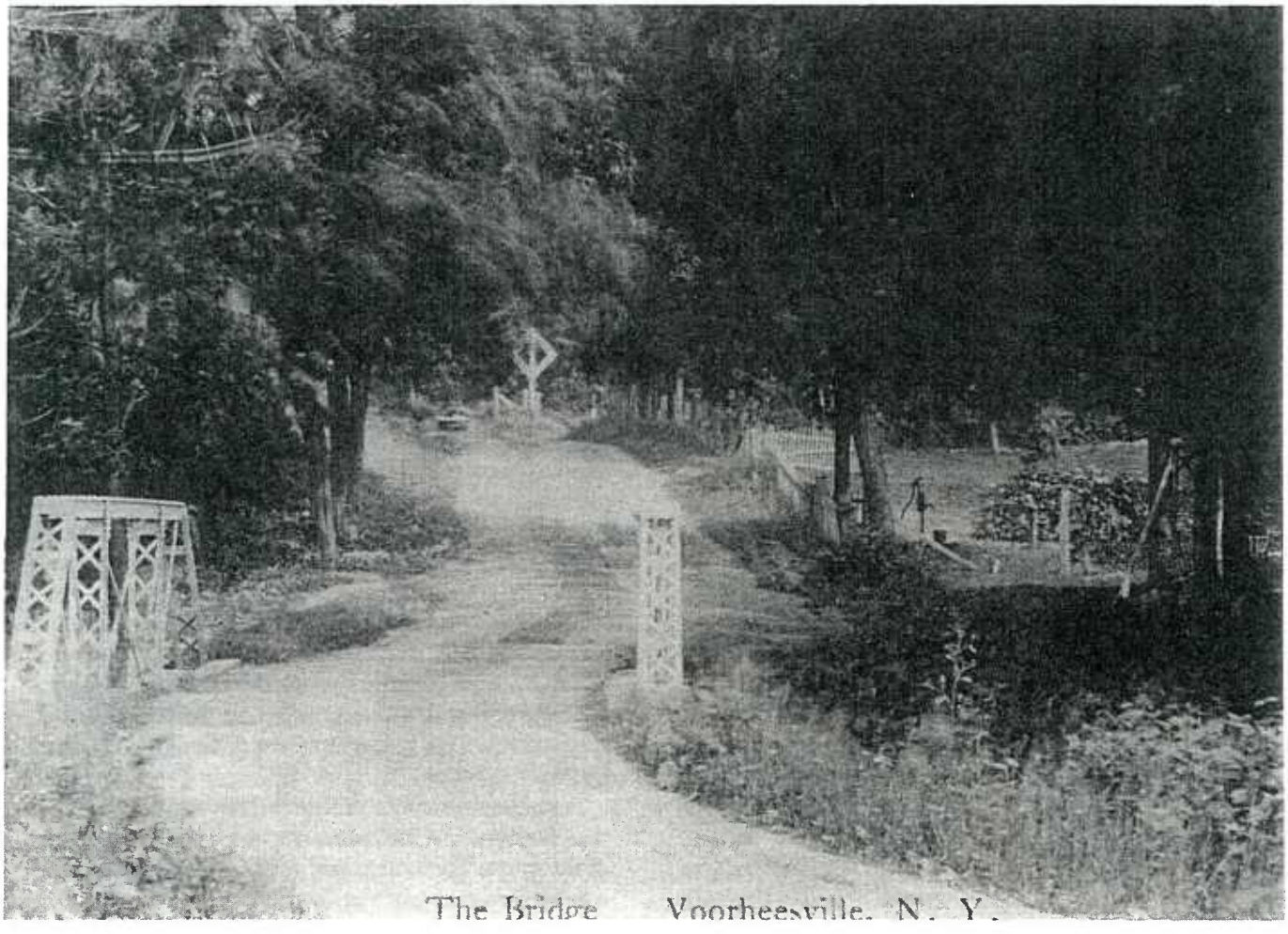
enjoyed coming to each summer for decades. That is, until the automobile deposed the railroad and became transportation king.

2. *An Agricultural Hamlet Grows*

Before the resorts came to Voorheesville, before the railroads made their presence known, there were essentially only farmers in the north central part of New Scotland. And for them, the coming of the rails in the 1860s served as the great economic equalizer with the rest of the town–in fact turned the economic tables in their favor altogether. Until then, farmers in the southern parts of the town had a distinct advantage. They were closer to the turnpike and plank roads that made the route to market more direct and easier. For the Voorheesville area farmer the trip to market in Albany with a load of produce was an ordeal, taking up the greater part of a day. As might be imagined, the trip to market was worse for those living further west. It's no surprise that the initial impetus to build the Albany and Susquehanna came from farmers living in the more isolated parts of the Schoharie valley.

A railroad man from Cobleskill, H.T Dana, describes the trip to market farmers living near Cobleskill had to take before the railroad came.[1] While this trip was a greater ordeal for these more western farmers, Dana's description provides great insight into what farmers in New Scotland had to endure before the railroad. It's worth quoting the Cobleskill resident's remarks for the vivid picture they offer of this era.

Writing about the period when the tracks for the Albany and Susquehanna were still being laid, Dana says a farmer's trip to market "was an event of as much importance, and required more elaborate preparation than a journey to Omaha, Nebraska, does now." The railroad man goes on to say that a farmer's wife "went bustling about the house the day before the journey was to be made, frying doughnuts, cooking sausages, and baking bread, while the farmer and his sons were putting up the grain or apples for market."



Even after the railroad came, the roads available to farmers remained relatively primitive. Illustrated above is the bridge across the Vly on Maple Avenue going toward New Scotland. Notice the railroad crossing sign in the background. The photo was taken long before the underpass was built in 1914.

When evening came, Dana continues, food for the three day trip was prepared and packed into a dinner box while the farmer "was busy at the barn packing a huge bundle of hay, and binding it with strong bands made by twisting rye straw into coils for rope." The farmer packed the hay "to avoid the purchase of feed for the horse whilst upon the trip."

The wagon was then greased and the dinner box placed safely on board ready for the early start. Then in the morning there were the roads and the elements to contend with. Dana says: "I will not recount the horrible details of a three days' pilgrimage to Albany and back, through mud and rain, slush and snow, trudging part way on foot or seated upon the soft side of a barrel of apples." This, although to a lesser degree, was the kind of trip the Relyeas, LaGranges, Cullings, Terwilligers and Martins among other Voorheesville area farmers, were subject to during harvest periods.

When the two railroads finally did come through Voorheesville and first offered their full complement of hauling services to farmers, the farms in the Voorheesville area differed little from those in the rest of the town in what they grew or produced. The strongest crops were hay, oats, winter rye and Indian corn. A few farmers grew barley and a little more than half cultivated several acres of buckwheat. Most farmers grew at least an acre of potatoes.

Oats and Indian corn seemed particularly agreeable to the soils of the area. Especially after 1840 Indian corn's production increased dramatically in New Scotland, some farmers even substituting it for fallow. As for the production of oats, the number of bushels seemed to increase as wheat was less and less able to be cultivated in the area.

But New Scotland farms, as with the rest of Albany County, had not always had such an awkward relationship with wheat. In its early farming history Albany County had had a long love affair with the crop. After the fur trade had all but dissolved in New York, wheat had become the staple of the province, certainly by 1734, and Albany County was a major factor. Indeed, wheat production had become so prominent in the county that the symbol for wheat was added to the city of Albany's official logo. Nearly a century later in 1831, the Albany agriculturist, Jesse Buel, still referred to wheat as the staple of Albany County.[2]

But the continuous depletion of soil through overcropping and shoddy farming methods, invasions by the wheat midge and weevil and rusts were to make wheat increasingly less profitable. In 1864, for example, the number of bushels of wheat harvested in Albany County seems to have reached its nadir at 1,858.[3] In New Scotland the total yield that year was only 354 bushels. And from all the farms in the entire Voorheesville area, only one farmer, Conrad Fryer, had grown and harvested wheat that year. He planted a single acre from which his yield was 10 bushels, slightly less than the county's per-acre-average. That was the same year the Albany and Susquehanna had put up its first combination passenger station and freight house and was ready for serious freight business.

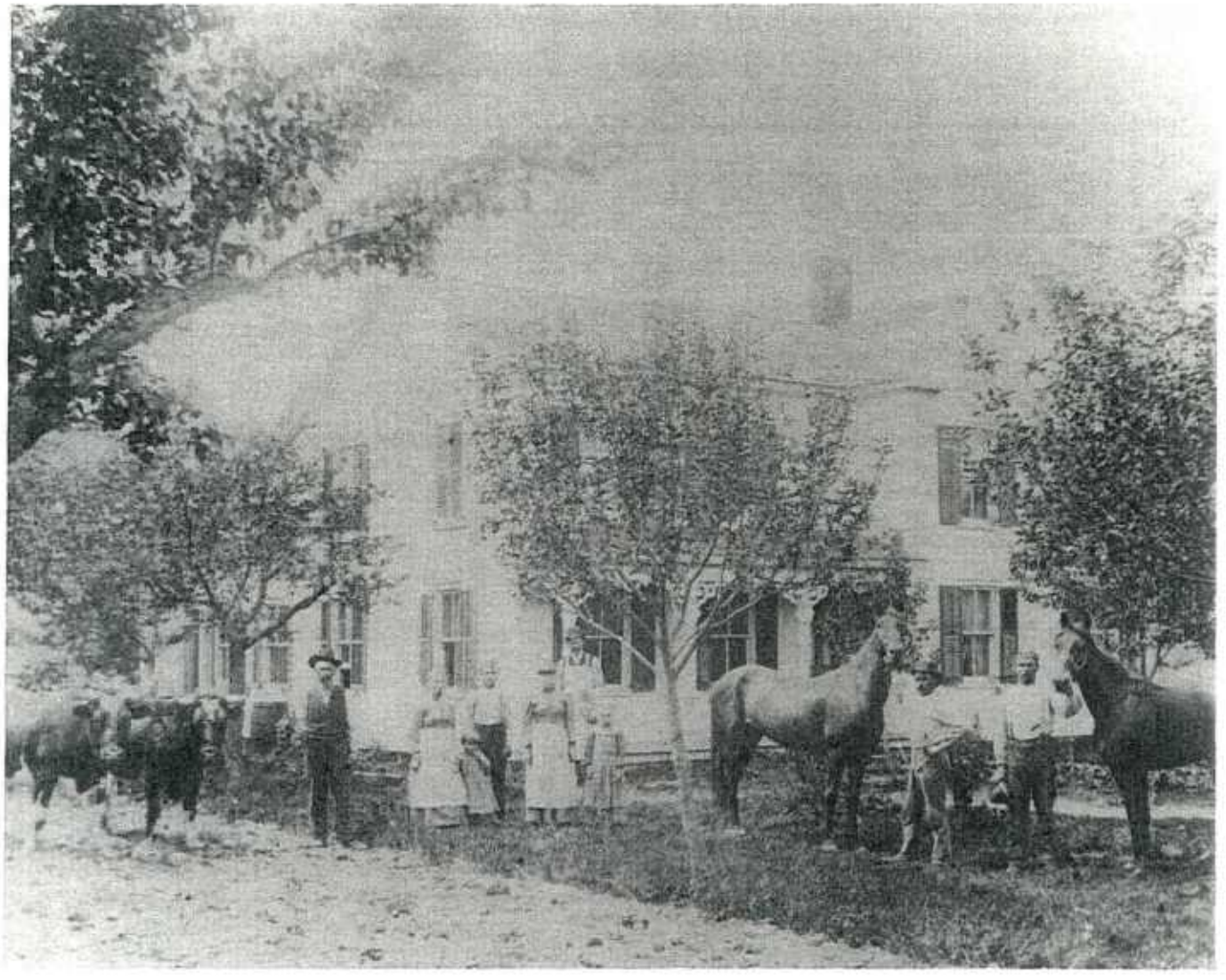
A look further down the list of agricultural products from the New York State agricultural census for the year 1865 gives us better insight into what a typical farm looked like when the railroad first came through. First of all, nearly every farm in the town had a fairly sizeable apple orchard, most in the range of 50 to 100 trees. However, those farms that depended more on apple production as a cash crop had much larger orchards. The Raynesford (now the King) farm on the west side of the intersection of Routes 85A and 85 had 450 trees. The Wayne farm had 300 in production and the Hilton farm(currently the LeVie farm)had 800 apples trees of fruit-bearing age.

From their yield of apples most farms produced several barrels of cider each year. In the late 18th and throughout the 19th century, cider was a most popular drink. Some farms relied on the sale of cider for their yearly income while others used their barrels to barter with storekeeps for essentials they were not able to produce themselves.

Part of the fruit production on many farms also included the cultivation of peaches, plums, grapes, pears and some strawberries. Some farmers specialized in a particular market vegetable such as turnips, peas or carrots. In years to come, the Bender farm would be famous not only for its Golden Queen melons but for its white turnip crops as well. [4] On the adjoining Becker farm (where the Auberge Suisse restaurant stands on Route 85 in Slingerlands), Albertus Becker produced 1700 bushels of carrots one year.

When looking at the town's farming practices at the close of the Civil War, it is essential to understand that the farming household was becoming increasingly less self-subsistent and increasingly more oriented to a market economy. Union depot in Voorheesville would become one of the major factors promoting this change in economy. However, by and large, much of what the farm family used each year was still produced on the farm in 1865. But as industrialization became omnipresent in the late 19th century, the move was increasingly in the direction of a market economy, whereby householders were encouraged to buy as a commodity or service what they once produced for themselves. This was as true for education as it was for butter.[5]

A major source of the production on farms each year was the horse. In 1865 horse power was clearly the name of the game. Each farm had at least one horse, most had a team and many of the larger farms had at least six or seven horses. The horse was used to plow, harvest and cart harvested goods to market. It was used for traveling to the general store to shop, for going to church, for visiting neighbors and rushing sick or hurt relatives to



According to the 1880 U.S. Agricultural Census, only about one in twenty New Scotland farmers still used oxen to work the fields. Here the Andrew Smith (2nd from right holding horse) family shows off its most prized possessions, yoke of oxen and horses. The Andrew Smith farm is currently one of the Indian Ladder farms situated on the Altamont Road.

the nearest doctor or to carry the doctor to the farm. In short, the horse was the single most important means by which the farm family made its living. Nothing happened without the horse. It had no competitor except the ox and oxen were limited in what they could do and how fast they could do it.

However, in 1865 oxen could still be seen trudging across the fields of some farms in the town, but only in about 10 percent of the cases. And only one farmer in the entire Voorheesville area used mules. That was Conrad Fryer. He had a pair.

On nearly every farm grunted a pig or two being raised for pork. Most had four or five and some farmers raised 15 to 25 for market. The town of New Scotland was later to become the largest producer of pork in the county. At least half the residents had sheep, a dozen on average, some farmers maintaining large flocks for wool production. At the Font Grove Farm just east of Voorheesville, James Hendrick grazed 100 sheep in 1864 and had a yield of 378 pounds of wool.

Milk also came directly from the farm so that nearly every farm had at least one milch cow at pasture. The larger farms had as many as eight to 12 cows, relying on the sale of milk for income. In addition to producing their own milk, most farm families also made their own butter. On average a farm might make between 100 and 800 pounds a year. Clearly those in the latter category made butter for sale at market or to neighbors. Butter was also used to trade for groceries at the general store. Cheese was made by a solitary farmer here and there, by less than 1 percent of the farming population.

In 1865 the typical New Scotland farm was about 80 acres. Some farms were as small as 10. Among the largest was the Hilton farm (LeVie's) with 320 acres, not only one of the largest in the colony of Rensselaerswyck but one of the domain's finest.[6]

SCHEDULE 2.—Productions of Agriculture in New Scotland in the County of Al. enumerated by me on the 23 day of June, 1880.

Name of the person who conducts this farm	Owner	Rents for fixed money rental	Rents for shares of products	Improved: Tilled	Improved: Permanent meadows, pastures, orchards, vineyards	Woodland and forest	Other unimproved	Farm values: Of farm	Of farming implements and machinery	Of live stock	Fences: Cost of building and repairing in 1879	Cost of fertilizers purchased in 1879	Labor: Amount paid for wages	Weeks hired labor	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Bryndere Henry			1	88	12	4		11107	400	770	15		60	11	1
Relyea William J.	1			129	11	10		15000	1575	770	50	20	350	100	1
Fryer Conrad	1			72	8	15		10000	1000	535	50		150	40	1
Loucks Casper	1			4				1500	100	200			50	4	1
Lagrange Abram			1	17	2			2000	125	125			15	2	1
Bonner Emeline		1		9	3			1210	50	120					2
Terwilliger Christopher	1			115	7	20		14000	250	505					12
Bradt David				6				3011	175	140			40	3	3
Reid Widow & Heirs	1			25			4	3000	400	370					3
Van Auken Alanson	1			27	10	5		4000	300	260					4

NEAT CATTLE AND THEIR PRODUCTS. / SHEEP.

Working oxen	Milch cows	Other	Calves dropped	Purchased	Sold living	Slaughtered	Died, strayed, and not recovered	Milk sold or sent to factory in 1879	Butter made on the farm in 1879	Cheese made on the farm in 1879	Sheep on hand June 1, 1880	Lambs dropped	Purchased	Sold living	Slaughtered	Killed by dogs	Died of disease	Died of stress of weather
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
	4	5	3	5	3		1		1000									
	4	4	2			2			500									
	4	3	4			1	1		400		8	3			3		1	
	1								100									
	3	2	3	2	4				300		7			4				
	1		1	1					140									
	2				2	1			220									
	2		2			1			250									

CEREALS. / PULSE. / FIBER.

Barley Area	Barley Crop	Buckwheat Area	Buckwheat Crop	Indian Corn Area	Indian Corn Crop	Oats Area	Oats Crop	Rye Area	Rye Crop	Wheat Area	Wheat Crop	Canada Peas	Beans	Flax Area in Crop	Flax Seed	Flax Straw	Flax Fiber	Hemp Area	Hemp Tons	Area in Crop
Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Bush.	Bush.	Acres	Bush.	Tons	Lbs.	Acs.	Tons	Acres
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69
		3	10	12	300	21	650	7	52			82								
		4	100	9	225	10	300	10	100											
		3	20	10	290	12	320	10	41	1	10	10								
								4	40											
				2	60	2	20						5							
				9	400	25	452	20	210											
				3	70	3	125	3	40				4							
		2	25			3	60													

For anyone interested in local history, the enumerations of the Federal and State Agricultural Census are more than numbers. They paint a vivid picture of farm life at the time the census was taken. Depicted here is a page of the U.S. Agricultural Census for 1880. Translating some of the farms into today's terms, the Conrad Fryer farm was 84 Voorheesville Avenue, David Bradt's was 14 Voorheesville Avenue, Christopher Terwilliger's farm was most of Salem Hills, and the Widow Reid farm was situated on Maple Avenue across from the service station.

The Severson (formerly Terwilliger) farmhouse on Maple Avenue. What's noteworthy about the photo is that today the barns are Stonington Hill Road in the Salem Hills housing development.

Much has been written about the poor farming practices of farmers in the early part of the 19th century. For example, when a field got run down, a goodly number of farmers might move on to another field. By 1850 nearly every county in eastern New York was reporting serious cases of soil depletion. It was said that only about one twelfth of the farmers took care to improve their lands, a quarter took steps to prevent deterioration and the rest just plain "skimmed" the lands creating damages to the extent of $3 per acre a year. With so much land available, oftentimes when a farm became depleted, the farmer might move further west rather than replenish the soil.

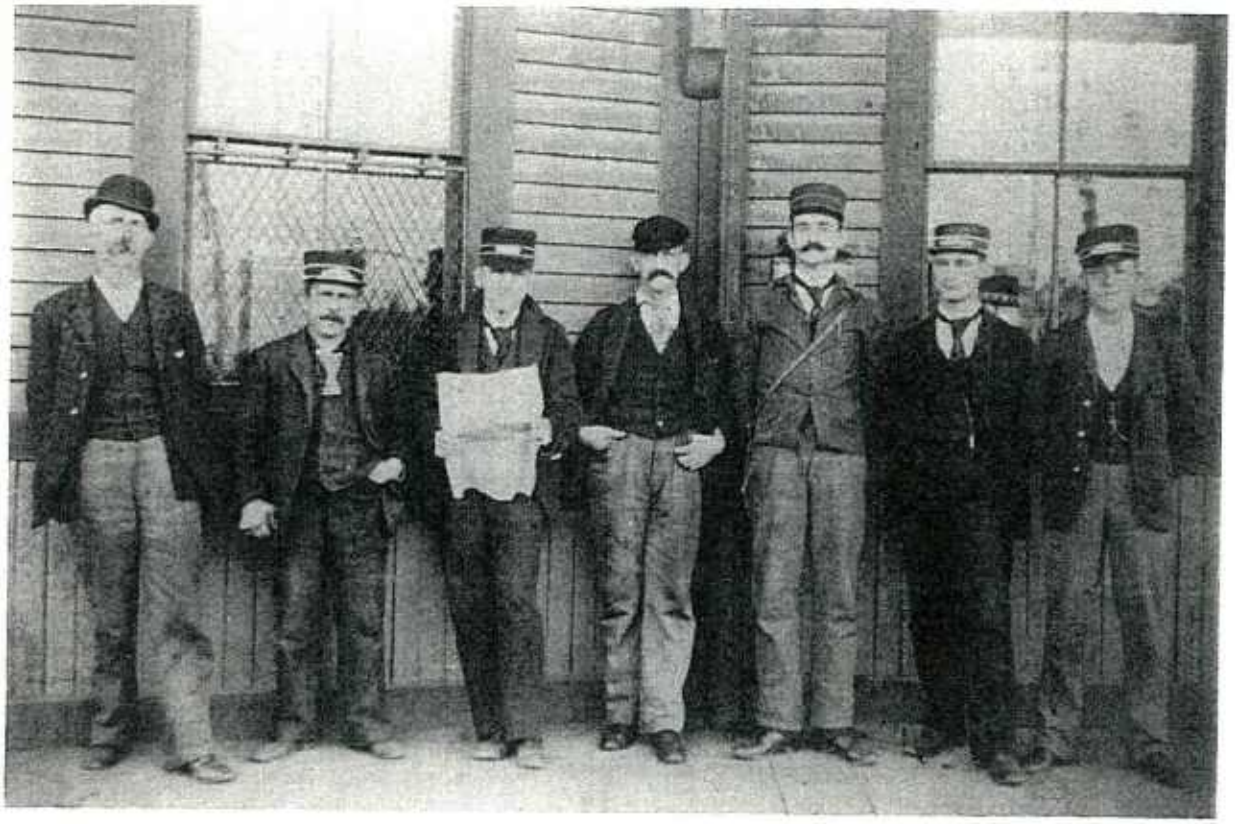
In a decade and a half's time, by 1864, cultivation practices had picked up significantly. However, only slightly more than half the farms reported an expenditure for manures and fertilizers.

But with more attention paid to better cultivation practices after the Civil War and with the coming of the railroad, farm production in the town of New Scotland increased significantly (from 1864 to 1879). Jacob Markle says of the New Scotland farmers in the Howell and Tenney History of Albany County written in 1886 that "The farmers are an intelligent class, and many of them adopt the progressive systems of rotation, manuring and the use of fertilizers."

Part of this intelligence came to the conclusion that the railroad could take crops to market much faster and more easily than an old wooden wagon pulled by a team of horses or oxen. Therefore production increased significantly on many farms between 1864 and 1879. Perhaps the increase in the yield of oats is the most dramatic.

In 1864 the Terwilliger farm (essentially the Salem Hills development) produced 40 bushels of oats. Fifteen years later that same farm had increased its production to 450 bushels. The Hiltons moved from 300 bushels in 1864 to 1,200 in 1879, the Fergusons at the north end of Voorheesville Avenue from 24 to 350 bushels. William Reid's farm (most recently the Jablonowski farm across from Smitty's Pizza) showed an increase in production

A young Gertrude Houck (Smith) stands in the middle of Voorheesville Avenue (about 1912). The land across the road (today's Hotaling Evergreen Park) was then still bedecked with apple trees from the old McElroy Orchard. This is but scant evidence of the pervasiveness of apple trees in and around the village.



Voorheesville depot crew after the turn of the century (l to r): Charlie MacMillan, Henry Kirby, ____ Miller, William Slingerlands, Franklin Vosburgh, Jacob Relyea and C. Nicholson.

from 40 to 125 bushels and Conrad Fryer went from 250 to 320.

Evidence to support the hypothesis that increased production was due to better farming practices can be found in the oat production on Conrad Fryer's farm during that period. In 1864 Fryer produced 250 bushels of oats on 18 acres while his 1878 crop of 320 bushels was grown on only 12 acres. Clearly the difference in production might be attributable to a favorable growing season, but the trend in increased production was too evident elsewhere. Similar growth statistics can be found in hay and winter rye production as well.

Another dramatic change in agricultural production during the period described can be found in the increase in the number of apple trees cultivated. In the five farms mentioned, Terwilliger, Hilton, Fergusor., Reid and Fryer, there were collectively 1,170 trees under cultivation in 1864. In 1879 that figure had increased to 2,400 trees. A good part of the difference is attributable to Conrad Fryer's planting of 550 trees by 1879; in 1864 the newly established farmer had none planted.

Perhaps Fryer, a shrewd businessman, saw the writing on the wall. About a decade later he would sell several acres at one end of his farm to Burton and Corey, two cider and vinegar makers from Albany. They would establish the Empire Cider and Vinegar Company and Fryer, as well as other area farmers, would have a steady customer for their apples.

The railroads' influence on fostering increased farm production can be seen as well. In January 1887, 30,000 bushels of apples were being shipped from the station. There was no way that this kind of yield could have been carried to market on dirt road surfaces. While four years later we see only 15,000 barrels being shipped, 20,000 more were being sent to the Empire cider mill which had opened in 1890. But it was the railroad that had brought the mill to town.

Similar shipping statistics can be found shortly after the turn of the century where, in the late fall of 1902, 25,000 barrels of fruit were shipped from the depot. Then there was hay and straw and grains. In January 1887 the two hay and grain firms in the village, John F. Tygert, and Hallenbeck and Bloomingdale, had shipped nearly 30,000 bushels of rye and buckwheat. All was not grown and milled in the immediate Voorheesville vicinity, as a good amount was brought from the grist mills in East Berne and surrounding areas.

There were other aspects of the agricultural landscape toward the end of the century that influenced the area's annual economy as well. For example, Henry Blessing, John Reid, and William Relyea had developed lucrative berry crops. In the summer of 1389 Relyea had picked five bushels of blackberries from the 30 Snyder plants he had purchased two years earlier. In 1891 he purchased 1,800 black raspberry plants from John Ryall in hopes of bringing their yield to market in future seasons. Ryall,

a town justice of the peace, had become noted for his berry crops. Each spring he would provide work for a number of village women who came to pick berries on his farm. Some days, during the berry harvest season, Ryall would take as many as 20 crates of berries to market.

During this period, huckleberries were also widely sought after and grown in many places. There was a large patch (several acres) just west of the village on the Altamont Road that housewives would descend upon when they were ripe. The swampy area bordered on several farms so occasionally there were some heated exchanges among the pickers as to who was picking whose berries. After the turn of the century, William Young is said to have paid for his house on Altamont Road with sales from the annual berry crop.

There were also some attempts by some residents at more exotic produce. In a swampy area on North Main Street, during at least one growing season, Frank Bloomingdale, the village hay and straw merchant, attempted to grow bog cranberries. At different times he had assigned several of his men to work the crop. Another cash crop cultivated by John Whitbeck was ginseng. In July 1903 Whitbeck was waiting to see how valuable such a crop could be. Although grown to the south and west of Voorheesville, hop production also had implications for many villagers. Many village women would travel to Clarksville or Schoharie to pick hops during the harvest season. Working hard and fast they were able to make considerable wages during the short picking season.

Each berry season residents looked forward to blueberries, gooseberries, strawberries and raspberries on the counter in the village grocery stores . At Wands' store or at Bewsher's or Levi Wood's, a customer could find the cream of the crop. Farmers would bring the best of their crop to the local store as a matter of pride. On the other hand they feared the reviews of their neighbors if any lesser quality than the best be brought forward with their name attached.

However hard area farmers worked, they never seemed to make the kind of living that those involved in manufacturing or shipping did. By the third quarter of the 19th century, farmers everywhere felt increasingly pinched as they received less and less of the national economic pie. In 1880 farm and urban real estate values were about equal, but by 1890 city real estate was double that of the farmer. And the estimated average wealth of the city family was nearly three times that of its country cousin.[7]

The increasing psychological press on the farmer by mid century was one of the reasons for the development of the Patrons of Husbandry in 1867, forerunner to the Grange movement. By 1875 Joseph Hilton had helped organize a chapter of the Grange in New Scotland to relieve some of this press. Over the years these farmer advocacy groups fought to lower transportation rates, reduce the power of the middleman, start cooperatives and buy materials wholesale. On a personal level they tried to foster a better social life for the farmer by sponsoring picnics, lodge meetings and other social gatherings. The annual picnic of the Grange held at the Grove Hotel was an event looked forward to each summer by villagers. Although the Grange's Patrons of Husbandry was a so-called secret society such as the Masons and Odd Fellows, both men and women were permitted to join.

There were other countywide organizations to help the farmer along, such as the Albany County Farmers League. Each year this group sponsored an institute at which information was shared about the latest farming practices. But as stated, no matter how much energy farmers put into bettering their conditions, occasionally they found themselves troubled by the way they were treated economically. In 1892, for example, their level of dissatisfaction ran high; they felt cheated, highly overtaxed by county government. Indeed when the Albany County Farmers League met at the Grove Hotel in February 1892, a good deal of the discussion revolved around the possibility of dividing the county. The proposal offered was to set the county towns off from the city and that portion lying adjacent to the Hudson River.

Of special note is that farmers of the Democratic, Republican and Prohibitionist parties were all in agreement about the proposal. However earnest their proposal and however angry they were, as history tells, the farmers never followed through with their threat.

"Then I was about 12 years old and I used to do the cooking and I used to bake and fix the meals so that when they came home from work the supper was ready and then she(my mother)would do the laundry before she went to work and it was my job to hang it on the line-we didn't have dryers, we had to hang them on the line. At that time she did work in her home, sewing. There used to be a lady that brought material from the collar factory and she used to make button holes in the men's collars and cuffs on a sewing machine-in her home she used to do that."

— Mabel Alkenbrack

CHAPTER TWO

The Golden Era Begins

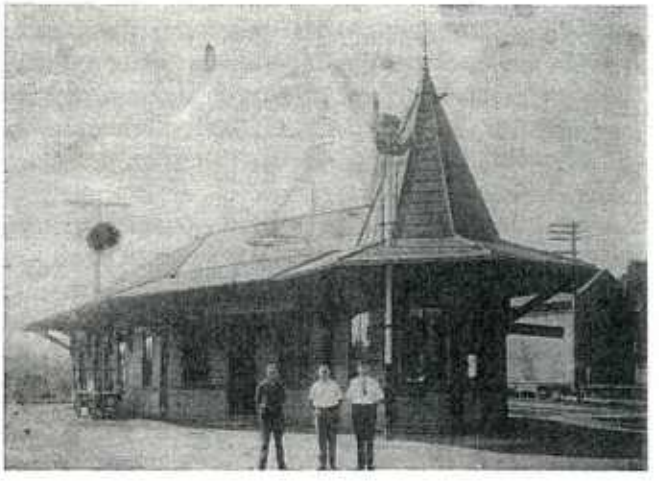
1. What's In A Name?

Once the railroad arrived, Voorheesville did not emerge into a booming business community overnight.[1] Indeed, the railroad itself was not prepared for such business right away. When the Albany and Susquehanna's first trains made their stops at the New Scotland station during most of the road's first year of operation, there were only makeshift quarters to handle the freight and passenger business. Along the tracks stood little more than a well-built shanty to serve as both passenger and freight station and to house the traffic guard who was fondly called "Mother Glenn." Glenn's husband Owen, an Irish immigrant, also worked on the railroad as a flagman for a number of years. When he died in December 1888 at age 85, he was said to have been the oldest settler in the village and was fondly referred to as the mayor of Voorheesville.

Sometime in 1864 the Albany and Susquehanna began to make provisions for a more permanent and realistic depot. A new combination freight and passenger station was built. This station was suited well enough for both passenger and freight traffic for a while but, by the 1880s, as the business and agricultural production in the area increased rapidly, the depot was rendered practically useless. As noted earlier, just in the month of January 1887, the grain merchants in the village had shipped 30,000 bushels of wheat and rye and the apple growers 30,000 bushels of apples. And the Cummings Brothers had already begun to ship large amounts of bluestone from the station. John Tygert, Frank Bloomingdale, the Cummings Brothers, in addition to the Terwilligers and Hiltons, among others who used the railway for frequent shipping, would have made their voices heard.

The West Shore listened. By early September 1889, it had taken the lead and broken ground for a new depot. The old station was not demolished but purchased by the village hardwareman Thomas Bewsher for $128. Bewsher dismantled the station and within weeks had set it up elsewhere in the village to be used as a storage shed for his hardware supplies.

Since both the A&S and WSRR companies were to share the use of the new depot, they split the building costs of the new station down the middle, each paying $1,608.66. In the minds of some village residents this was skimping, for while the frame of the new station was being put up, they were heard murmuring that the new building did not seem much larger than the one Bewsher had carted away. Although it was ready for use by 1890, the new depot was only a passenger station. No separate accommodation had been made for freight. It seems odd that a village doing Voorheesville's volume of business did not have a freight building, and would not for over nine years. It's hard to imagine how the freight was handled in a sane manner. It's no surprise that the business community had developed great fondness for Frank Coughtry, the general station agent.



Many considered the Voorheesville Depot with its little cathedral spire to be among the most handsome along either road. Standing in front of the depot is its crew of 1928 (l to r): Phil Pettinger (clerk); John Hodges (telegrapher); and Arthur Wright (freight agent).

The close quarters in the depot got to be too much for the business community. They began to complain once again to the railroad. The complaints reached their peak when in May 1897 a number of residents in the community sent a petition to the West Shore pleading for a storage building. West Shore officials finally relented. By October they sent a team of surveyors out to Voorheesville to look over the land adjacent to what had become the Joslin Brothers hardware store. Bewsher had sold the hardware store to E. Dayton and Jesse Joslin in 1890 and built a grocery store for himself at the south end of the flat iron building. To the north of these stores stood the new freight building ready for operation in 1900.

But in 1864, when Mrs. Glenn was stopping the horse and wagon traffic with her hand signal while the trains passed, the little stop of New Scotland on the Albany and Susquehanna was becoming a focal point for a farming community that had had little focus up to that

The Voorheesville freight house built in 1900 still stands today.

time. Within four years the little community surrounding the New Scotland stop would become an unincorporated village with its own post office and be given the name Voorheesville. Because the station stood at the junction of the two rail companies, it was referred to by some as Union Depot.

In many, if not most of the generally accepted accounts of how Voorheesville got its name, a small but persistent mythology has developed, particularly with respect to the identity of Alonzo B. Voorhees himself. Almost invariably it has been asserted that Voorhees came from New York City, that he built the first home in the village and worked for the railroad as a lawyer, having been sent to Voorheesville on some sort of official railroad business. But no evidence is available to date to support any part of that mythology.

For example, the only connection between Voorhees and the railroad discovered to date is his acting in the capacity of commissioner of deeds (basically today's notary public) for the Albany and Susquehanna. He had certified the road's year end report for the annual report of the State Engineer and Surveyor of New York. All the railroads in the state were required by law to detail their annual expenditures, the improvements they made during the year, even a listing of the accidents that occurred along each part of the road.

Voorhees' work for the A&S was dated September 30, 1859. His law office in the city of Albany was situated in the vicinity of a number of Albany and Susquehanna officials and he most certainly knew many if not all on a personal basis. But without access to Voorhees' ledgers it's difficult to suggest that he acted legally for the railroad other than in the above-mentioned instance.

Alonzo B. Voorhees was born in Cherry Valley in 1821. After being educated at Cherry Valley Academy and Hartwick Seminary, he studied law at Lawyersville, New York . He was admitted to the bar in 1848. Three years later, the young attorney had moved to Albany and began practicing law with Thomas J. Van Alstyne on 83 State Street. He stayed there until 1855 when he opened his own office. That same year he was appointed as justice to the Albany Justice's Court, a position he held for a number of years.

Voorhees was a staunch Republican all his life and on more than one occasion he became involved in politics in both elected and appointed capacities. In 1867, for example, during a Republican national administration, he was appointed Registrar of Bankruptcy for the U.S. District Court, a position he held until his death on August 28, 1893.

Perhaps it was only a coincidence but the same year that Voorhees was appointed to the federal post, he moved to New Scotland, into the house he had built on the hill at the juncture of Main and Prospect Streets. What induced Voorhees to move from the city at this time is not known. The previous September he had purchased from William H. Slingerland, a civil engineer and John H. Sand, a surveyor, a five-acre parcel southwest of the railroad. At that time he most likely began building his new home. Voorhees' house is not listed on the Beers 1866 map so we know it did not exist before that time.

Later Voorhees bought two additional acres from Slingerland and Sand in April 1867, then nine more in April 1868. These parcels came from the 50-acre tract that Slingerland and Sand had bought near the junction in 1866 from Peter Martin. Slingerland was quite familiar with the area, having acted as surveyor for the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad Company in 1851 when it was originally planning where to lay its track. Fifteen years later, after the two developers bought the 50-acre parcel, they subdivided it into 38 lots. These lots, situated on Main and High (Pleasant) Streets, comprised Voorheesville's first subdivision. By the late 1880s, the subdivision had already begun to take shape.

It is sometimes thought that Voorhees lived in the village all his life, but he stayed just four years, from 1867 through 1870. During his final year of residency he was selected to serve as the town's supervisor, on April 12, 1870. While living in the provinces during those four years, Voorhees continued to practice law in the city, traveling back and forth to his office each day by train. At that time he would have been one of the few regular commuters, since the village was still mainly agricultural and most people were still employed locally on farms and in farm-related work. The City Directory of Albany for 1871 lists Alonzo B. Voorhees removed to the city and living at 13 Madison Place.

But that was not the end of Voorhees' association with the village. From time to time he would drive out by horse and wagon to visit, sometimes staying for a short vacation. In July 1885, for example, he came to the village and stayed several weeks among the usual summer guests. And in September 1892, Voorhees along with James Bentley, Robert Oliver and George Addington, his political friends, drove out to the village by horse and wagon to attend the farmer's picnic. On

ALEX. W. RANDALL,
~~Assistant~~ Postmaster General.

To Mr. A. B. Voorhees
~~Care of the Postmaster of~~ 49. State. St.
Albany. NY
~~who will please forward to him~~

STATEMENT.

The proposed office will be called Voorhees ville

[*The name of the candidate for postmaster should not be applied as the name of a post office. It is preferable to have some* LOCAL *or* PERMANENT *name, which must not be the name of any other office in the State; and you should aim to select a name not appropriated to any office in the United States.*]

It will be situated ~~At the~~ Intersection of the Albany & Susquehanna R.R with the Troy & Schen & ~~quarter of Section~~ in the , Township of New Scotland
~~Range~~ , in the County of Albany , State of New York

It will be on ~~a new~~ route No. 10814, being the route from Albany city Hall
to Bainbridge on Hall & S.R.R., on which the mail is now carried Six times per week.

The contractor's name is The Albany & Susquehanna R.R. Co. of which J. T. Ramsey is Pres't

Will it be *directly on this route?—Ans.* Yes at the Depot at Voorhees ville

If not, how far from and on which side of it?—*Ans.* — — — as above

How much will it INCREASE the travel of the mail one way each trip?—*Ans.* None at all

Where will the mail leave the present route to supply the proposed office?—*Ans.* At the A & S.R.R. Depot

Where intersect the route again?—*Ans.* " " " "

What post office will be left out by this change?—*Ans.* Not any

The name of the nearest office to the proposed one, *on the same route*, is Normans Kill
its distance is four miles, in a South Easterly direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest office on the same route, *on the other side*, is Guilderland Station
its distance is four & half miles, in a North Westerly direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest office to the proposed one, *off the route*, is New Scotland
distance by the most direct road is three & half miles, in a Southerly direction from the proposed office.

State the names of the other offices near the proposed one, their directions and distances from it by the most direct roads.

Ans. Guilderland Center is a post office & four miles in a Northerly direction, and there are no other post offices nearer than above stated

The name of the most prominent river near it is Hudson River

The name of the nearest creek is Fely Kill

The proposed office will be ~~five~~ miles from said river, on the West
side of it, and will be One fourth miles from said nearest creek, on the West ~~side~~ side of it.

If it be a village, state the number of inhabitants.—*Ans.* A small Village containing about 200 inhabitants

If not, state the number of families within two miles.—*Ans.* There about Two hundred families

Also, the number of families within one-half the distance to the next office.—*Ans.* About 200.

A *diagram, or sketch from a map*, showing the position of the proposed new office, with neighboring river or creek, roads, and other post offices, towns, or villages near it, will be useful, and is therefore desired.

A correct map of the locality might be furnished by the county surveyor, but this must be without expense to the Post Office Department.

ALL WHICH I CERTIFY to be correct and true, according to the best of my knowledge and belief, this first day of February, 1868.

A B Voorhees

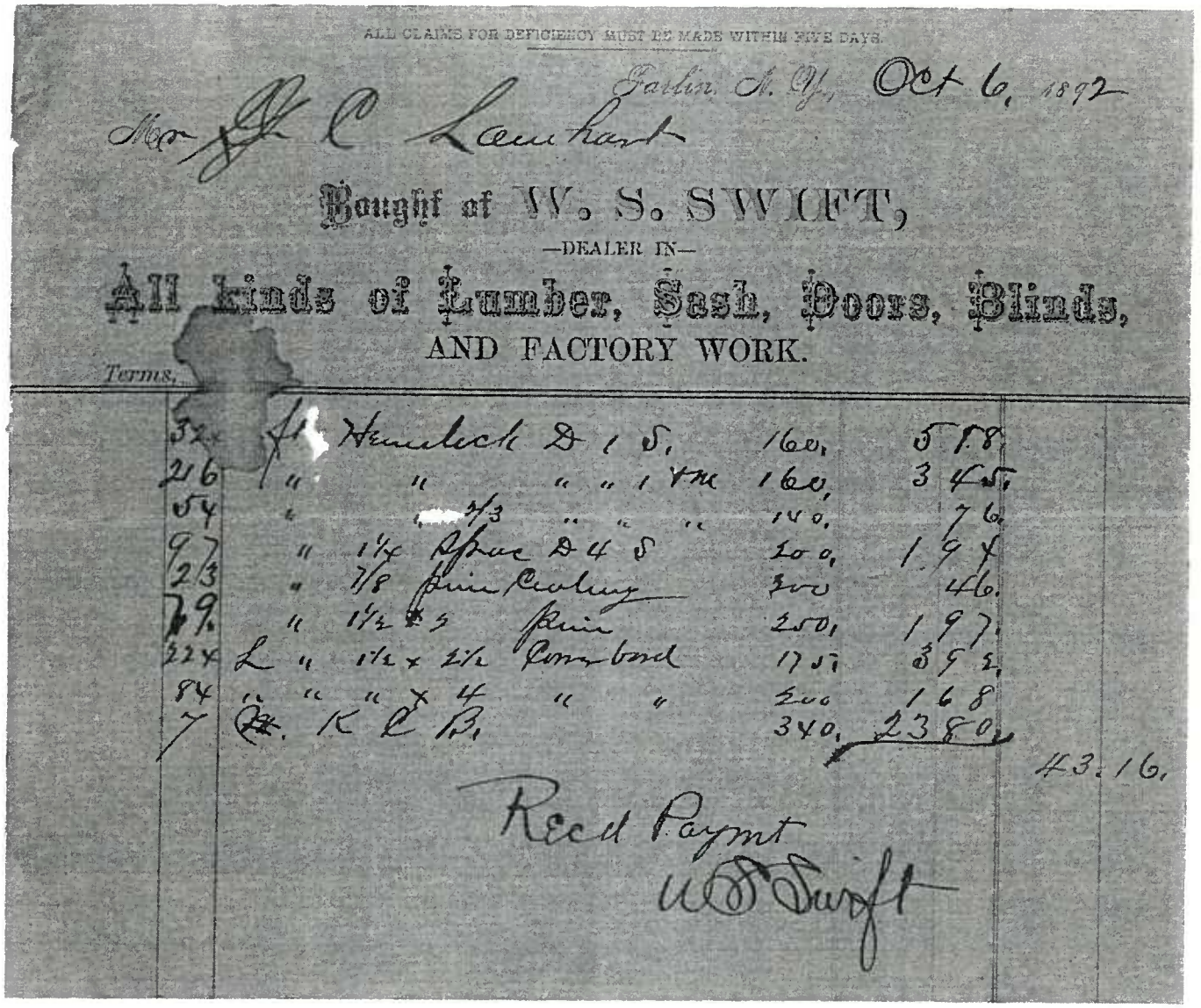
I CERTIFY, That I have examined the foregoing statement, and that it is correct and true, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Wm H. Fitzgerland Postmaster of Normans Kill

The application for a post office which Voorhees filed with the U.S. Post Office Department. By filling in Voorheesville on the top line, he named the village after himself.

another occasion he returned to the country to defend Conrad Fryer in a three-way suit over the ownership of furniture from the Grove Hotel.

When he first arrived in New Scotland in 1867, Voorhees wasted no time in making application to Alex W. Randall, Postmaster General, for a post office at the New Scotland stop along the Albany and Susquehanna. Apparently nothing was done with the first application because Voorhees applied for a post office a second time the following year, on February 1, 1868. In a postscript to a note accompanying the application he alludes to the earlier application: "By reference to the application in the foregoing matter filed with you about one year ago..."



ALL CLAIMS FOR DEFICIENCY MUST BE MADE WITHIN FIVE DAYS.

Farlin N. Y. Oct 6, 1892

Mr. H. C. Leonhart

Bought of W. S. SWIFT,

—DEALER IN—

All kinds of Lumber, Sash, Doors, Blinds,

AND FACTORY WORK.

Terms.

32	ft	Hemlock D & S.	160.	5 12	
216	"	" " " 1 rm	160.	3 45	
54	"	" 1/3 " " "	140.	7 6	
97	"	1¼ Spruce D & S	200	1 94	
23	"	7/8 Pine Ceiling	300	46	
79	"	1½ " S	Pine	250	1 97
22	L	" 1½ x 2½	Pine Board	175	3 92
84	"	" " x 4	" "	200	1 68
7		K L P.		340.	2380

43.16.

Rec'd Paymt

W S Swift

A William Swift letterhead from the Farlin days and a letter postmarked 'Farlin' from the same period.

It is somewhat ironic, yet consistent with political realities that Voorhees, a relative newcomer and outsider to New Scotland, would get to name the village after himself. We know that to be the case for on the first line of the application for the post office, where it asks what the new post office will be called, Voorhees in his own hand filled in "Voorheesville". Written in broad script sideways in the left hand margin is "Who for P.M.??" The response: "James A. Reid Jr."

The new postmaster was son of James Reid who had been the first supervisor of the town in 1833. The Reid family had lived in New Scotland since the late 18th century.[2] While they were basically farmers, at one point they opened and ran a tavern next to where the firehouse stands today. Later, about 1860 the Reids turned the tavern into a general store where James Jr. held his postmaster position until February 1874. At that time Conrad Fryer, builder and owner of the Grove Hotel, took his place. Incidentally, James Reid Sr., was also among those involved in setting up the early school system in the area in the early 1820s when New Scotland was still part of Bethlehem. Some of the first meetings on the organization of the new school were held at the later-to-be supervisor's house.

In a note Voorhees attached to his second application,

he described the younger Reid as a "respectable man and I believe all parties still agree that he should be postmaster. There is no opposition to him by anybody. Respectfully yours, A.B. Voorhees." Beneath Voorhees' postscript in another hand reads: "The Albany & Susq[a] RR Co. has notice of this application and as President of the Co. and personally I applaud the same. Dated Feb 6th 1868." It was signed J.H. Ramsey, president of the road. The post office began operation under the name of Voorheesville the following week, on the 11th, and the loosely formed association of farmers along the railroad began to identify themselves with the new name of Voorheesville.

It is interesting to speculate what influence Voorhees' venture in naming a village after himself had on his acquaintance, William Slingerland. Slingerland was postmaster of the Normanskill Post Office in 1868 when Voorhees applied for the Voorheesville office. Two years later (1870) the Normanskill post office also received a name change, going from Normanskill to Slingerlands.

When Voorhees moved out of the village and was back in the city about a dozen years, this time living on Lancaster Street, which was located in the 16th ward, he was elected supervisor of that ward for a year. He continued to practice law until 1893 when he entered the Home for Aged Men on the Troy Road. He died there on August 28. His obituary said he had been "prominent in his profession" and that he had "enjoyed a large and lucrative practice."

2. *Farlin Who?*

For a goodly number of towns situated along the railroad in the late 19th century, it was not uncommon to find their names changed, in some cases more than once. Normanskill to Slingerlands is one example of such a change as is Knowersville to Altamont.[1] The railroad was so involved with federal politics that a renamed post office was often the result of political influence. Often enough these changes would result in a town's post office going by one name and the surrounding community by another.

This was the case with Voorheesville for a two-year period when its post office was changed to Farlin on August 27, 1890. The village went by the name Farlin until August 19, 1892, when it was changed once again to Voorheesville. But during the two-year interim there seemed to be some confusion on the part of some residents as to how to refer to themselves. Were they a Farlin post office and a Voorheesville village or an all Farlin village? Perhaps there was some resistance to the new name for in some newspaper ads and on the letterheads of several businesses it says Farlin (formerly Voorheesville); others says Farlin Post Office and give their address as Voorheesville and some others list only Farlin, New York.

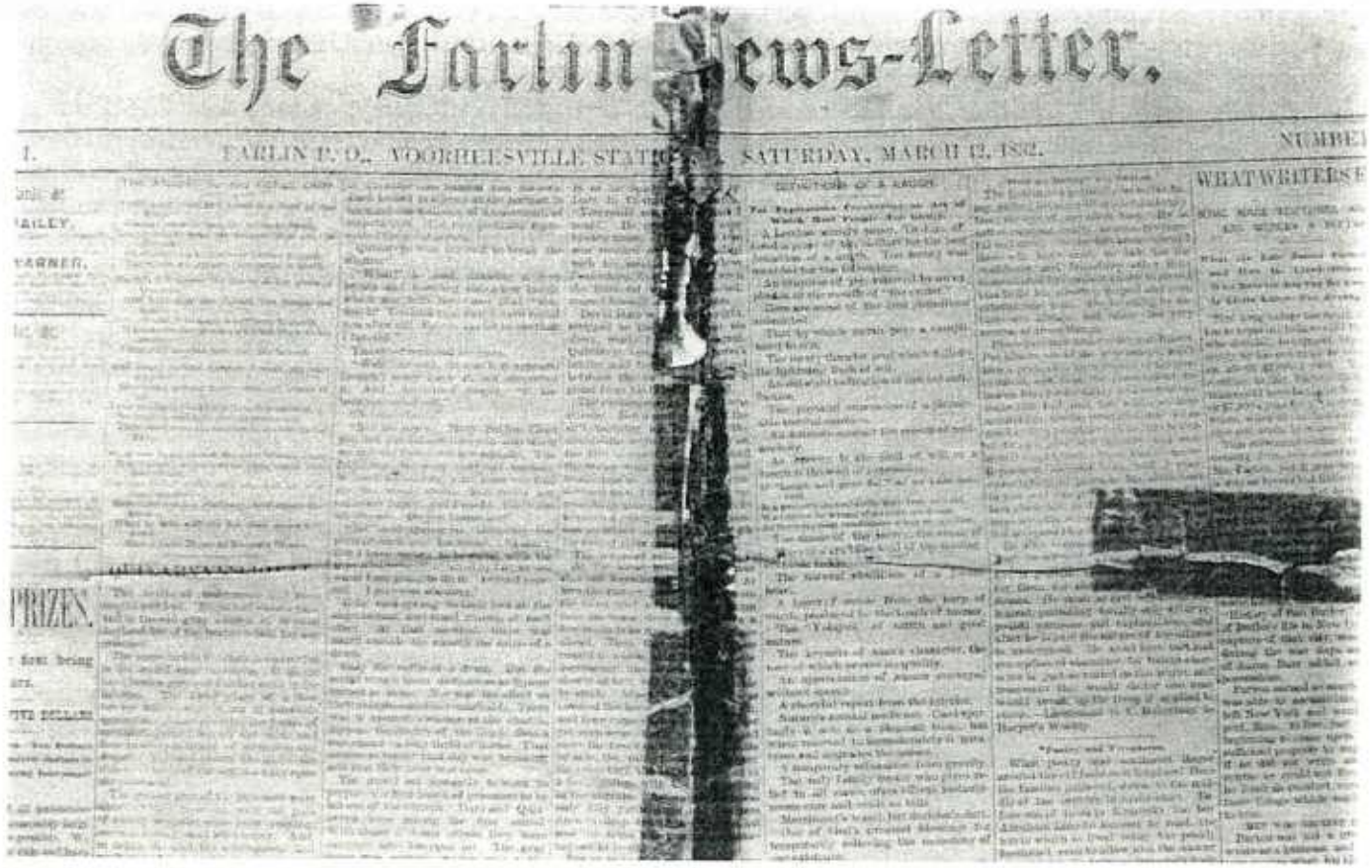
The Farlin in question is none other than Dudley Farlin and in his case there is a clear connection with the railroad.[2] Farlin had a career with the railroad that began as a clerk in the freight department with the Ohio and Mississippi in 1859. Later he moved to the Delaware and Hudson where he served as assistant freight agent (1875 to 1885). In 1886 he was promoted to general freight agent, a position he held for four years (1886-1890). The naming of the village after him could have been a reward for his long years of service.

What is ironic about the two individuals after whom the village was named is that more is known about Farlin than Voorhees. In many ways Farlin was the more prominent of the two. Born in Warrensburg, New York in 1835, Farlin proved to be both an avid businessman and traveller. In 1866 between railroad jobs, he travelled to California, then sailed to Oceania. He then lived in Australia, New Zealand, Papua, Celebes and other places for several years before returning to the states in 1872. Upon his return he became a clerk in the freight department with the New York and Oswego Midland Railroad.

We mentioned the beginnings of his relationship with the Delaware and Hudson in 1875. In 1882 his interests turned to oil and later to electric. He was president and principal stockholder of the Lima Oil Company which he sold shortly before 1890 for $800,000. He also served as president of the Edison Light and Power Company of Albany; The Norwich, N.Y. Illuminating Company; the Cooperstown Electric Light Company; The Merchants Oil Company; The Manhattan Oil Company and The Albany Oil Company. It might be argued that these were not major oil companies, but about 1890, the Manhattan Oil Company produced nearly 4,000 barrels of oil daily. It had 445 cars contracted and 375 on track, owning 35,000 acres of oil territory.

The year before retiring from the D&H, Farlin traveled to England, Scotland and Ireland. In the spring of 1890, the same year as his retirement, he was elected president of the Young Men's association. Later, from 1892-1894, he served as U.S. Forest Commissioner while still residing in Albany. The following year he moved from Albany to New York City. Farlin had lived in New Scotland for a year (1876) and in Slingerlands for three, but there is no evidence to suggest that he ever lived in Voorheesville.

Just before his retirement from the railroad we see at least two organizations bearing his name. The first was in April 1889 when a certificate of incorporation was filed for "The Dudley Farlin Camping Association."[3] While Farlin himself was not one of the subscribers, the group was set up for the purpose of "Social, Literary and Athletic pursuits, Yachting, Hunting, Fishing, or other lawful sporting purpose including an annual



The Farlin News-Letter.

FARLIN P. O., VOORHEESVILLE STATION, SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 1892.

A section of the front page of the first edition, first number of The Farlin News-Letter. Listed below the name of the paper is a reference to the two names the village went by: Farlin P.O. and Voorheesville Station.

camp gathering."

Perhaps the formal association grew out of a group that bore Farlin's name several years earlier. This group was involved in an evening train excursion to Altamont. In August 1887 the paper gave notice that "The Dudley Farlin Association of Albany will give an evening railroad excursion to Knowersville (Altamont) on Thursday evening, August 11th." The train was to leave Albany at 7:45 p.m. and return from Knowersville at 12:30 a.m. A round trip ticket for the evening's event sold for 85 cents.

As indicated, in August 1892, the name of the post office and village were changed back to Voorheesville. Perhaps an aging Voorhees lobbied to have the village restored to its original name, but more likely the switch was due to an administrative change by the federal post office. On April 14, 1892 the Postmaster General Miscellaneous Order 48 directed the Fourth Assistant Postmaster General not to establish any post office whose proposed name differed from that of the town or village in which it was located. Whenever possible the name of the post office was to be the same as that of the local railway station to avoid confusion and delay in the mail.[4]

Whatever the underlying reason for the change, those who lived in the village must have felt relief from the confusion of two identities. On the other hand, when it came to spelling and writing out Voorheesville by hand, villagers must have pined away for the much shorter Farlin.

One addendum to the Farlin era. During the two-year period in which the village was officially called Farlin, an attempt had been made by a certain William "Bert" Reid to start a newspaper in the village. Reid, an Albanian(not an apparent relative to the New Scotland Reids) had come into the village in mid-January 1892 to see what the prospects were for starting a printing office and a newspaper. The prospects must have looked good because, by early February, Reid had leased the upper part of the Schell building for both printing and editorial purposes. He had hired two men to work in the office and a Miss Ferguson as a typesetter.

Reid announced that the name of his new paper was to be The Farlin News-Letter. The first issue of the four-page broadsheet came out on Saturday March 12, 1892. Although the paper was modeled on the format of the Altamont Enterprise and probably was intended to compete with its senior, the upstart paper had an uphill battle. The Enterprise had been in operation since July 1884 and had built up a coterie of loyal subscribers.

Consequently, the News-Letter had a struggle to gain a modicum of readers. To boost its circulation and

foster community interest in the paper, the publisher ran several contests. In addition to offering a prize to the youngster who brought in the most subscribers, the publisher also sponsored an essay contest in which a dictionary was offered to the essayist who wrote most colorfully about "Which teacher is most popular?"

After nine months of publication, however, the paper collapsed and under somewhat strange circumstances. The town constable had been called in to investigate Reid. The pre-Christmas issue of the 1892 Enterprise read: "No tidings have been heard from late editor of News-Letter since his escape from Constable Wormer."

After Reid's disappearance from site, there was no further mention of him in the Enterprise. In February 1893, John Ogsbury co-publisher of the Enterprise, drove to Voorheesville and bought the type and office equipment Reid left behind. As far is presently known, there are only two extant copies of the Farlin News-Letter.[5]

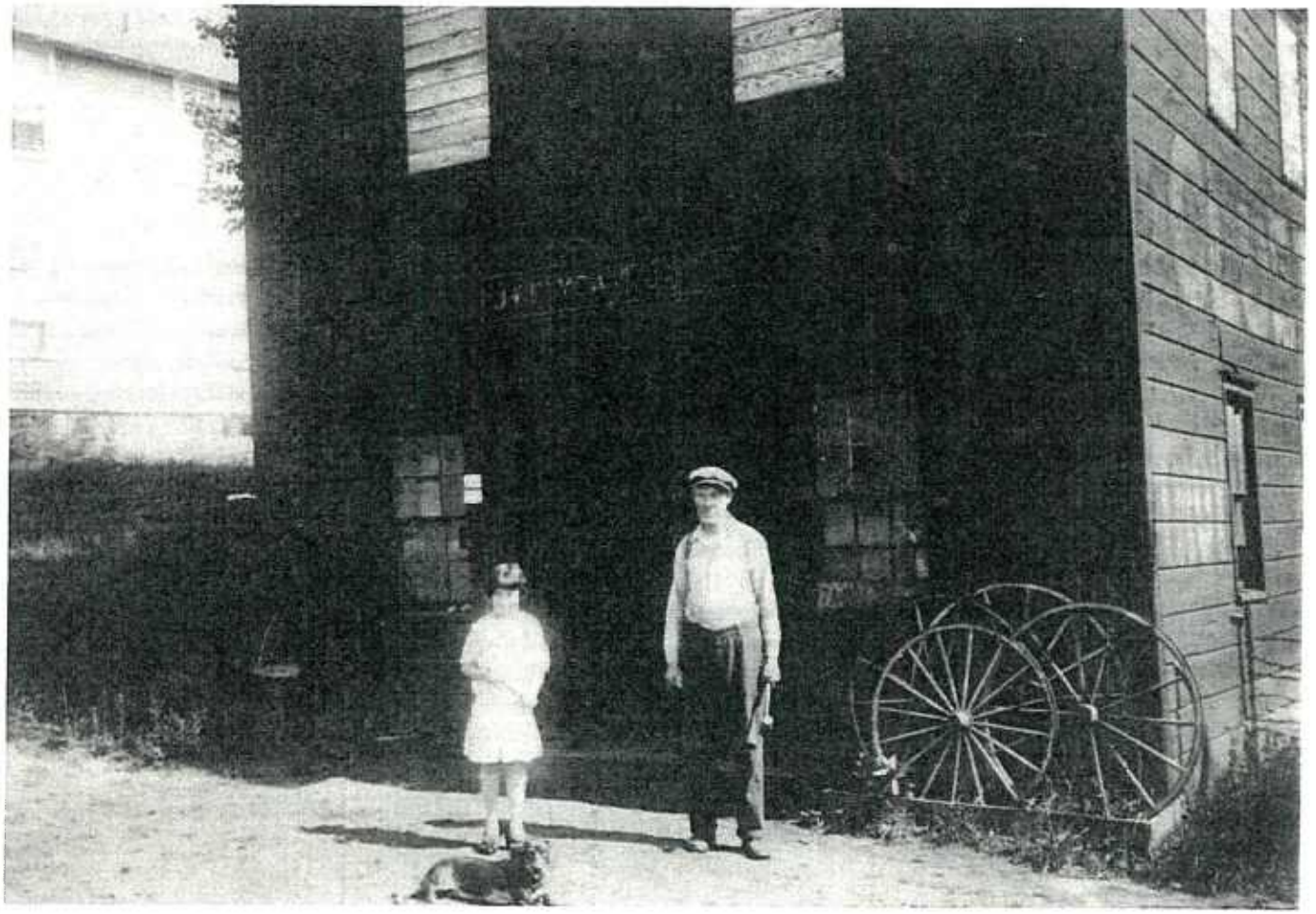
Despite the changes in the name of the post office, it grew and its services increased as the outlying areas of the village became more populated. Beginning on July 1, 1901, rural delivery services were begun for those outside the incorporated village and anyone 80 rods from the post office. The mail would be delivered to only those who had set up boxes along the old stage route.

3. Hay and Straw Market

In Jacob Markle's article on New Scotland in Howell and Tenney's History of Albany County, Markle provides a brief description of each of the hamlets in the town and a fairly complete business directory for each.[1] If only the length of Markle's descriptions is taken into account, both New Salem and Clarksville received twice as much attention as Voorheesville. At this time the two hamlets further south not only had larger populations than Voorheesville but were more settled and more well-rounded villages. In terms of population, New Scotland had 47 families with 200 inhabitants, Clarskville 78 families with 300 inhabitants and Voorheesville just 38 families with a population of 140.

And as far as businesses and available services went, Clarksville had a bakery, probably the first in the town,

Voorheesville's first separate post office building. It was purchased in Altamont in 1940 by Voorheesville resident Charles Fields and moved to its Main Street location for $1,000.



Jim Relyea, village blacksmith for many years with neighbor Mary Tork and brother Sammy's dog Nellie (circa 1928). Blacksmith shop was located on Grove Street to the south of Tork residence. When Relyea left the village shortly after, he was Voorheesville's last blacksmith.

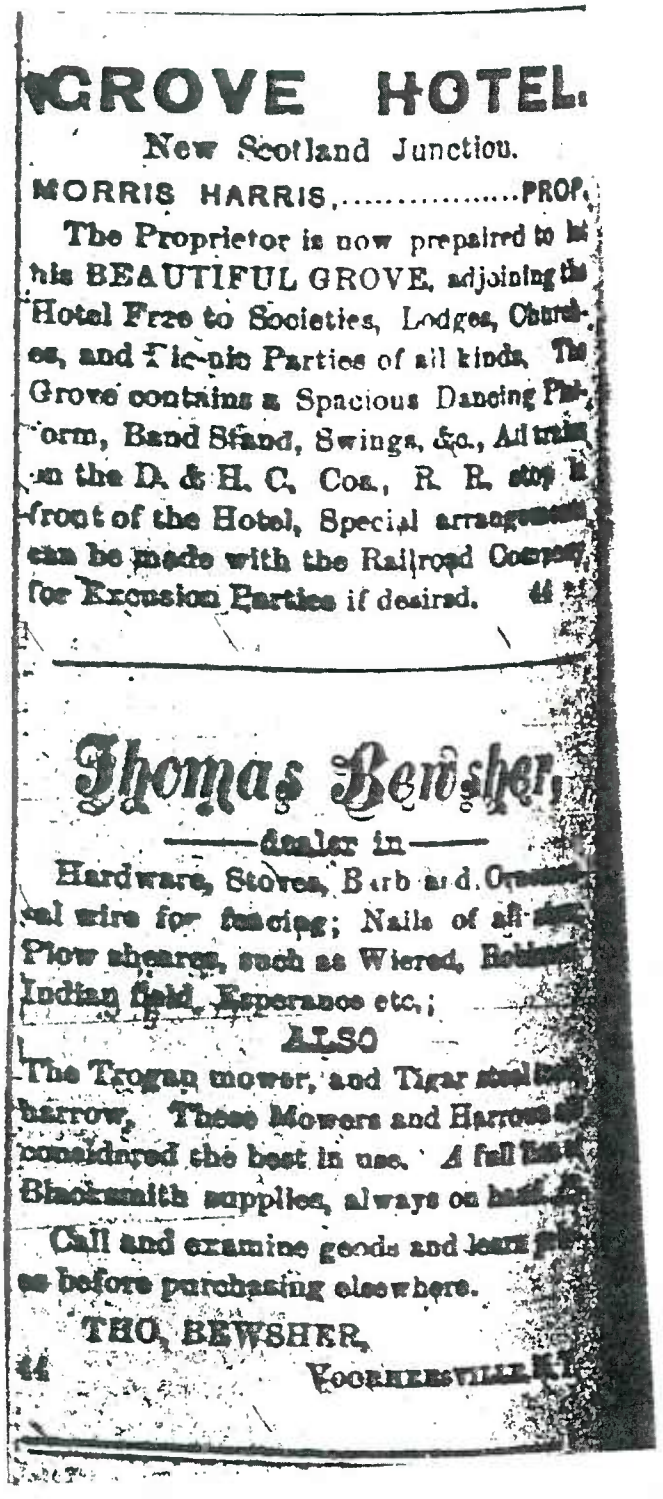
where Jacob Wright made his Wright's Celebrated Clarksville Bread. The hamlet also had among its other trades and businesses three hotels, three stores and two shoe shops in addition to an undertaker, a sure sign of civilization! New Salem had two hotels, a fruit evaporator, a milliner and dressmaking rooms in addition to its core businesses and services. Voorheesville, in turn, was listed as having three blacksmiths, one wheelwright shop, two stores, one tin and stove with general merchandise, one hotel, a depot and freight buildings.

The commodity that Voorheesville seemed to lag far behind in was political clout It did not seem to have the same level of access to town government the more southern hamlets in the town enjoyed. As noted before, there were fewer key officials elected from the Voorheesville area in part because geographically Voorheesville was out of the economic center, far from the turnpike and plank road systems situated further south.

What is odd, however, is that when Amasa Parker's Landmarks of Albany County was published about a dozen years later,[2] when Voorheesville had outstripped both hamlets in nearly every category of business and social life, New Salem and Clarksville still received about as much attention as Voorheesville did when it came to length of copy. But what is interesting is that when the content of the articles is examined, a good part of the material on New Salem and Clarksville focused on earlier times. Most of the information on Voorheesville was related to its then current activities and current businesses. New Salem and Clarksville were already much less of what they had been and Voorheesville had stretched far beyond its earlier self.

It may be going too far to suggest that historically Voorheesville had been the town's forlorn sheep, but what are we to make of Jacob Markle's comment about the village in the earlier of the two county histories "With pleasant surroundings and other inducements, the place is rapidly improving.".

To meet the 1886 publication date for the earlier county history, Markle probably had his village inventories done by '84. At this time Voorheesville was already showing significant increases in population. The Rand, McNally and Co. Business Altas of 1880 listed the population of the village at 50 inhabitants. If



GROVE HOTEL.

New Scotland Junction.

MORRIS HARRIS,.....PROP.

The Proprietor is now prepared to ... his BEAUTIFUL GROVE, adjoining the Hotel Free to Societies, Lodges, Churches, and Pic-nic Parties of all kinds. The Grove contains a Spacious Dancing Platform, Band Stand, Swings, &c., All trains on the D. & H. C. Co., R. R. stop in front of the Hotel, Special arrangements can be made with the Railroad Company for Excursion Parties if desired.

Thomas Bewsher,

—dealer in—

Hardware, Stoves, Barb and Ornamental wire for fencing; Nails of all ... Plow shears, such as Wiered, Robinson, Indian field, Esperance etc.;

ALSO

The Trojan mower, and Tiger steel ... harrow, These Mowers and Harrows ... considered the best in use. A full ... Blacksmith supplies, always on hand.

Call and examine goods and learn prices before purchasing elsewhere.

THO. BEWSHER,

Voorheesville, N.Y.

Two ads from May 1885 Knowersville Enterprise.

we can take this figure and the figure provided by Markle at face value, what we see is a village nearly tripling in population within a five year period. A visitor walking down the streets of the village would see some real life signs of that growth for Main Street was just beginning to take shape as a main street.

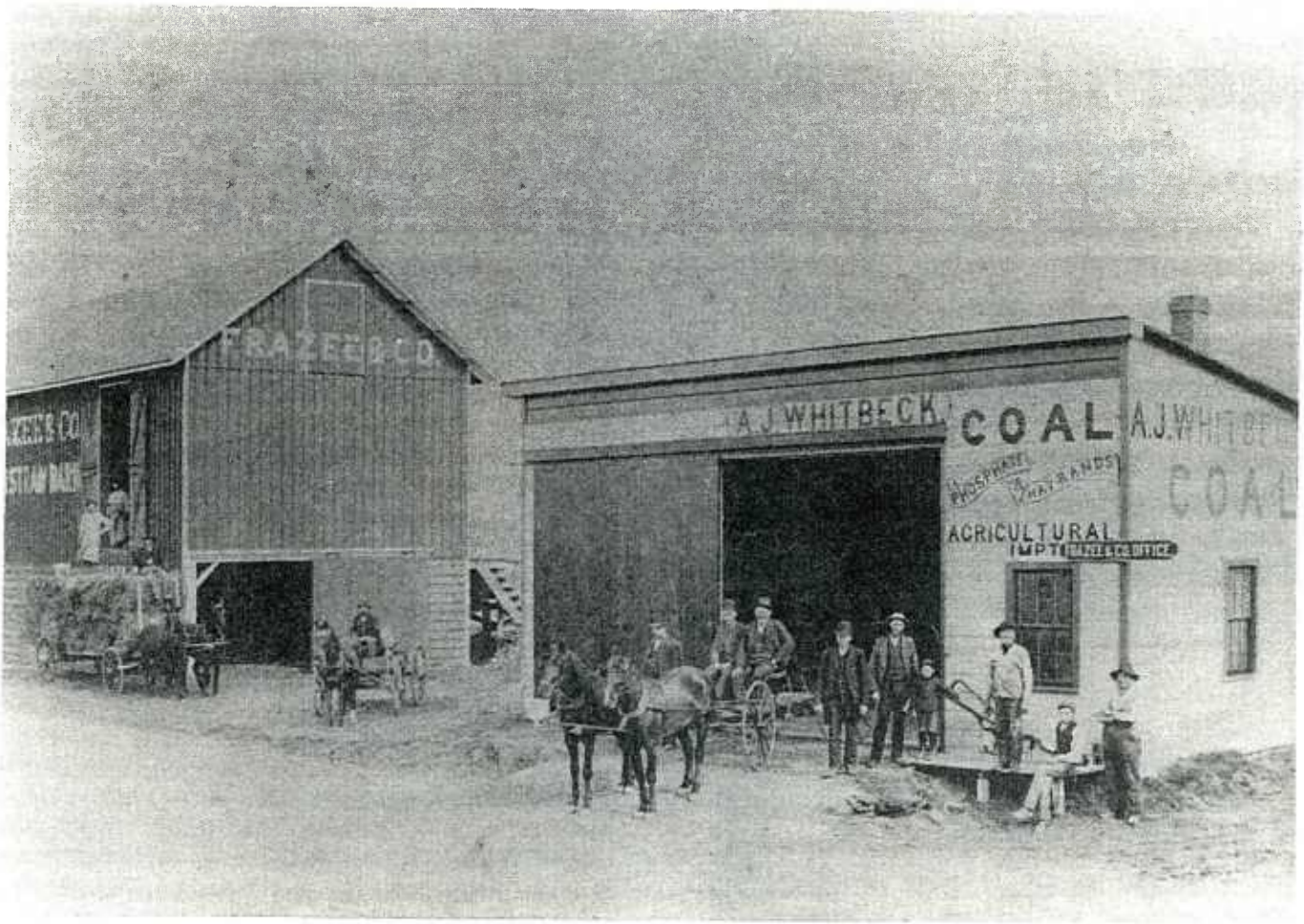
To provide some grounding for Markle's list of village enterprises in 1886, we can connect Frank Kaiser with the wheelwright mentioned. Charles Van Slyke, David Relyea and James Relyea were the three blacksmiths. The Relyea family, which had come to the New Scotland-Guilderland area from Ulster County in the late 18th century, had been blacksmiths for generations. Various members of the family took up this trade to serve the community well into the 20th century.

The single hotel referred to was the Grove that had been built about a decade earlier by Conrad Fryer. Thomas Bewsher was the tinsmith. He ran the hardware store at the end of Main Street near the depot which he began in 1880. Peter Hart was the village shoemaker at the time and Abram LaGrange ran one of the two grocery stores having begun his business about 1877. William S. Swift ran the other grocery store, having started that business in the Spring of 1880 when he moved to Voorheesville. He also served as post master at that time.

Anyone from the Voorheesville area reading Markle's comments on the village at this time is likely to find them somewhat disappointing. They center mostly on the railroads' history and the rest is little more than a laundry list of businesses and select influential citizens.What Markle failed to mention, for example, was that Slingerland and Sand had already begun to sell lots from their 38 lot subdivision in the center of the village, 19 situated on Main Street, the other 19 on Pleasant Street. Moreover,he offers no real indication of what the railroad's influence on the village had been up to this point. He fails to mention that by 1870 there were over two dozen residents in the village who worked for the railroad under section foreman Casper Louer. Six of these workers lived with Louer, three of whom were his sons.

In fact, Louer was among the first to buy a building lot from the two developers. On April 1, 1874 he bought lots one, two and three going down Main Street beginning at the corner of Main and Center. Peter Martin, who had sold the subdivision parcel to the two developers years earlier, bought the next two lots down the street. By the early 1890s William Swift would own or have had in his possession at one time close to a dozen of these lots. Some he bought to sell, others he used to build his various business enterprises such as his second grocery store later taken over by John Wands. Indeed, as lots from the subdivision were sold and built upon, the appearance of the village began to take on more of a townlike quality. And the impetus behind the look? Of course, the railroad.

From a business standpoint Slingerland and Sand's speculative enterprise was right on the money. By the mid 1880s the Voorheesville station was becoming a central shipping place for the agricultural products of farmers not only in New Scotland but in neighboring Knox, Berne and Guilderland as well. Farmers from these parts who were large producers of hay and straw



Frazee and Company hay and straw barn which Frank Bloomingdale and partner Jacob Hallenbeck bought in 1888.

and grains, now had an efficient means to get their bulky produce to markets in Albany, Brooklyn and New York City. In 1854, for example, the town produced 5,000 tons of hay, in 1865 the tonnage had grown to 11,331 1/2 tons, a number that remained steady right into the period being discussed.

In the early 1880s John Tygert had been the principal hay and straw merchant in the village. But that singular position was not to last for long, for in the fall of 1885 the firm of Hallenbeck and Bloomingdale, hay and straw merchants from Guilderland Station since 1875, moved their growing business to Voorheesville. Almost immediately they began to employ a dozen men. Business boomed for the two partners so that toward the end of 1887, Hallenbeck and Bloomingdale had bought out both the business and buildings of John Tygert. Tygert, who had also operated a lumber business with partner William Swift at this time, was cutting back on his business ventures altogether. By the end of March 1888 he had already sold out his lumber interest to Swift.

Swift's purchase of the lumber business from Tygert was another among many indications that the individuals who were to play a significant role in moving the village toward its golden age, were taking their positions. Two months earlier Frank Bloomingdale had bought out his partner Jacob Hallenbeck and during the following fall bought out the hay barn and business of a certain Mr. Frazee. He had become the principal hay and straw merchant in the village. There would be minor competitors from time to time as in February 1895 when Teunis Quackenbush and John H. Shafer started a hay business. But in Voorheesville, for over three decades, Bloomingdale was hay and straw.

It should be noted that John Tygert's abilities as a hay and straw man were not to go untapped for long. In February 1891 he left for New York City, having been hired by the hay firm of Bloomingdale and Volkamer. The Bloomingdale in question was one of Frank's two brothers who were also in the hay and straw business. Charles A. and William S. Bloomingdale were ranked among the largest commission merchants in hay and straw in Brooklyn at the time.

Frank Bloomingdale's hay and straw business increased each year so that it soon became one of the largest, if not the largest, hay and straw business in Albany County. At its peak, Bloomingdale's shipped between 6,000 and 10,000 tons of hay to New York and

Frank Bloomingdale standing at head of team in front of business (pre 1914). Today the store is Crannell's Lumber and Feed on Main Street. The sign reads:

CATALOGUES FARM WAGONS SLEIGHS HARNESS	FRANK BLOOMINGDALE DEALER IN HAY, STRAW AND GRAIN	D & H • C • CO'S COAL FERTILIZERS FARMING UTENSILS

Brooklyn and other principal markets each year. In the year between October 1887 and October 1888, for example, Bloomingdale shipped 500 carloads of hay and straw to various markets. That means he was shipping, on average, nearly a carload and a half each day. During most of this time Bloomingdale continued to employ a good dozen men to cut and press hay. In the fall of 1898, business had become so good that he set up an electric plant in his hay barn to keep his crew working both day an night, which meant until about 10 in the evening.

Bloomingdale's machinery for cutting and pressing hay was the state of the art for the time. His E.W. Ross and Co. hay cutter could chop up to 30 tons a day and his Columbia hay press, that turned out two bales to each pressing, could handle between 25 and 30 tons a day. Sometimes the baler was stretched to its limit.The hay was pressed in a 30 X 60 foot hay press building that was also used for milling grain. The building stood on 22 foot posts that were covered from top to bottom with steel sheeting.

The milling department of Bloomingdale's business was equipped with a Munson Bros. of Utica steel mill which had a capacity of grinding 100 bushels an hour. This machine was driven by a 40 HP engine and a 50 HP boiler. Bloomingdale's mill products were said to have been unsurpassed for excellence anywhere. Some years he even grew the rye he milled. In the fall of 1902, Bloomingdale had harvested 400 bushels of rye from a planting in the fields on the north side of the D&H tracks, between the tracks and North Main Street.

Clearly, for Frank Bloomingdale, the railroad was his ticket toward a resourceful living. But in some ways the tracks were a mixed blessing for the future mayor. While the tracks provided him with his bread and butter, they also brought great misery. On more than one occasion the sparks from passing locomotives would touch off a barn and as many as 60 tons of hay would literally go up in smoke in an evening. On other occasions, tramps, brought into town by the trains, would start fires in or near his barns when attempting to cook and heat themselves. On several windy nights these fires also spelled doom for the seasoned merchant.

Over the years Bloomingdale suffered losses of differing amounts in over a dozen fires. In 1888 he lost 60 tons to a blaze in the hay barn he had recently bought from John Tygert. In January of 1897 he lost not only another 60 tons of hay to fire but all his machinery for pressing as well. The loss of this fire was estimated at $3,000. Fortunately at the time, Bloomingdale had his materials insured with Lloyd's and Co and was able to recuperate a good part of his losses. For the 100 men who showed up that January night pails in hand to fight the fire, their only recourse was to stand and watch the barn and machinery blaze its way out.

Cold weather could also a destructive force for Bloomingdale as machines in the not thoroughly heated

Ad from February 1898 Enterprise

barns would fall prey to frigid temperatures and fly to pieces. In January 1886, only several months after Bloomingdale had moved to the village with his partner Hallenbeck, their hay presses flew apart from the cold on a Tuesday morning. By the following Monday Tygert and Fuller's had broken down as well and little hay was seen shipped from the depot until parts were gotten and repairs made.

It might seem odd to hear that the hay presses were in service at all during the winter season, but it was on the snow covered roads that farmers had the easiest time transporting their heavy loads of produce. The smooth roads made easy pulling for the horses and abundant

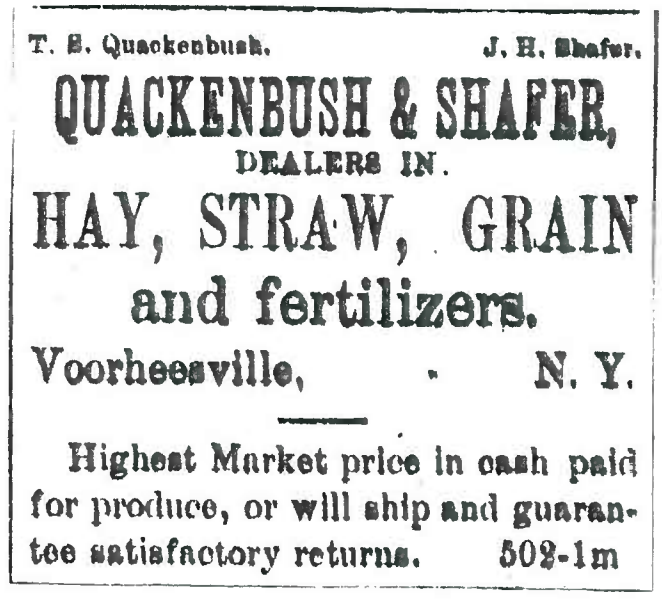
Newspaper ad for 1909

work for the hay dealers. On some winter days, once sleighing was good, farmers brought in 50 to 70 loads of hay each day until the surplus from their barns was sold.

Attached to Bloomingdale's main store building were scales(a Fairbanks Standard)for weighing both horse and wagon when they came in. The farmer would drive his horse and loaded wagon onto the scales and be weighed, unload the produce and then on his way out be weighed again-this time wagon empty. The 24 foot scale platform was said to be the largest in the county at the time.

When it came to business matters, Bloomingdale was not only energetic but inventive. In addition to marketing hay and straw, he engaged in a variety of business enterprises. As in the case of a number of other businessmen in the village he speculated from time to time. When he was able to buy a carload of some goods or materials at a good price, he was quick to let village residents know what he had to sell. This might include a load of hickory wood,apples, horses, coal and alfalfa. His deals, however, were not always cut with an eye towards profits. In mid December 1902, he purchased 30 tons of coal from a crippled car that had reached the station and distributed it to those who were 'needy'.

Bloomingdale was forever expanding his business interests. In January 1896, he began operation of a saw mill which proved successful immediately. He was also an inventor of sorts. In late February 1905 he installed machinery on his premises for manufacturing a dump wagon for which he had received a patent. Lewis Becker, a wagon maker from Rensselaer, was hired as foreman to oversee the operations. Toward the end of the century Bloomingdale also ran a foundry for a period of time.



Newspaper ad for 1894

And in the back of the store along the tracks was a large coal pocket from which he sold the celebrated D&H coal. Bloomingdale had built the pocket in 1911, the third such pocket in the village. A side track ran to the pocket for easy delivery.

It should be added here that as the exclusive dealer for McCormick farm machinery, Bloomingdale was the quintessential salesperson. When a new and innovative piece of machinery came in, he would let farmers know that he would be giving a demonstration of the machine's abilities at one of the area farms. It was not uncommon on such occasions for Bloomingdale to sell as many as two dozen McCormick mowing machines in an

afternoon. In the spring, when a new line of machinery arrived, he might advertise a free clam bake at his office on a Saturday afternoon. Farmers needing a break after the week's work, would come in to the village, enjoy a picnic while looking at the new line of equipment.

While Bloomingdale was the boss of his various crews, he did not maintain the kind of distance so often typical of worker-boss relationships. From time to time, he would sponsor an oyster dinner for his workers at one of the meat markets. After work he and his crew of workers would dine, have some laughs and after dinner enjoy a good cigar with an after dinner drink.

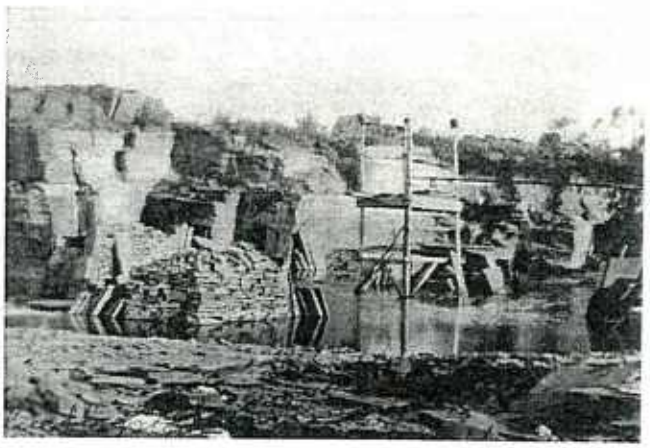
As we will see in the chapter on government and incorporation, the hay and straw merchant was the first elected president(mayor) of the village. Before that he had held various other appointed and elected political positions. In 1885 he served as Constable for a time and in the November 1894 election he won the assembly seat for the First Assembly District of Albany County after an unsuccessful attempt the year before. In 1894 he finally defeated Democrat George Kelly by a 4,491 to 1,036 margin(the Prohibition candidate Henry Baxter receiving 159 votes). He was reelected in 1895 only to lose to Kelly the following year. During the 1895 assembly he served as a member of committees on railroads, agriculture and Indian Affairs.

During his tenure in state government, he is said to have written the bill that released property to the city of Albany administration to build Lincoln Park in the southeast part of the city. After suffering for several years from an illness that forced him to retire from business, he died in January 1933 at the age of 80. In the decade before and after the turn of the century, Bloomingdale had the largest amount of taxable property in the village and was considered to be one of the wealthiest, if not the wealthiest, person in Voorheesville.

4. A Mill and Apple Cider Town

When summer began the year Howell and Tenney's county history came out, Voorheesville, like many small farming communities, had an unemployment problem on its hands. The mechanization of farm chores through industrial age machinery had enabled farmers to get more work done with increasingly fewer hands. One result was that many local residents who hired themselves out as laborers were able to find on average only two days work a week. Enough of these workers could be found lounging about the village day after day with little else to do but gossip and drink. The hot summer sun must have made the days seem even longer than they were.

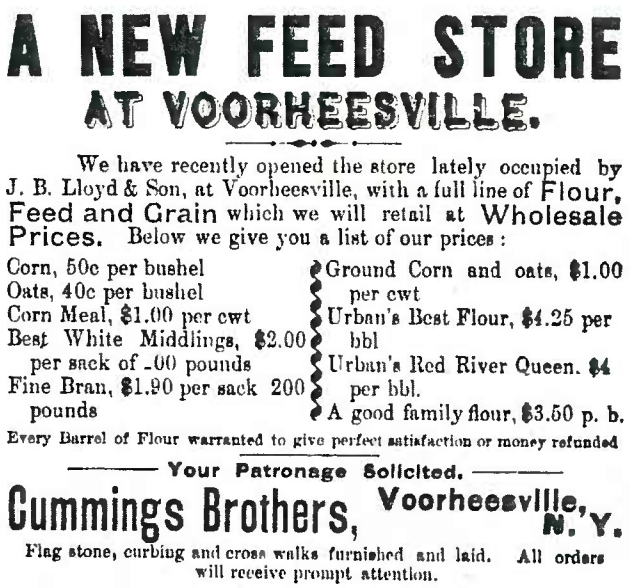
In communities that were not blessed with new businesses brought by the railroad, those without work tended to migrate to the cities. But for Voorheesville



Flagstone quarry in Reidsville, New York. This is most likely the quarry mined by the Cummings Brothers, John Flagler, Hiram Brate and Fred Conger after forming their stock company.

and other communities where the railroad began to generate business, new jobs emerged so that many workers were able to find new kinds of work. It is worth noting, therefore, that by 1893, the employment picture had changed totally in the village. Everyone in the village willing and able to work was gainfully employed. In July, the paper reported that harvest help was scarce.

The availability of work was due directly to the new businesses that were being generated in the village. We already mentioned that Frank Bloomingdale had picked up over a dozen men by 1886 to help him in his various ventures. Moreover there was the new subdivision on Main and High Streets being built, as well as a new church (Presbyterian); there was an increase in the number of houses elsewhere as well as new stores. In 1886 William Swift had sold his grocery store on Main



John and James Cummings opened their feed mill in early 1895. Their stone business had been in operation in the village for nearly a decade.

Oscar Vunck (in straw hat) with crew in front of feed mill on Main Street which he bought from John and James Cummings in the first decade of the century.

Top ad from Albany City Directory for 1890; bottom ad from the following year after Burton and Cory opened their cider mill in Farlin (formerly Voorheesville) N.Y.

Street to William Matthias of New Salem and by the following summer was putting up a new store two doors further south. The masons and carpenters and laborers in the village had as much work as they wanted.

There were other indications of growth as well. In August 1885 a derrick had been erected at the junction of the two railroads for unloading blue stone that quarrymen John and James Cummings hauled by horse and wagon from Reidsville.[1] Within a decade James Cummings had moved into the village from Reidsville and shortly afterward his brother John moved there from Albany.[2] Part of the reason for the move was to better oversee their stone business as well as the feed mill they had built on Main Street in 1894. In early 1895 their grain and feed business was flourishing and by May of the same year they had formed a stock company to sell bluestone that was being shipped from the station. The three other principals in the company were John Flagler, Hiram Brate and Fred Conger.

Not only did business ventures such as those initiated by the Cummings brothers provide steady work but they infused the village with a sense of enthusiasm and hope. A new business was cause for celebration for everyone. When the two quarrymen opened their feed mill on Main Street (later the site of Oscar then his son George Vunck's mill), they held a grand social at which the Voorheesville band played from its repertoire. The kind of work the two brothers were engaged in hardly allowed for pretense. As the paper made special note of the event, it was for all, "elite and otherwise."

But before the Cummings Brothers had settled in, another business was started in the village that was to have an impact on village economy for over a half century. That was the cider mill that Burton and Cory began to erect in 1890. In June of that year Charles H. Burton and A. Elmer Cory of Albany purchased from Conrad Fryer three acres of land on the north side of the D&H tracks (the corner of Grove Street and Voorheesville Avenue). The land was part of a parcel that villagers referred to as the "gravel pit" because it was used as a source of gravel. Fryer probably sold loads of the gravel to the town for use on the roads.

When Fryer sold the land to the two cider makers, he was careful to include in the deed certain restrictions that would protect the interests of his hotel on the adjoining parcel. Two of the stipulations were that the land in question never be used to build or run a hotel or a saloon and that spirituous drinks never be sold on the property.

Burton and Cory has no intention of doing so. They were cider and vinegar men. At the time of the purchase, Burton had been owner of a cider and vinegar manufacturing plant at 78 Green Street in Albany for more than a decade. He had bought the business in 1882 which had been started in 1839 by Francis Vail. It was considered to be not only the oldest but at the time the best manufacturing plant in the state.

The two cider men wasted no time in achieving their goals. By mid-July a switch was being put in to connect the mill with the main track. The switch, which ran in front of the Grove Hotel in an easterly direction to the end of Grove Street, was later to become the source of conflict between the Fryers (Conrad and his two sons Ira and Harrison) and the cider makers. Regardless, by the end of the month, the masons had finished their 40 X 100 foot cellar walls and by mid-August nearly 20 carpenters were at work framing the building. At the end of the month, the building was being painted by Flockton and Radley and the new 60 hp engine and machinery were being installed. In the third week of September Burton and Cory celebrated their opening with a grand "hop" to which all the villagers were invited. It was a time of celebration not only for the two cidermen but once again for the whole village. The presence of the mill was another indication that Voorheesville was turning into a mini industrial-manufacturing metropolis.

The week the building was completed an ad appeared in the Enterprise informing apple growers that Burton and Cory were looking for apples and would pay between $2 and $2.50 a barrel. To facilitate delivery, they announced they had set up outlets in Altamont, Fullers Station and Quaker Street where orchardists could drop off their produce. In its first week of operation the mill was making 9,000 gallons of cider a day. By early December all the available apples had been processed and the business was closed for the season. The village's latest venture was considered a grand success.

During the winter Burton and Cory realized just how much of a success, because in April of the following year (1891), they began grading for an addition. This would include several tanks, each holding 1,000 barrels of cider. On the first of October A. Elmer Cory with four

The Empire Cider and Vinegar Works.

Albany investors formed a corporation and the Empire Cider and Vinegar Company was born.[3] Shortly afterwards the new stock company bought Charles Burton out.

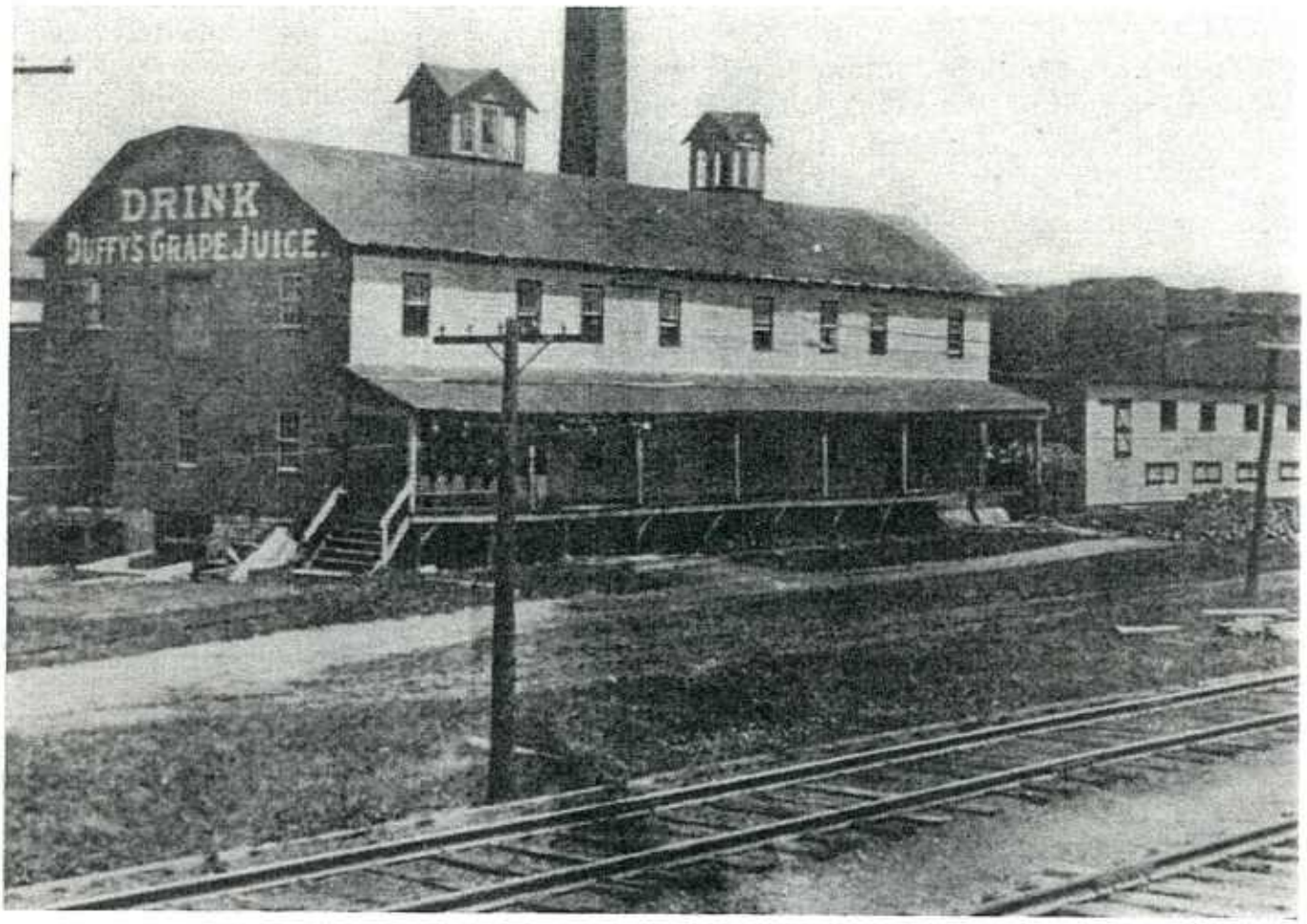
During the mill's second season, production had picked up considerably. Consequently Cory decided to keep the mill open nights availing himself of the electric light jets that had been installed the previous September. Workers could be found peeling and grinding until at least 10 p.m. some having started early that morning. During this second year of operation, 20,000 barrels of apples were received by the mill giving area farmers a continuing and extraordinary outlet for their cider apples.

In general, during its earliest years, the mill stayed open for about 70 days. Grinding would begin about the third week in September once Cory had advertised in the paper that he was looking for apples. Area farmers would begin making their collections of cider apples immediately and then haul them to the mill. Usually by the third week in November the tanks were full and the doors closed for the season. This schedule would change several decades later when Duffy-Mott kept the operation going year around.

Each new season witnessed a gradual increase in production so that by 1900 over 3,000 bushels were being ground daily, the machines grinding the full 70 days of the season. Because of the increased rate of production, there were not enough locally grown apples to supply the mill. By 1903 and 1904 it became more common to see 10 to 15 carloads of apples being shipped in from surrounding areas. However, toward the end of the century prices paid for cider apples had dipped considerably. In 1897, the cider mill was paying 40 cents a barrel and in 1899, 25 cents a barrel. In 1902 the price was still at 25 cents a barrel.

In 1899 a new dimension was added to the plant as the Empire Cider and Vinegar Company pressed its first carload of grapes and began producing grape juice. Expansion continued as an evaporator was added in 1903 and in 1904 foundations were laid for five large tanks to store the freshly processed drink. This delicious nectar young school children would stop to sample on their way home in the afternoon. Arthur Gregg tells how on more than one occasion he and his schoolmates would imbibe more than their little systems could tolerate, forcing them to make speedy forays into the brush on their way home.

By the early 1900s the plant saw new ownership in a Mr. Duffy of the American Fruit and Produce Company



In the early 1900s Duffy from the American Fruit and Produce Company bought the cider mill. The production of grape juice became a specialty.

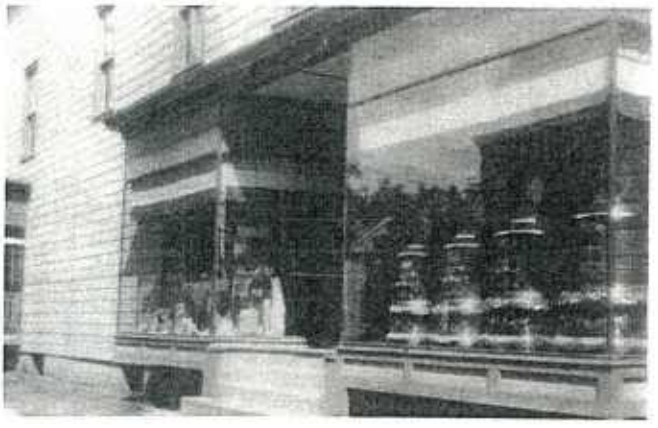
and also of malt whiskey fame. For Duffy the Voorheesville plant was one of about 20 he owned and operated. Needless to say, the new owner was less than impressed with his first visit to the plant in 1903. While he and the overseer of the plant, Mr. Bigelow, were walking through in December, two of the plant's 500-gallon tanks toppled over and sent 1,000 gallons of cider flushing everywhichway.

Although the plant continued to prosper, by 1914 it was put on the market. However, it did not sell for three years which explains why an advertisement for the mill was not included in the Voorheesville Athletic Association's field program for September 1915. By June 1917, the mill's new owners were the Empire Cider and Vinegar Company of Rochester. After that the plant would be known as the Duffy-Mott Company.

Shortly before the plant was sold, there was an incident that was to bring the Voorheesville Hose Co. No. 1 rushing to the rescue. The story is worth telling for what it says about the tenor of the war period. Just before being sold in May 1917, the plant had been set ablaze one night causing over $1,000 in damages. There was strong suspicion that the fire was the work of an arsonist. Just before the fire was set in the idle plant, rumors were bandied about that the mill was going to be bought by a firm who would turn it into a munitions factory. When the fire was discovered, villagers considered it the work of German sympathizers.

There was some evidence to support the claim that the fire was started by an arsonist for, after the firemen had put the blaze out, they noticed a quantity of waste in the rear of the building that had been soaked in kerosene They also saw automobile tracks impressed in the field nearby indicating a hasty departure. Window panes has been broken on the north side of the building where the fire was started and there was an empty match box near the oil-soaked waste. Residents reported to the authorities that earlier in the evening they heard a machine driven toward Albany on a seldom-used road to State Road to Albany. But nothing further was heard of the incident.

When the Duffy-Mott plant in Goshen burned down in July 1918, any machinery that the company could salvage from the Orange County plant was brought up to Voorheesville. The Voorheesville plant was enlarged once again making it one of the largest cider and vinegar plants in the Northeast.By 1950 the Duffy-Mott plant was employing over 200 people on a regular basis,



The front of the Joslin Brothers Hardware Store at the foot of Main Street about 1917-1918. Parlor stoves in the window. The window glass was insured by the two hardwaremen.

using as many as 30 million pounds of apples a year as well as several carloads of prunes. The Voorheesville plant is said to have produced the first commercial bottle of prune juice east of the Rockies. The mill also produced cider vinegar, apple sauce, evaporated apples, jellies, jams and marmalade.

But in 1956, after 65 years of near continuous operation the mill closed, the property sold to Kenneth Warren. In 1957 the name Duffy-Mott is no longer found on the village tax rolls. The loss of the mill at that time was an another indication that the golden age that the railroad had wrought over a half century earlier, was on the wane.

5. *Quality Cider Up The Road*

When Voorheesville is described as a cider production community of note, the reference is always made to Duffy-Mott or to its predecessor the Empire Cider and Vinegar Works, thereby keeping its finest cider maker a best-kept secret. Long before Burton and Cory came to Voorheesville to purchase land for their Voorheesville plant, William H. Ferguson and his brother, Andrew, had been running a prosperous cider mill on Voorheesville Avenue on the village side of State Farm Road. Except that State Farm Road did not exist at that time.

W. H. FERGUSON & BROS.,
Makers of Sweet Cider, Refined Cider, Sparkling Baldwin Cider.
SOUND REFINED CIDER A SPECIALTY.
Also, WHITE WINE VINEGAR AND CIDER VINEGAR.
DEALERS IN NEW AND SECOND-HAND BARRELS.
DEPOT, 61 QUAY STREET, ALBANY, N. Y.
MILL AT VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y.

Ferguson Brothers ad from 1883 Albany City Directory

CIDER!

Farmers can exchange their cider apples at our mill for good Old Cider Vinegar, WHICH WILL KEEP PICKLES, or for 7 gals. of new cider for a barrel of apples. Or they can have their apples made up separately by paying 2 cts. per gal. and receive all the cider their apples will make.

FERGUSON BROS.
At the Old Mill.

Ferguson Brothers ad from 1892 Enterprise.

The Ferguson family had owned the farm since 1812 when Lott Ferguson moved from the Black Creek area of New Scotland after an unsuccessful farming attempt there. On their new farm the Fergusons first raised principally grains and stock. But sometime before the end of the Civil War, cider and vinegar became their principal products. Business prospered for the brothers because in 1865 William and Andrew erected a new mill equipped with more efficient equipment, especially large wooden smashers. In fact the two brothers were forever updating their cider making technology. Again between 1881 and 1882 they revamped their mill. Inside the new 52 X 54 foot structure they had set up a 16 hp engine to run the latest in improved grinders and presses. The new equipment must have enabled them to raise their level of production considerably for in 1883 an ad appeared in the Albany City Directory for the Ferguson Brothers as producers of cider and vinegar. Their Albany address is listed as 61 Quay Street and their products are listed as cider, vinegar and dealers in new and second hand barrels. In the directory for the following year their business ad reads sweet cider, refined cider and sparkling Baldwin cider.

While the cider made by the Empire Cider and Vinegar Company was said to be of the highest quality, the products of the Ferguson Brothers seem to have been of a whole other order. The Fergusons were so confident of

Overview of Voorheesville from High (Pleasant) Street. Bewsher's Grocery to far left, Bloomingdale's to left center, Vunck's feed mill to right, cider mill in background. Notice water tower on other side of tracks from Vunck's.

the quality of their cider that they not only sold it locally but traveled to a number of state fairs to sell it. In the late 1880s they traveled to New Jersey and Maryland introducing fairgoers to Voorheesville's best nectar.

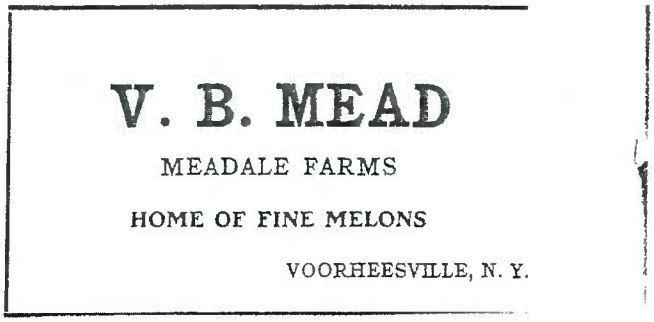
The level of the quality of the Ferguson cider and vinegar products can be attributed not only to William Ferguson's knowledge of cultivating good cider apples but also to his studious grasp of the cider making process. For 12 years he had been an avid student of chemistry, particularly the chemical change of cider when it passes from juice to finished cider or vinegar. In fact, William was regarded as somewhat of an expert on the process, his advice frequently sought by cider makers throughout the state.

William also wrote in a variety of journals on the subject and himself invented several improvements for the cider making process. From 1882 to 1891 a good deal of his time was spent on the road selling and erecting vinegar machines. Whenever the Albany County Farmer's Institute had a topic related to his area of expertise, the farmers were proud to have William as a speaker. At one of the annual institutes held in Voorheesville in February 1898, Ferguson was listed on the program to speak on the care of fruit trees

The Fergusons were also gifted pomologists. In addition to raising and selling apple, pear, peach and Japan plum seedlings from their farm, they also sold sprays to control disease and pests and offered expert advice to orchardists on the control of harmful pests. At the 1894 State Fair, William received first prize for a marketing display of his apples in addition to first prizes for 10 varieties and blue ribbons for Swars, Canada Reds, Oxnobles, Willow Twigs and York Pippins

In the 1880s the two brothers built a box factory which reportedly used several thousand feet of lumber annually. In the fall of 1894 they introduced a fruit evaporator into their business, allowing them to sell large quantities of their products to customers in Germany and France. In 1895, Oscar Ferguson, another brother, added to the family business by building a grist mill. Grains were milled on and sold from the farm. In season the family employed about 20 people in the cider production process, cutting about 150 barrels of apples per day.

The Ferguson farm was the next farm east of Conrad



Vites Mead ad in 1915. Mead purchased the Ferguson family farm in 1913 and kept up the tradition of horticulture.

Fryer's. It's unknown how cordial a relationship existed between the two farming families but we do know that in May 1890 the Fergusons had asked Fryer to purchase three acres of land along the D&H tracks, the same parcel of land that Burton and Cory were to buy the following month. Whether anything inamicable occurred between the two Voorheesville farmers is unknown but Fryer chose to sell the land to Burton and Cory, thus giving Voorheesville two cider-making plants.

While William attended to the more inventive and scholarly aspects of the cidermaking business, his brother Andrew attended to the marketing of the product for over 40 years, from about 1875 until shortly before his death in December 1916. William died in January 1912. In 1913 Vites Mead bought the much renowned farm and continued as an orchardist, himself planting several hundred pear and cherry trees. After the farm was sold, Mrs. Mattie Ferguson and her family moved into the Harris House where Mrs. Ferguson conducted the hotel's restaurant business for a time.

"Up here across from Marie Abelman's there were 45 acres—a man by the name of Frank Alvey plowed it one fall with three horses and a riding plow all by himself. I used to hook up four horses all by myself on a three section harrow side by side and harrow with them all day—6 o'clock in the morning until 6 at night."

— Abram Furman

CHAPTER THREE

An Enterprising Business Community

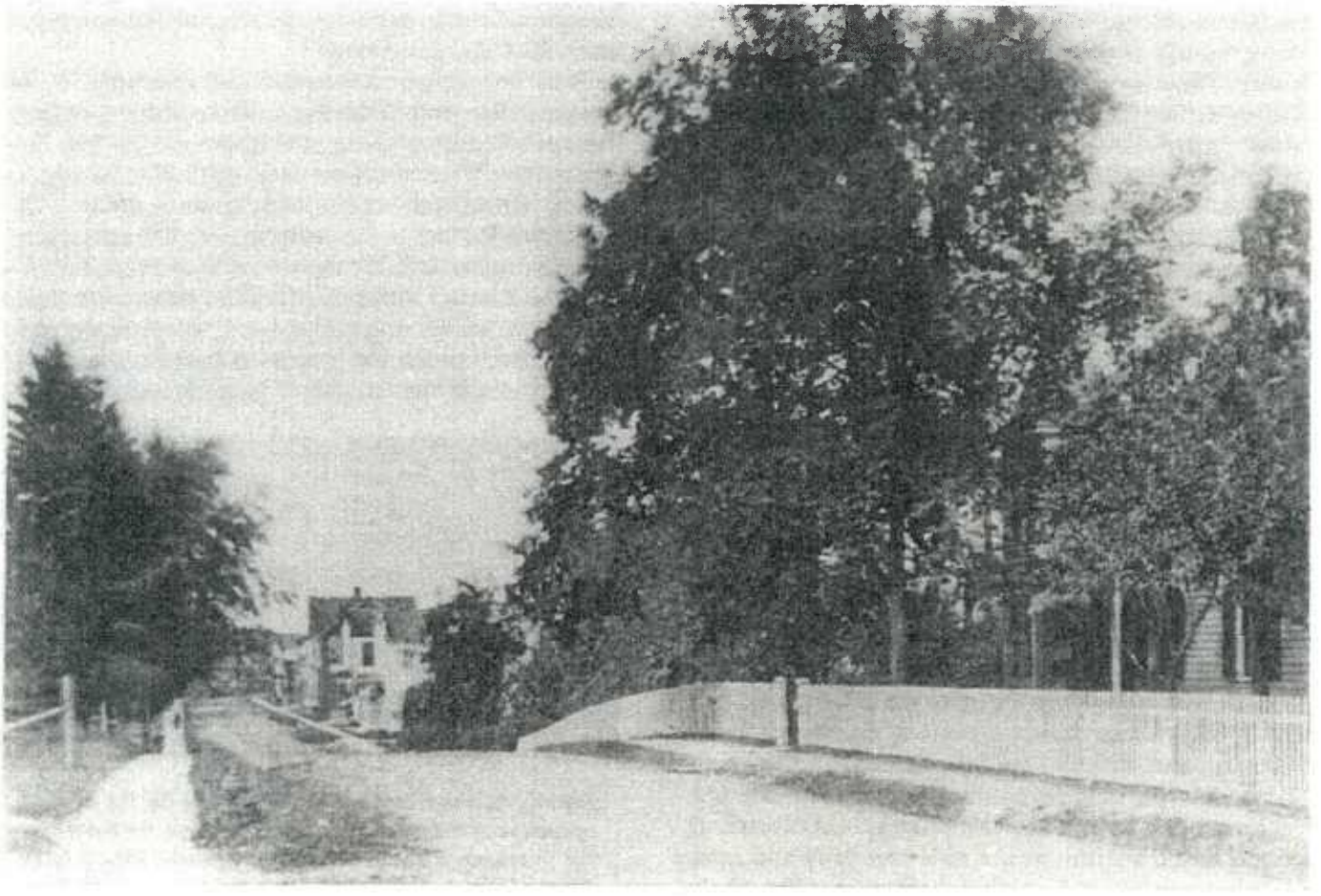
1. Cooperative Ventures

As Voorheesville began to take shape as a business community, the village began to develop a collective image of itself as a community on the move. Many villagers considered their Voorheesville to be the latest version of the cat's enterprising meow. Anything was possible. Indeed from time to time the village correspondent for the newspaper would reflect this attitude, waxing eloquent about the strides the village had already taken, begging the question whether there could ever be a limit to such growth.

What is interesting to observe is that this collective image was not puffery; it translated itself into collective action. When opportunities for new business ventures did arise, the community's business leaders huddled together to form corporations and mini stock companies and try the new venture cooperatively. Examples of these joint ventures can be found in the canning factory that was established, a cigar manufacturing venture, a shirt factory, the village's first foundry and a savings and loan association. The ventures were not always successful economically but their existence reflects the high energy level and intense attitude of many who lived in the village during this era.

2. A Canning Factory

Since a stamping process to make tin cans cheaply had been invented in 1847, the sale of canned foods in the U. S. grew rapidly. By 1870 about 30 million cans of food were being sold annually. The canning process



Even as Voorheesville grew into a bustling business community, the village still maintained a quiet rural quality as is evident from this view down Main Street. Thomas Bewsher's house is to the right with picket fence.

The canning factory, as other businesses, was dependent on the depot crew to move things along efficiently. Pictured here the depot crew from 1930 (l to r); Phil Pettinger (clerk), John Hodges (telegrapher) and Arthur Wright (freight agent).

had become a major industry. Perhaps it was knowledge of this trend that influenced a number of Voorheesville citizens in the summer of 1896 to think about starting a canning factory in the village. These thoughts were turned into action on Wednesday, October 13 when a number of village businessmen gathered at the Harris House to talk about the feasibility of starting such a factory. Those who showed up thought it a great idea. However, they decided that before such an operation could become a reality, at least $5,000 in stock subscriptions would be needed.

The following week a second meeting was held. At this meeting it was reported that $2,500 had already been subscribed. This news increased enthusiasm for the project to the point that a decision was made to go full steam ahead. Within two weeks a parcel of land for the factory was purchased from Garry Hotaling and by the middle of November, due to the energetic efforts of Clarence Newland, the full goal of $5,000 in subscriptions was nearly reached.

By Thanksgiving, a directorship for the new company had been chosen and work on the foundation begun. The seven directors were: Clarence Newland, William S. Swift, Alden E. Oliver, Henry Spoore, Albert Borst, E. Dayton Joslin and William Crannell. A short time later Crannell dropped out and was replaced by M.F. Barber.

In January 1897 Newland, the largest shareholder with 12, was chosen to be the manager of the new plant. Doctor Oliver was chosen president, E. Dayton Joslin secretary and Henry Spoore treasurer. The new enterprise was to be known as the Voorheesville Canning and Preserving Company. By February, 14,000 cans had arrived at the station for the new company and area apple farmers had still another market for selling their produce.

The factory was opened for business in mid-February with 55 persons hired to take their places in a system that ran like clockwork. In its first week of operation, the factory filled 1,400 cans each day and, in the second week, that number rose to nearly 2,000 a day. Within three weeks of operation the company started shipping its products to New York City. By mid-March another 10,000 cans were filled and the plant closed for the season, by all accounts a very successful one.

Work in the factory was set up in an assembly line fashion, similar to that of many such processing plants in those days. For some workers who had spent a good part of their lives involved in the more organic processes of the farm, the clockwork atmosphere would prove a difficult challenge. They were asked to behave as part of the inner workings of a machine. But it was work and put bread on the table.

The canning process began with apples being carried to the upper floor where they were peeled by six young men. These peelers were paid at a rate of three cents a box, each box holding nearly a bushel of apples. The peeled apples then ran down a chute to the lower level floor where they were distributed in pans to the women and girls who quartered, pared off remaining peelings and cut out poor spots. Paid at a rate of 25 cents per hundred pounds, these workers were able to make between 50 cents and $1 a day depending on their dexterity. For comparison purposes, farm laborers made about $1 a day at this time.[1]

Once the apples were pared and quartered by the women, they were taken to a table where four boys worked intently packing the apple pieces into four quart cans. These packers were paid three cents per dozen. Some of these workers made a dollar a day which means they were packing over 400 cans a day. After being packed, the cans were then passed slowly by a reel through a trough of boiling water after which they were sealed and cooked and taken to the store house. Throughout the process Albert Borst and T.C. White counted the number of pounds and cans filled

Equally as important as the depot crew for the smooth operation of the road was the section crew. Pictured here the Voorheesville area section crew about 1912 (l to r): Nicola Uliano, Pellegrino Michele, _____, Michael Ricci (section foreman), Anthony Valenti, Anthony Ricci, Francesco D'Arpino (kneeling on handcart), _____.

while Henry Spoore recorded the tallies.

There is no apparent reason why a night watchman was needed at the plant at this time but one was hired in mid-June 1897. The most obvious hypothesis is that, since these were hard economic times, the watchman was hired to protect the stored foodstuffs from being pilfered by tramps needing something to eat. The watchman might also be alerted to possible fires started near the building.

However, by July the night watchman was out of a job as the canning factory was being auctioned off by the sheriff on the 24th of that month. For some reason Newland must have dropped out and taken with him his 12 shares. At auction the factory was purchased by attorney Stephen Daring for $1,650 a far cry from the original $5,175 that went into making the plant operational. Some wondered why Daring was interested in the plant but the attorney was not acting in his own behalf but for William Swift, E. Dayton Joslin, Henry Spoore, Robert Martin and Albert Borst, its new owners.

The newly structured corporation did not lose a beat. As fall approached, the factory was back in operation with 200 cans of apples put out as samples. However, upon reopening, only about 30 people were employed. Nevertheless, by December the skeleton crew had already shipped two carloads of apples with another two ready to go.

There does not seem to have been another change in ownership but in the following fall, 1898, the name of the factory was changed to the Hudson Valley Canning Company. At this time, the factory began putting up tomatoes for the first time. The owners must have experienced a supply problem because, when the season was done, they began considering making contracts with area farmers for the following season's tomato crop. By February 1899, the factory had begun negotiations for 50 acres of tomatoes.

In August 1899 when the factory opened its doors, it had upped its work force to 50 workers. This included men women, boys and girls. And, as in the previous season, the canners were putting up both apples and tomatoes. And this year more than ever. By September about 4,000 cans a day were being readied for shipment.

From December 1899, when workers had finished with the actual processing and were pasting labels on the cans, until July 1904, there is no mention of the factory in any newspaper accounts. In July 1904 a Mr. F.W. Bird of Plainsfield leased the canning factory building with the intention of starting a creamery.

Ad for Schell's cigars in The Farlin News-Letter, March 1892.

3. *Cigar Making*

The canning factory was not the business community's first attempt at a corporate venture. Earlier in the decade, an attempt had been made to form a corporation to manufacture cigars. That was in March 1892. But unlike the canning factory, this project never really got off the ground.

The three principals in the cigar making venture were Leroy Schell, a Mr. Palley and Peter Hummell, all of whom subscribed for $1,000 to start the corporation. The main impetus behind the project was, as might be expected, Leroy Schell himself. Schell had called a meeting at his new Schell and Co. building on Main Street for the purpose of discovering who might be interested in forming a stock company to manufacture cigars.

For Schell the manufacture of cigars would be nothing new. He had begun his own wholesale business sometime in 1890. At that time he had moved to Rufus Flansburgh's house adjoining the store and began rolling cigars. These he sold under the names of "Splendid," "Base Hit," "My Opinion" and "Blue Hen." Business had been good for Schell for by November he had hired one of the village masons, Ed O'Brien, to lay the foundation for a new cigar factory.

To some extent then, Schell was looking for village residents to back his ongoing operation. With shares selling at $100 apiece, nearly $4,100 of the needed $5,000 was collected in short order. Somewhat ironically, one of the subscribers was Morris Harris, owner of the Harris House. Harris had himself been a manufacturer of cigars in Albany decades before. It is likely that Schell sought a tip or two from the former cigarmaker as he went along.

But despite the availability of Harris' expertise and the apparent enthusiasm of the community for the project as a whole, by mid April it had fizzled. Schell, however, did not abandon going into business altogether. By September 1892 he had opened a hay and feed store on Main Street probably in the building he had originally planned for his cigar factory. Clearly Schell had taken the correct route, because by December he was already putting an addition on the building to handle the increased volume of business.

Leroy Schell's store on Main Street. Bewsher's Grocery Store to left.

In August 1902 Schell's business had improved to the point that he was able to hire William Gilbert as his foreman. Gilbert had moved to the village from the family farm in Guilderland about six years earlier. He was to remain foreman of the business for only six months for by mid February of the following year, Schell had sold him the business and moved to Kingston. Gilbert remained in business for at least another decade.

Leroy Schell is another example of the kind of ingenuity that was prevalent in Voorheesville at the time. We already mentioned that Frank Bloomingdale had received a patent for a dump wagon. Schell too had received a patent for a rotary can opener which he had invented. In hopes of making some modest sales he would take his invention with him to various localities and proudly give demonstrations. These he gave in Voorheesville and surrounding villages such as Altamont on a number of occasions.

We need to say something further about the making of cigars here. Although Schell's corporate venture in cigars did not turn out as anticipated, Voorheesville was not to be without a cigar factory for long. Before the century was out, a Guilderland Center cigarmaker, George Hallenbeck, had moved his business to the village.[1]

It might seem odd to some to see so much interest in

G. A. HALLENBECK

MANUFACTURER OF

FINE HAVANA AND DOMESTIC

CIGARS

VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y.

Ad for George Hallenbeck's cigars, 1915.

cigars, but cigars were a major part of the life of many men in the 19th century. Weddings, births, the winning of a lottery, these were all special occasions for somebody to hand out cigars and for the men to enjoy a smoke together. When the men gathered in the village grocery stores at night to discuss the day's activities and gossip, cigars would often be part of the ritual. Indeed in winter, when the doors and windows of the stores were closed tight, clouds of smoke grew so thick in the room that it became difficult to see who was sitting across the way. Periodically someone would have to get up and throw open the doors and windows to clear the place out.

We also know that in more elite circles Victorian men would remove themselves after dinner to separate quarters for brandy and a good cigar. Hallenbeck's business, therefore, was a key part of 19th century life for men at all social levels. When Hallenbeck first moved to the village in August 1898, he bought a house and lot from Frank Bloomingdale on Main Street next to Wands' grocery store. Behind the house he broke ground for the factory in October and, within two months, he was ready to roll cigars. By the following spring, 1899, the cigar business had moved along nicely. He had already hired D.A. Hutton as his travelling salesman, a position that Fred McMillen took over in 1901 and in 1904 was handled by Aaron Blessing.

At some point, another village resident, Luther Law, began manufacturing cigars as well. In September 1901

VOORHEESVILLE

Retail Feed Market.

38 lb. Clipped Oats,	29c
Urban's Best Flour,	4.00
CORN,	43c
CORN MEAL,	80c
CRACKED CORN,	80c
WHITE MIDS,	$18.00 per ton
Coarse Bran,	$15.50 "

Remember at Schell's you get **Full Weight** and honest treatment, also that we now do all our own grinding, and all our Ground Feed is of **Best Quality** and **Not Adulterated.**

L. S. Schell, Voorheesville, N. Y.

Ad for Schell's feed store dated October 1895. Was Schell implying something in the ad?

he is mentioned in the paper as having an ongoing business. He had taken a helper and moved to Thomas Bewsher's house on Main Street.

An early April edition of the paper that year reported that the cigar factory had closed down for a period of time. If this was Hallenbeck's, it did not stay closed for long, for Hallenbeck was to remain in business for nearly three decades longer.

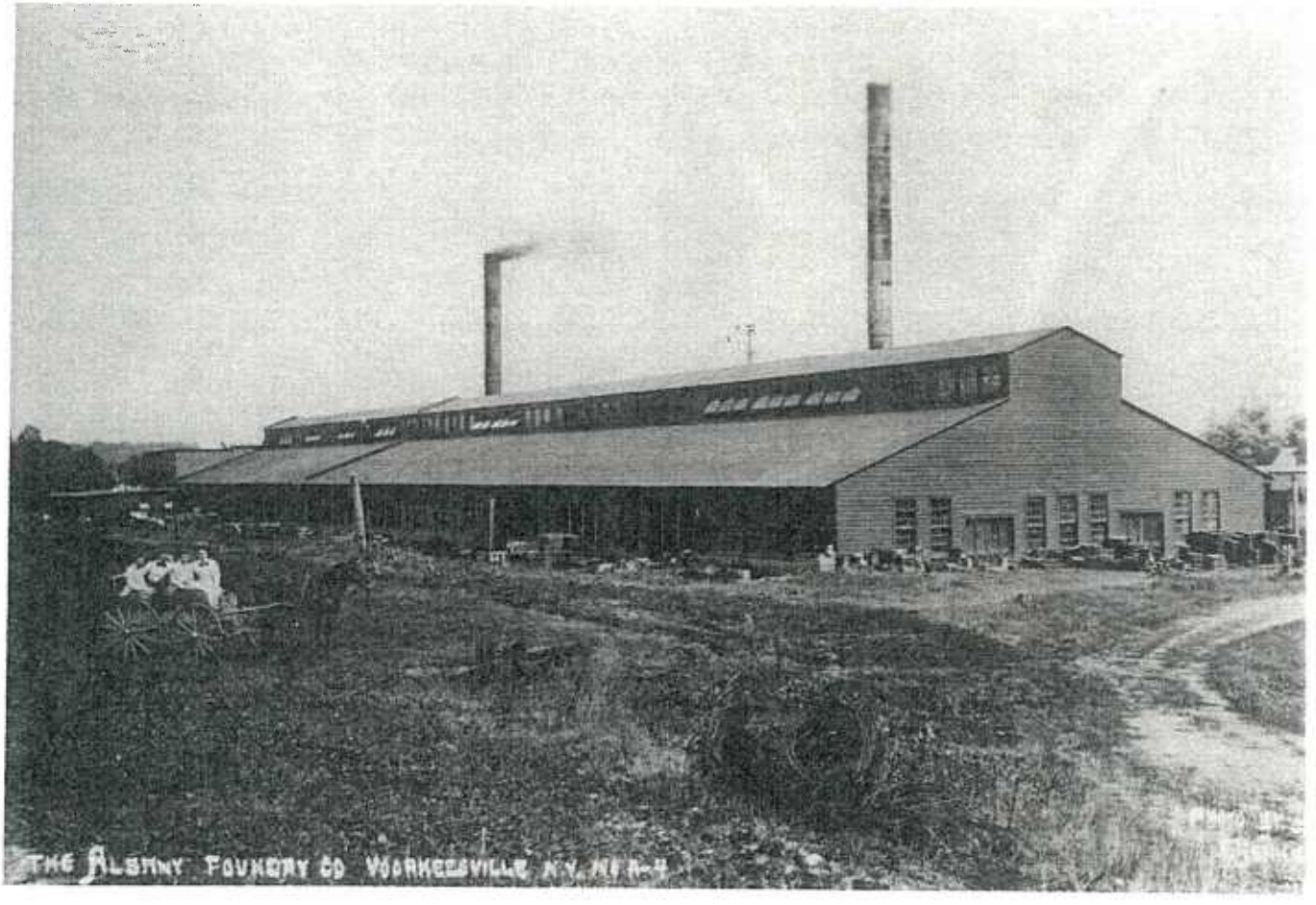
Among his varied business ventures, Frank Bloomingdale also found himself in the foundry business. This ad from April 1902.

4. Malleable Iron Works

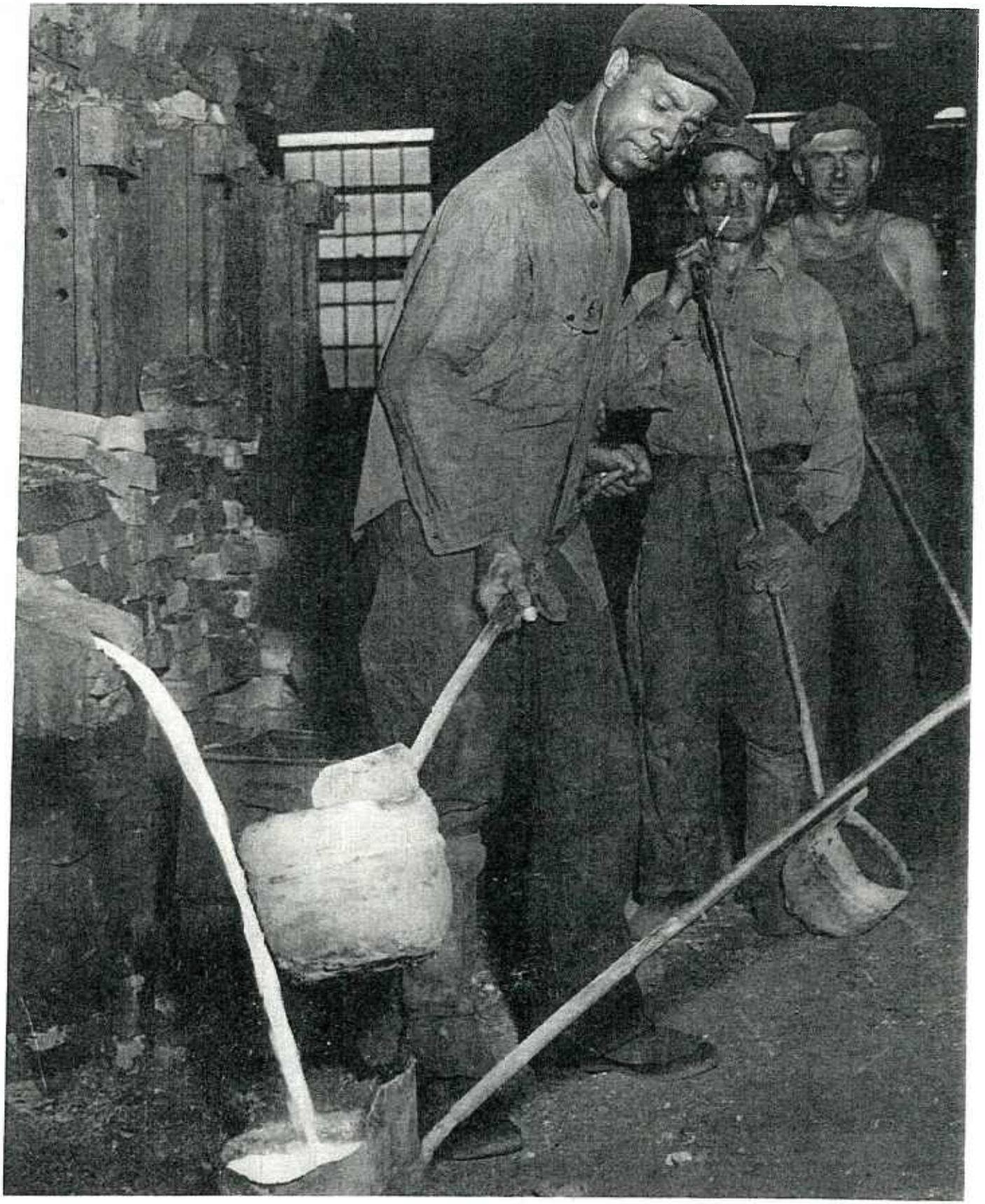
Throughout the years Voorheesville was best known for two industries, its cider mill and a foundry. The foundry usually referred to is that built by Frederick Griesman in 1908 on the north side of the village. But there was at least one other foundry in the village in operation several years before and simultaneously with Griesman's.

The first mention of a foundry in Voorheesville dates to the early 1890s when Jay Newbury, who already had an ongoing operation in Guilderland, decided to establish a foundry in Voorheesville. Village residents were enthusiastic about Newbury's plans and encouraged him to follow through with them. They promised him support. By late January 1893, several interested citizens has subscribed $400 toward the new industry. This show of interest must have been sufficient to help the iron founder with his decision to move because not too long afterward, Newbury was seen in the village looking over land prices in search of a reasonable piece of property.

By early 1895 Newbury had found a piece of land and



The foundry Frederick Griesman built in 1908.



Albany Casting Co. foundry workers (l to r) Ulysses Grant Goods. John Scoones and Nicholas Tymachon fill ladels with molten iron from melting furnace. To pour the metal into their molds, 40 men walked 35 miles each afternoon carrying the ladles. Filled ladles weighed 200 pounds.

MANUFACTURERS OF
ARCHITECTURAL CASTINGS
SOFT AND LIGHT BENCH CASTINGS
AND
HEAVY MACHINERY CASTINGS

TERMS, 30 DAYS NET
2%. 10 DAYS

PHOENIX FOUNDRY COMPANY

C. L. ELLIOTT AND C. L. CANTON, PROPS.

GENERAL FOUNDERS

VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y. Jan. 19th. 1912 191

WE RENDER STATEMENTS MONTHLY

SOLD TO Oddn Fellows Society,

Voorheesville, N. Y.

Filling up grate pattern, and repairing same				
1 file			50	
4½ hrs time @	60¢ per hr.	2	70	
To making 6 grate bars	268# C6¢ per #	16	08	19. 08

Rec'd Payt.
Sept 13/1912

Bill from Phoenix Foundry situated on Pine Street at Voorheesville Avenue. It burned to the ground in 1916.

intended to move forward with his plans. By July a load of iron had arrived at the station for the founder and shortly after that he began moving machinery from South Schenectady. But something happened at this point and Newbury backed out. By May 1896 Garry Hotaling, owner of the site, was told by residents that if a foundry was to be realized, responsibility for its operation would have to fall upon his shoulders.

This was a responsibility Hotaling wanted no part of. And so, for three years, nothing came of the project until a number of businessmen called a meeting toward the end of September 1899. Atop their agenda was how much it would cost to move Newbury's foundry buildings at Sloan's(Guilderland) to the village. It was thought about $1,100. Six hundred was subscribed almost immediately.

By the next week subscriptions had been raised to $960 and a committee was formed to act on the deal. Leroy Schell, Morris Harris, William Swift, S.N. Peck and Frank Bloomingdale formed a committee to spearhead the operation. There were delays but by mid November 1901 a switch was being laid to the new foundry and buildings were being erected. By March of the following year (1902), the furnaces were going full blast and Voorheesville had added a foundry to its list of accomplishments.

It's not known what happened to the mini-corporation or its directorship during the year but in 1902 an ad appeared in the newspaper indicating that Frank Bloomingdale was looking for scrap iron. In some way responsibility for the operation had fallen on Bloomingdale's shoulders adding another enterprise to his long list of business ventures.

The foundry continued for a number of years because by January 1908 talk was bandied about that a second foundry was coming to the village. It was more than talk because in the spring of that year Frederick Griesman, an Albanian, began work on the foundation for his new foundry situated at the northern end of the village. The new enterprise saw no delays and was ready for

operation by October 1908. It was called the Albany Malleable Iron Company Foundry.

Griesman did not find his operation smooth sailing when it came to finding competent pattern makers. Indeed in order to attract a crew of knowledgeable founders, he offered housing as a benefit. Griesman, therefore, had built a series of identical houses on the west side of North Main Street. Later he bought a number of smaller houses on the east side of the road which were also used by his employees.[1]

Griesman's business was a grand success but by the early 1920s the founder, in only fair health and wanting to travel with his daughter, was looking for a buyer for his foundry. He found one in a family who also ran a foundry in Easton, Pennsylvania. But by the end of the decade, the new founder was unable to keep up his Voorheesville operation and Griesman, who carried the paper on the business, found himself the owner of a foundry again. But by his death in 1933, Griesman had resold the foundry again.

During this later period, the foundry put out castings for automatic steel bumpers for dangerous highway curves and made brake shoes for the railroad. But the foundry fell on hard times as the status of malleable castings declined with the development of drip forgings. About 1936 the Albany Malleable Iron Company bought the premises which later became the Albany Castings Company owned by Henry "Pop" Blumenaeur. During the Blumenaeur era the foundry made agricultural and industrial machinery and at one time employed as many as 200 people.

By 1911 there was still a second foundry in the village, the Phoenix Foundry, which was situated at Pine Street and Voorheesville Avenue. This was most likely the foundry that Bloomingdale et al. had started earlier. In 1913, C. L. Elliott and Charles Canton were listed on the business' letterhead as owners. The Phoenix made architectural castings, soft and light bench castings and heavy machinery castings. Canton died in late December 1913 or early January 1914 and in October 1916 the foundry burned to the ground.

5. *Encouraging Thriftiness*

Although Frederick Griesman never made the village his permanent home, he was to take a great interest in its life and have a significant influence on a number of its institutions He was not only a major economic contributor to the library's early development, helping to keep it in operation during its earliest times, but was a major impetus behind Voorheesville's first savings and loan association. But as we will see, it was John Guffin who picked up on this impetus and became the association's mainstay for nearly a half century.

John Guffin, later in life, when he was appointed chairman of the board of directors of the savings and loan association.

Before discussing the Griesman-Guffin enterprise, it is worth noting that an earlier attempt had been made to start a bank in the village in September 1892. Newspaper reports indicate that this earlier effort had been made by Franklin Vosburgh and William Matthias. Vosburgh served as president and Matthias as secretary for the institution they called the National Loan and Savings Bank. But little else is known about its existence, how long it lasted or what eventually became of it.

In 1913, however, the village would have its first long-

The sign immediately over the entrance to the building reads 'Voorheesville Savings and Loan Association'. During its earliest days the association shared space with the library. This building, located on Voorheesville Avenue, was also used to store the fire company's hose cart. Today it serves as Village Hall.

lasting bank with John Guffin and Frederick Griesman as its main protagonists. In a brief history of the bank that Guffin wrote after his retirement,[1] he says that the idea for the bank started while he was working for the state in Albany. In 1908 Guffin had been persuaded by a friend to move to what was described to him as the beautiful village of Voorheesville. Interestingly enough, that friend was Frank Vosburgh. But, at the time, Vosburgh's persuasion of his friend to relocate had no immediate relation to banking.

Guffin, who traveled to work in Albany each day on the Altamont local, met Griesman on his various trips back and forth from the city. During one of these trips, Griesman asked Guffin to call upon him at his office at the foundry which Guffin did. During their conversation, Griesman informed Guffin that he did not like the influence of saloons on his workers, particularly a saloon located on the road leading from the foundry to the village. He told Guffin that on payday too many of his workers never made it beyond that point with their paychecks intact.

The foundry owner asked Guffin whether he knew anything about savings and loan associations. Although Guffin replied that he knew little, Griesman asked him whether he would be willing to organize such an institution in the village. At the time Griesman had been director of a savings and loan association in Albany where members saved on a weekly basis.

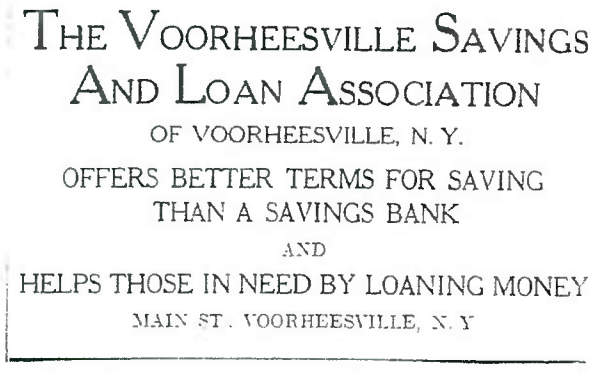
Guffin agreed to look into the matter. The foundry owner suggested to Guffin that he use his personal attorney, Judge Woollard of Albany, to prepare the papers of incorporation and he would pay the expense. Guffin went ahead with preparing the papers but through the help of a friend in the state banking department.

On April 12, 1913 Griesman called a meeting of select members of the community to consider the organization of a savings and loan association. He presided while Guffin took the minutes. At a second meeting the following week Griesman, Charles Canton, Frank Vosburgh, Oscar Vunck, Albert Vanderpoel, John Whitbeck, William Relyea, George Hallenbeck, William Crannell, James Cummings, Dr. William Shaw and John Guffin were present. All were elected directors of the new association; Griesman was elected president, Vosburgh vice-president and Guffin secretary-treasurer. Noticeably absent from this list of distinguished residents are names such as Frank Bloomingdale, E. Dayton and Jesse Joslin and William Swift. Bloomingdale was nominated to be a director by James Cummings at a later date (1914) but lost in an election of the directorate to W. D. Alexander, manager of Griesman's foundry.

After the first election, the directors appointed a committee to draw up a set of by-laws and a motion carried to pay the village board $12 a year rent for the use of a room in the village building. A certificate of incorporation was filed with the state and the bank was open for business on May 31, 1913. In the beginning the bank was open only on Saturdays when Guffin was not working at his regular job. It was decided that the secretary-treasurer would be paid $2 a week for his services and that each director would be paid 50 cents for each meeting attended.

To carry the association along financially, each director was obliged to carry and pay weekly or monthly on at least 10 free installment shares which would eventually mature, with the dividends credited, for $1,000. Griesman was not only the president of the association but also served as its financial backbone, having subscribed for many more shares than the minimum. The new association was on its way, but it had to contend with some psychological barriers. First of all there were a number of village residents who were not asked to share in the bank's operation, who began to speak of the association's impending doom. Second, for many workers at the foundry, the idea of saving part of their weekly paychecks was a strange way to live. To assist the workers in reordering their thinking, Guffin remarks: "Mr. Griesman put a little heat on his foundry workers to open share accounts."

Three signs were made and put up in strategic locations advertising the bank and Stephen Daring was appointed attorney, a position he held until his death in August 1932. At the association's August 16, 1913 meeting, the first formal application for a loan was made. Edward Oliver, a worker at the foundry, applied for a $1,600 loan to buy three houses belonging to Peter Bockhouse on the highway north of the village. It was approved. At the next meeting Nicola Uliano received a $600 loan to purchase a home on Prospect Street and the bank was in business. However, on September 6, the board rejected its first loan application when George McVeigh sought $1,200 to buy a large block of timber near Northville in the Adirondacks. The bank's directors indicated that they were not interested in using its money for speculation purposes. Moreover, they were more interested in keeping the association's investments closer to home.



This ad for the association placed in the Voorheesville Athletic Association's First Annual Field Day program, September 6, 1915.

A main interest of the savings and loan association was lending money for new homes in the village. This view down Voorheesville Avenue shows what some of these homes looked like earlier this century. Current Village Hall is all the way to the left.

In early November, the board had its first squabble. It had received an application for a loan of $1,600 for a property in Delmar. William Relyea, who was asked by the secretary to appraise the property, responded in a verbal statement that the property was not worth the loan. Incidentally, he added, the applicant was "a drinking man." Thinking that this latter allegation might have influenced Relyea's appraisal, Secretary Guffin then asked James Cummings to make a second, independent appraisal of the property. Cummings made the appraisal, judged the property to be worth the loan and it was made.

It should be mentioned at this point that the association's directors were also interested in the general well-being of the community, particularly its business welfare. During 1914, they were instrumental in organizing the village's first board of trade. The group included not only businessmen and professionals but public-spirited citizens as well. The group was proud to have as one of its members Peter Ten Eyck. However, in a relatively short time internal jealousies and factions arose causing the new trade board's demise. In his history of the bank, Guffin says he was reminded of the old saying "God made the country, man, the cities, and the Devil the village."

By July 1914, the bank was able to begin paying its shareholders their first quarterly dividends, 1 1/2 percent on prepaid income shares, 1 1/8 on savings and 1 1/2 on free installment shares. The association continued to progress gradually without major incident until the directors were told by Griesman in 1922 that he would step down from his post as president. He was succeeded by Franklin Vosburgh.

At a meeting in 1926 John Guffin made a motion that the bank erect its own building on a piece of property on Main Street but the motion never carried. Instead the bank moved to the northernmost part of the Joslin block where a post office had once operated. In 1941, when Guffin retired from his state job, the bank was finally able to maintain day hours for the first time. Beginning as a small community venture the bank had turned into a solid business. By January 1956 the institution showed assets of $921,309. Later it became First Federal.[2]

A final note on "the bank." Throughout this discussion we have used the term "bank" interchangeably with "savings and loan association." If John Guffin were alive today, he'd be terribly annoyed. During his long association with the savings and loan association, Guffin balked whenever he heard people use the word "bank" to describe the association. He reminded them that what they were referring to was an association. Guffin considered banks to be financial institutions for the rich and savings and loan associations as community resources to help with the local needs of the ordinary citizen.

5. *Shirts and Collar Button Holes*

As mentioned earlier, during the village's so-called golden era some of the village residents thought there would never be an end to the growth the village was experiencing. On one level there was good reason for this optimism because new businesses continually found their way into the village as iron shavings are drawn to a magnet. In the late 1890s, a small shirt and collar factory became one of those shavings.

But as early as 1889, the making of shirts had become a part of the village's daily life. In October of that year Lucien Haight had rented the upper floor of the newly built store of Rufus Flansburgh on Main Street and began making shirts. He employed seven women. Four years later another aspect of the sewing industry came to town when Cary Bradt advertised in the paper for women to hand make button holes in collars. This kind of work was to continue for some time because in 1897 Lavinia and Hattie Joslin the wives of E. Dayton and Jesse Joslin respectively, ran a collar making business from the upper floor of Joslin's hardware store.

Collars would arrive at the Voorheesville station for the Joslin women each morning by train and be handed out to women interested in sewing. Any work completed the day before would be handed in to the Joslins and shipped to Troy by train. Arthur Gregg recalled in his later years that many women in the village made a fairly good salary doing such piecework.

The first mention of a full-fledged shirt factory coming to the village was in April 1896. At that time a certain T. F. Angelum, who operated a shirt factory in Clarksville, sought to relocate his operation in Voorheesville. During a visit to the village in search of a location, Angelum let it be known that he would need 150 women to make shirts. In May, Angelum had contracted with William Swift to put up the factory building but before Angelum could move his machinery from Clarksville, his plant

Cary Bradt in search of buttonhole makers in May 1893.

there burned. He was able to salvage only a single load of machinery.

Perhaps some momentum for the factory had already developed at the time of Angelum's hard luck for Morris Harris, owner of the Harris House and Frank Bloomingdale, among others, formed a corporation to sponsor a shirt factory in the village. They began to erect a building on North Main Street for this purpose.

At this point Angelum seems to have bowed out of the picture because a certain Mr. Hubbard of Albany was hired to oversee the operations of the corporation's new factory in August. By early September production was underway, albeit with only eight stitchers. However,

A view up Main Street with Harris House on right. The flat iron building to the left was known as the Joslin Block. In the apartments upstairs, the two Joslin women ran their collar sewing business.

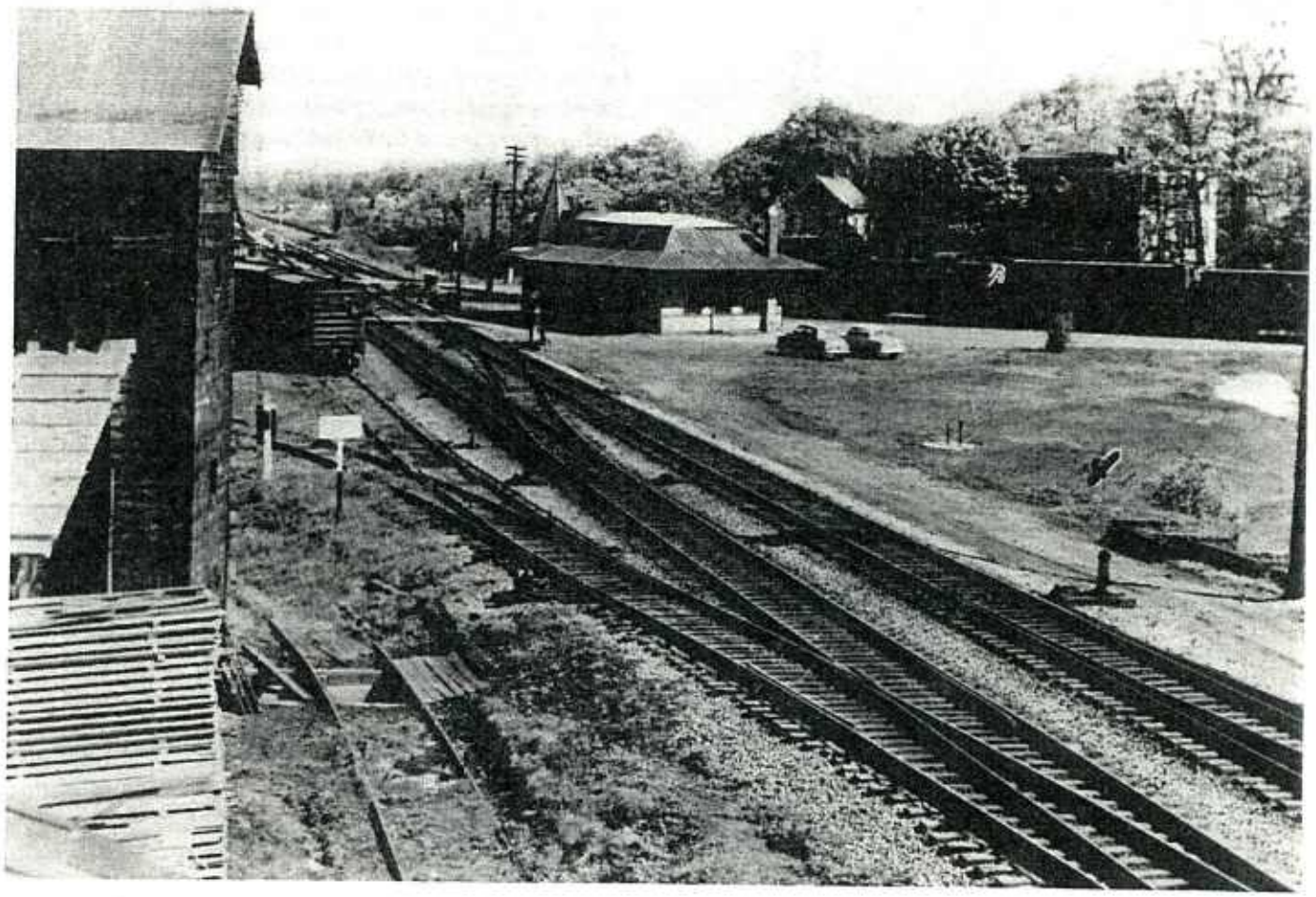
within a month that number had increased to 20. But the 20 were laid off toward the middle of the month as the factory was closed until after election day. The choice of election day as a reopening date was not arbitrary for both Harris and Bloomingdale were heavily involved in politics at the time. In 1896 Bloomingdale was a candidate for the assembly for his fourth straight year.

For the most part, the shirt factory never seemed to do very well under the corporation's management. In March 1897 representatives from a Troy firm, Fellows and Company, paid a visit to the village to inquire about hiring the factory. It's likely the Troy firm was contacted by Harris and Bloomingdale to bail the corporation out. The factory was probably kept going in the meantime but, in the March 17 edition of the paper, Fellows and Company announced it would be opening up a factory in the village and was taking applications for workers. In April they had readied the factory for operation and a Mr. Peck was hired as its supervisor. Within a month 20 women and girls were at work making shirts at what was known as the Voorheesville Shirt Factory.

But even with a professional company running the operation, the factory still never seemed to fare very well. First of all, the women in Voorheesville did not take to this kind of industrial work inside a plant. They did not seem to mind doing piecework at home, as is evidenced by the success of the earlier collar ventures. What they did seem to mind was the sweatshop type atmosphere characteristic of many factories of that era. Oftentimes the heating would be poor and the building ill-lighted.

Consequently, Fellows and Company found themselves having to advertise constantly in the paper for help. Part of their advertising included a pitch trying to convince the women of the village and its environs that this kind of work was worthwhile. Indeed in the June 16 edition of the paper, Fellows and Company wrote an open letter to the women of the village telling them that they were much more intelligent than their counterparts at their Troy plant. They indicated that women who applied for work in Voorheesville would be paid a salary while they are being trained, that they would receive a small workload during their training period, being placed on a full piecework schedule only after their training period was complete. Furthermore, they informed the women that in Voorheesville all machines were furnished by the company while the workers in Troy had to buy their own.

The company's public relations tactic didn't take hold. Therefore, all through June and July its heavy advertising campaign for workers continued. Perhaps as a morale booster to the current workers, the company held a party for its crew in July. A month later it wrote a second essay in the paper describing shirt making as an art. At this time Fellows made its first threat to leave Voorheesville, if more people didn't come out to work. Fellows informed the villagers that if they pulled out,



An overview of the Voorheesville railroad yard and depot. The Grove Hotel is off to the right on the other side of the boxcars; Crannell's coal pocket is to the left in the forefront.

other companies might follow suit.

Things changed for the better temporarily, for by December additional improvements were being made in the plant. Fifty more machines were added, which made a total of 100 and the 25' X 125' room was fitted with steam heat and lighted by electricity. Still the response of the community was not what Fellows had expected so that by February 1900, Fellows and Company threatened once again to pull out of the village.

Again, for a time, there seemed to be some improvement in worker response and production for, by August 1901, the company had to up its number of cutters to five to keep the stitchers busy. Additional improvements were made in November 1902, but eight months later the factory was closed for an indefinite period. After a stint of six years, the village's interest in shirts was through.

In March 1904 a Mr. DeAngelus arrived in town talking about the possibility of buying the factory and turning it into a foundry. That did not happen, for in June of the following year, work was being done to modify the factory into a novelty company. It was said that the new factory would employ 50 workers.

The factory was leased to C. H. Angus and Company of Albany who used it as a nickel plating plant. Twenty, not 50, workers were hired and at the rate of between $10 and $13 per week, a fairly decent salary for the time. But that work did not last very long. In March 1907, a fire raged through the factory and razed it to the ground. Only the engine house was saved. At the time the fire hit, the building was owned by villagers: Bloomingdale, Comstock, Harris and the Abe Relyea estate.

"Well, I had a playmate that lives across the road — Marion Young her name was — and we used to go in the summertime to the swimming hole over back — well, Windlespecht's had a swimming pool over, you know where Olive Kling lives on New Salem Road. Across from there down in back was a big hole and there were a lot of big willow trees and we used to go behind the willow trees, put our bathing suits on and go swimming. We'd walk thru an orchard and take some of the apples to play with in the water."

— Esther Schultz

CHAPTER FOUR

Village Hospitality

1. Taking A Vacation

In the latter part of the 19th century industrialization began to take its toll on city dwellers, particularly on those who had recently migrated to the city from the rural farm. With the increased intensity of urban life and the unyielding pace of the factory, people yearned to get back in touch with their lost Eden, so to speak. Whenever vacation time rolled around, therefore, hordes of travelers headed to the country for their earned relaxation. This yearning for the country was especially acute during the summer months when the heat turned the stone-laden city into an oven. Ironically what made such vacations possible were by-products of the industrialized city: a shorter working day and something new called "leisure time."[1]

For those who sought respite in the country, the railroad was an economical, fast and comfortable way to take an excursion to resort areas. At many railroad stops, particularly those in lake and mountain areas, hotels and boarding houses sprouted up to serve the new onrush of visitors.[2] And to help vacationers plan their annual jaunts, each year various hotel guides and tourist directories were published, some by the railroads themselves.[3] In these little compendiums would be found places of interest along the line, places to stay, their hospitality rates and nearby sources of entertainment. One such guide was "The Tourist's Guide Through the Empire State embracing All Cities, Towns and Watering Places By Hudson River and New York Central Route" edited and published by Mrs. S. S. Colt of Albany in 1871.[4]

Voorheesville was one of the many hamlets described in such guide books. The village attracted vacationers each year in large part because of its proximity to the Helderbergs and the cascading falls of the Vly below LaGrange's mill pond. With the arrival of the Albany and Susquehanna, the Helderbergs in particular had become visible up close to tourists on their way west for the first time. The escarpment's unique qualities drew many visitors back to visit the range and its famed caves and Indian Ladder on foot. At the same time, writers with an interest in nature were beginning to call attention to the mountain range. As early as 1869 Colvin Verplanck wrote in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* of their "romantic wooded rock scenery, dark caverns, and spraying waterfalls and accessible mountain grandeur."

But it was the railroad that made such talk realistic for the average tourist. The Helderbergs were now accessible as they never had been before. As Mrs. Colt correctly related in her 1871 guide: "Until quite recently we knew about as much of the Helderbergs–aside from the fact that we can see their peaks from our windows-as we know of New Zealand."

The railroad's arrival then was not only to bring to Voorheesville numerous commercial and industrial opportunities but droves of vacationers and tourists as well. To accommodate the guests for the summer months, many Voorheesville farming families turned

Cover of the D&H's 'A Summer Paradise' for 1905. In the 234 page book were listed many of the hotels, boarding houses and places of interest along the D&H's Susquehanna Division for that year.

their homes into boarding houses. Some residents even moved in with a neighbor or into one of the hotels in order to rent out their entire house for the season. Many of these farms were in full view of the mountain people came to see and visit.

By the 1890s the village also had three hotels, where visitors could find a comfortable bed, the Grove, the Harris House and Nick Oliver's West End Hotel. At least at the Grove and Harris House, the two main hotels, a guest might be able to catch a vaudeville-type show before heading off to the mountains on foot or by carriage. The Grove and Harris House also had livery stables where a horse and carriage could be rented for the day. But, as might be expected, the atmosphere of the hotels was decidedly different from the more traditionally rural boarding house.

2. *Morris Harris' Place*

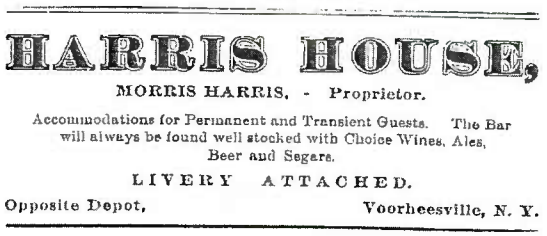
As in the case of each of the hotels that existed in the village, the Harris House had a personality that reflected the interests and tastes of its owner. Located at the foot of Main Street across the street from the depot, the Harris House seemed perennially busy, serving as host to a wide variety of social and political groups. Chronologically it was the second hotel to be opened in the village, having taken its name from Albany born entrepreneur Morris Harris.

Harris was an Albany native who moved to Voorheesville sometime in early 1885 in order to enter the hotel business, not the Harris House but Conrad Fryer's Grove Hotel across the tracks. Before opening his own hotel in 1889, Harris had already learned the trade well, having spent several years running the Grove in Voorheesville and later a hotel in New Salem.

But when Harris came to the village the second time, he was more than a hotel owner. Morris Harris was a large section of the backbone that made the village the commercial and social success it was. He was one of the more energetic businessmen in the community, ready to join in ventures such as the canning factory, the shirt factory and the trotting association. In addition, he was also the main impetus behind the establishment of the Voorheesville Odd Fellows Lodge. Harris was also one of the few Jews, if not the only Jew, living in the village at the time.

On one level Morris Harris' life story serves as a good example of the many careers a person might have during his lifetime in the 19th century. Harris had grown up in Albany the son of a Russian immigrant who was a traveling salesman throughout Albany County. After finishing school at age 14, Morris became a hairdresser in the city. The Albany City Directory lists him employed as a hairdresser from 1877-1879. The following year he began manufacturing cigars, having opened a factory on 34 William Street with his brother Issac as his partner. At their busiest the duo employed close to 30 cigar makers. Following in his father's footsteps Morris served as the company's traveling salesman, hitting the stores, hotels and taverns throughout the county and perhaps much further, while his brother Issac oversaw the day-to-day operations of the Albany factory.

This work lasted until 1884 when Harris is listed in the city directory as a liquor salesman. We can presume that part of this job included traveling to many of the same hotels and taverns he visited as a cigar salesman. So for a second time and now, under different auspices, Harris must have discovered Voorheesville and the Grove Hotel. Whether the bustle of the growing village captivated him or whether Conrad Fryer offered him a deal he couldn't refuse is unknown, but Harris did gather his belongings and make his way to Voorheesville


HARRIS HOUSE,

MORRIS HARRIS, - Proprietor.

Accommodations for Permanent and Transient Guests. The Bar will always be found well stocked with Choice Wines, Ales, Beer and Segars.

LIVERY ATTACHED.

Opposite Depot, Voorheesville, N. Y.

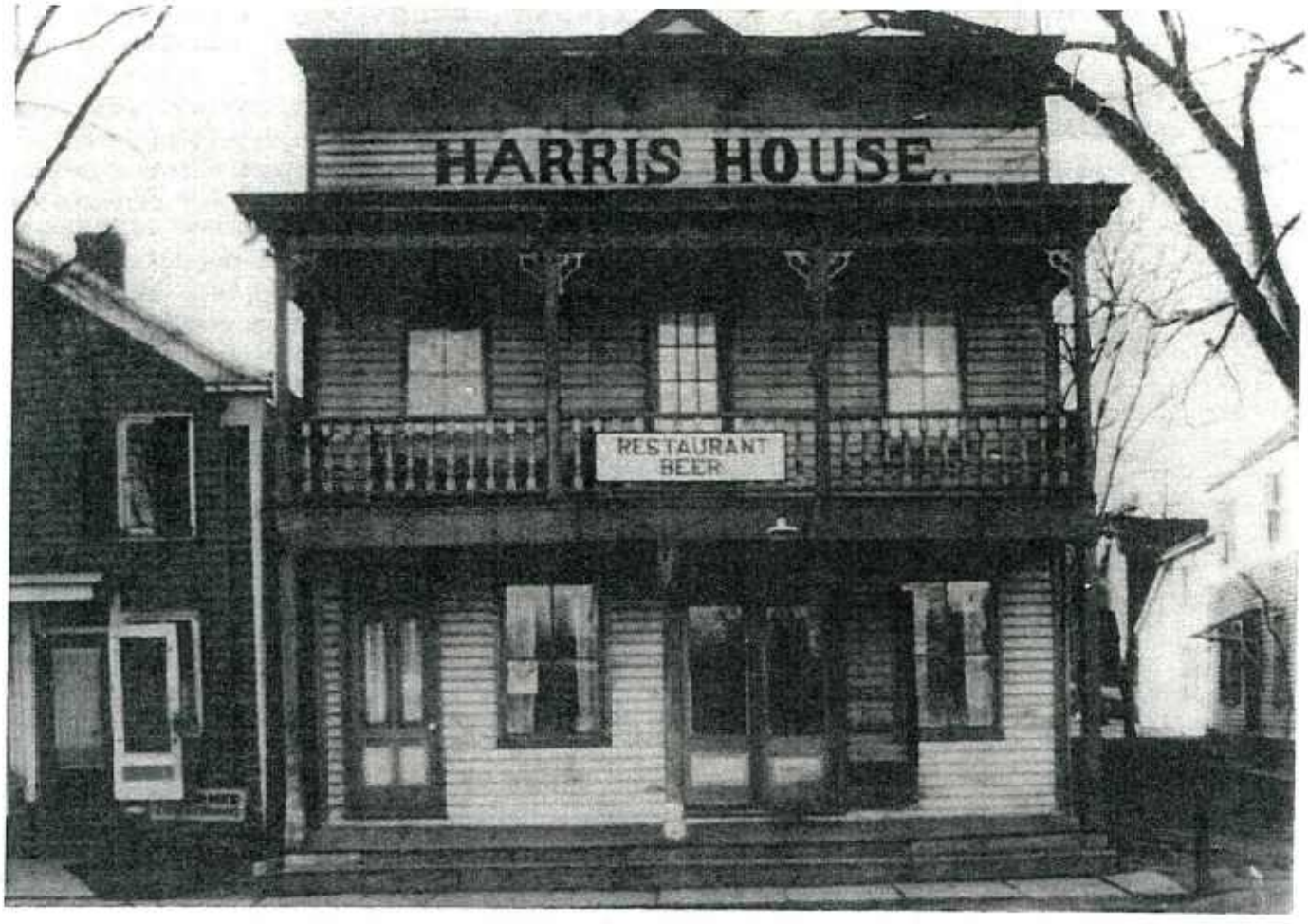
Ad for Harris House taken from 1890 D&H directory.

to become the proprietor of the Grove Hotel. That was toward the beginning of 1885. For the 21 months that Morris Harris ran the Grove, it was the only hotel in the village. Harris stayed until December 1886 when he sold his interest to Frank Craft of Albany and Craft's son-in-law, George Hess of Oneonta.

Harris did not cut his ties with the village, however. He was in and out of town throughout the summer of 1887, perhaps looking for another business venture. That he found, but not in Voorheesville. In December he bought the upper hotel in New Salem from Willis Knowles and ran a hotel business there for two years but always with an eye glancing in the direction of the growing village four miles to the northeast.

Therefore, when the grocery store of William Matthias was up for sale in January 1889, Harris took the opportunity to buy it and turned it into the famed Harris House. By early April, renovations of the building were being completed and on a Saturday night toward the middle of the month he held an open house for the entire village serving clam chowder and other goodies for his guests. By the following week his livery stable in back of the hotel was open for business ready for the stream of summer vacationers that began each year in late June or early July.

The Harris House differed from the Grove in a number of ways, the most obvious being that it was considerably



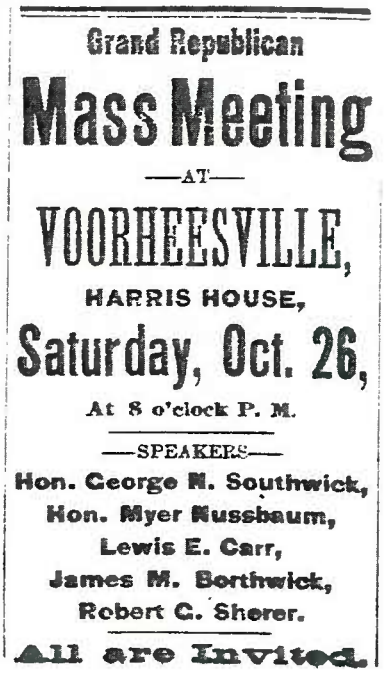
The Harris House: hotel, restaurant and bar; to the left a store run by Worner family, probably sight of first grocery store within the village (1870).

smaller. And because of the personality of its owner and his interests, it drew different people and sponsored different kinds of activities. For years the hotel served as one of the town's courtrooms, for which Harris was paid a small stipend by the town, about $15 annually. There was enough judicial activity going on in the hotel's courtroom that in June 1892, Harris began to modify the rooms in the back to make enough space to hold a 20-member jury.

The hotel was also used as a gathering place for political conventions and agricultural organizational meetings. The Republicans of the First District would often hold their convention at the Harris House and the Albany County Farmers' Institute was also held there periodically. On at least one occasion, the school commissioners held their annual convention at the hotel. Villagers had also grown accustomed to finding the town's tax collector seated at a table waiting for residents to pay their annual assessment. And from time to time patrons of the hotel were given a surprise as the Queen of the Gypsies showed up at the hotel.

While for some the political activities that were sponsored at the hotel were entertainment enough, Harris served up a wide menu of social and athletic events for his patrons. By 1893, for example, wrestling matches had become a periodic feature at the hotel. More often than not the hotel featured its favorite son, Frank Reid. Before shouting and oftentimes well-oiled crowds, Reid squared off with out-of-towners such as Albert Johnson, The Cyclone and Andy Conners, both of Albany. Reid and Conners had several bouts at the hotel. On one of the cards that featured this duo was slated a second match between Albany's Jack Dillon and Tom Duffy of New York City. What's noteworthy about the event is that the winner's purse was $50, not too shabby a sum of money for 1393 when most laborers were scarcely making a dollar a day.

But the Harris House was not all sport. It also had somewhat of a serious side. In one part of the hotel Harris had installed at one time a small reading room. In the fall of 1894, curious hotel patrons admired the new oak desk Harris bought and had delivered to the hotel. Lectures were also sponsored at various times. In May 1894 the author Arthur Helm Batchelor of Lansingburgh came across the river to give a lecture on "Hell." On a Saturday night, no less! It is difficult to


Grand Republican

Mass Meeting

—AT—

VOORHEESVILLE,

HARRIS HOUSE,

Saturday, Oct. 26,

At 8 o'clock P. M.

—SPEAKERS—

Hon. George N. Southwick,
Hon. Myer Nussbaum,
Lewis E. Carr,
James M. Borthwick,
Robert C. Sherer.

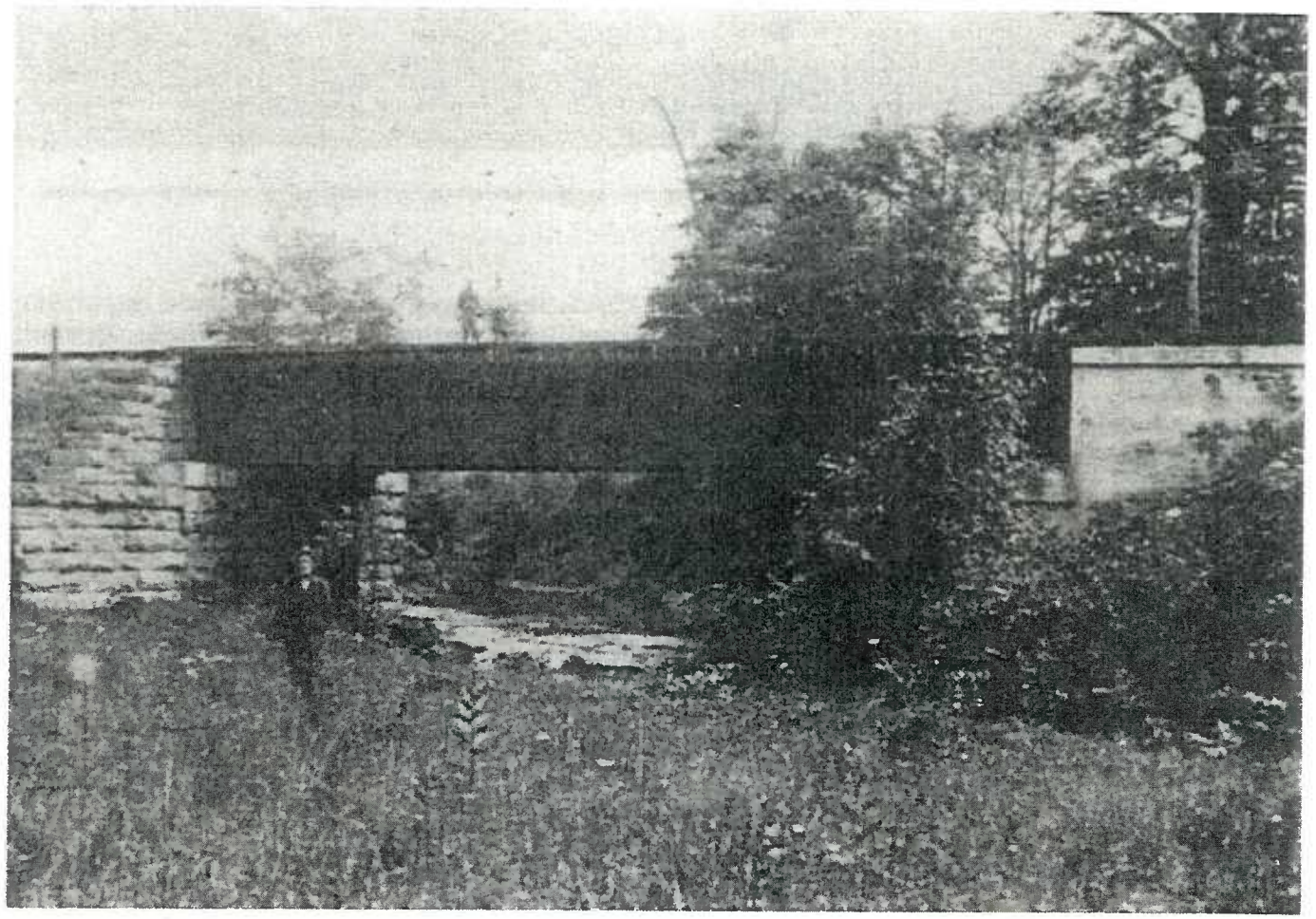
All are Invited.

The Harris House was host to many Republican get-togethers. This announcement was for a 1895 event.

assess what the tenor of such a talk would have been or even who would have attended such a talk on a Saturday night.

More often than not, the entertainment offered at the Harris House was a vaudeville-type program similar to those found across the tracks at the Grove and in many hotels across the state at this time. This was the era of the traveling vaudeville show. One of the favorites at the hotel was Professor Button, a well-honed ventriloquist who also put on a great magic show. Button was so popular with the villagers that one year he was asked to do shows on two consecutive nights. He drew large crowds both nights. And Mack's special variety show came for three nights straight on a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in 1899. When nothing of interest was being offered on one side of the tracks, patrons seeking entertainment might cross the tracks and perhaps find something going on at the Grove.

Part of the uniqueness of the Harris House was that its owner seemed to be forever willing to experiment with the unusual. In the spring of 1896, he purchased a gramophone and on Wednesday evenings offered gramophone entertainment to his patrons. The following year he introduced what seems to have been an early



West Shore Bridge over Vly Creek. Guests staying at the Harris House might walk up Main Street to take a dip in the creek when the weather got warm.

version of the juke box. Hotel patrons were amused to hear a musical instrument play every time a penny was put in the slot.

Of course Harris boarded people in the 10 rooms of his two-story building as well. The hotel was said to have had a fine reputation for its first class beds and first class service. And not surprisingly, the enterprise of the former liquor salesman and cigar maker was said to have had the best whiskeys and cigars money could buy.

In emergency situations Harris would make his rooms available to railroad workers brought into town to work on the track. When a crew of 70 "Italians," as they were referred to, were brought into Voorheesville to clear snow from the tracks after a large February storm in 1899, the entire crew boarded at the Harris House. Given the space limitations of the hotel, it is likely that the men slept side by side across the floor of each room. For the men it was better than sleeping in a boxcar for the cold evening, their more accustomed sleeping quarters.[2]

As time went on, Harris became more concerned about serving quality food. In late March 1899, he converted his hall into a kitchen and dining room with enough space to sit 50 people at a time. After this modification Harris lasted in the hotel business for only four more years. After nearly 20 years in the hotel business, he sold the hotel in 1903 to Irving Riseley of Kingston and moved to Amsterdam. But surprisingly, he was not done with the Harris House. Riseley had not been able to make a go of the hotel and a year later had put the hotel back up for sale. In April 1904 Harris bought back his former establishment and moved back into the village. At the same time he also seems to have purchased Nick Oliver's West End Hotel situated along the Vly near the Voorheesville grade school.

3. The Elegant Grove

The biggest and best known of the three hotels in the village was the Grove. Many visitors to the village found this to be the most amenable place to stay, in part because of its size. Indeed at one time so many newlyweds sought out the Grove for their honeymoon that it was said to be called the Honeymoon Hotel. At different points in the life of Voorheesville, the Grove served as the center of its social and recreation activities.

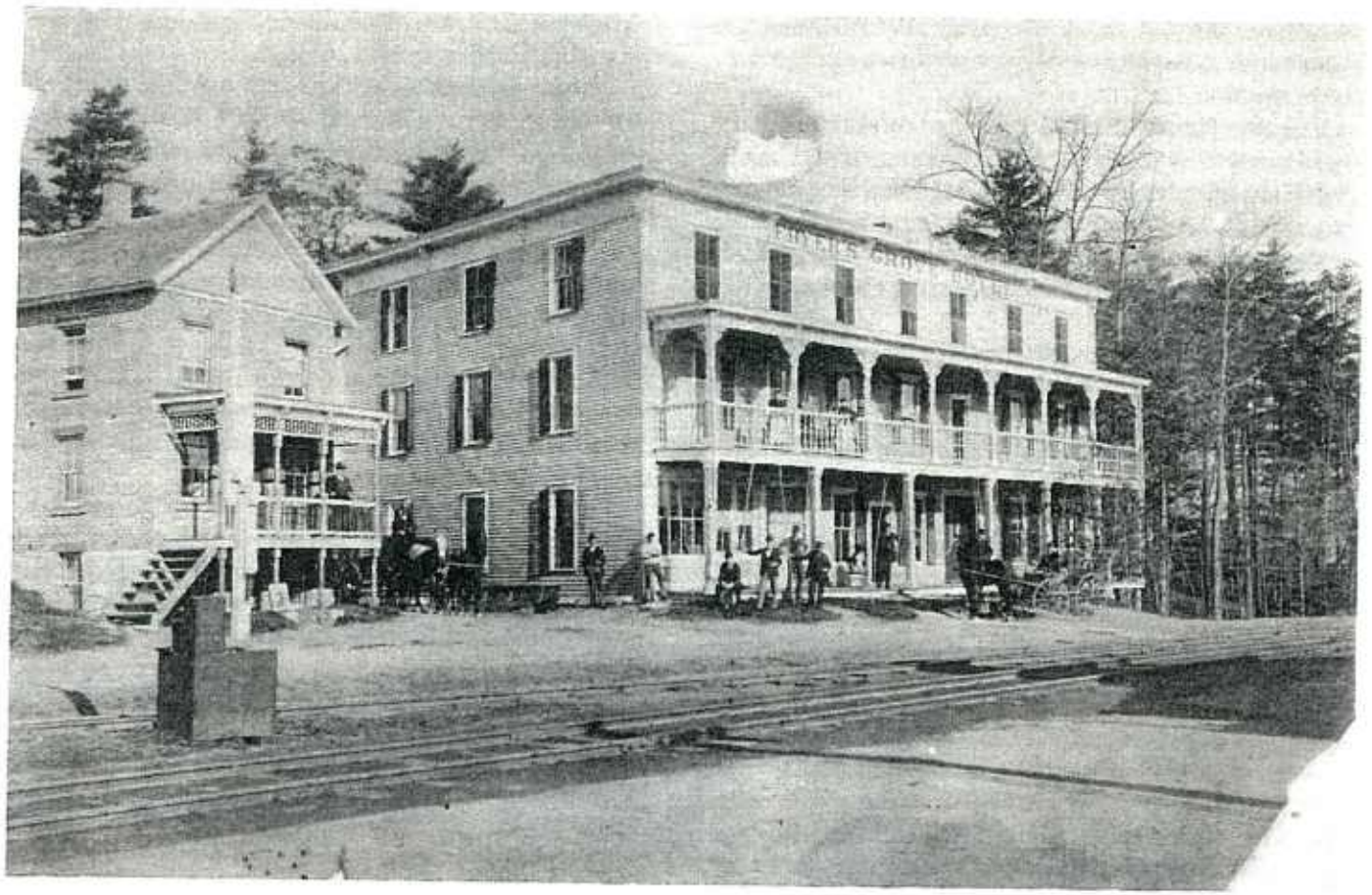
The Grove was built sometime in the mid 1870s by Conrad Fryer, a native of Guilderland who moved to Voorheesville and bought a farm shortly before the railroad came. Fryer, one of the Guilderland Fryers, was born on a tract of land known as the "Fryer Farms", farmland that was considered by some to be the most productive in the section beneath the Helderbergs. These farms were also famed because they were one of the few tracts in all of Rensselaerswyck that was owned free and clear of the patroon. As clear title holders, the Fryers were not subject to a lease, nor did they have to pay annual rent to the patroon, which served as a great source of family pride. It also afforded the family a great sense of independence.

Conrad Fryer then, was born into a family known not only for its independence but also for its industriousness, energy and perseverance. His father Abram and his older brother John F., who had inherited part of the family farm, were known for their hard work. In one biographical sketch of the family it was said of Conrad's brother, John: "Idleness was to him a sin, and no one on the Fryer farm sinned in that particular."

Conrad's uncle, William, was a successful merchant in Albany (about 1839), having begun a dry goods business in that city because he shared in the belief that the Erie Canal would put Albany on the commercial map—which it did. It seems Conrad learned the life lessons of the farmer from his father and brother and a keen business sense from his uncle. Still in his early 30s, Conrad bought over 100 acres bordering the intersection of the A&S and Hudson and Saratoga roads. This was several years before the two roads began operation. He shared in the belief that the railroad would put this part of the town of New Scotland on the commercial map—which it did. His Grove hotel was one of the first manifestations of his business sense. His flourishing coal business in the mid-1880s was another and, as we will see, there were considerably more.

As already noted, although Fryer built the Grove

Grove Hotel ad from D&H directory (1890). Ad says hotel sleeps 50.



The Grove Hotel about 1895. Fryer's brick house to the left; shoemaker sign in front of brick house basement.

Hotel which was situated at the southwest corner of his Voorheesville farm, he himself ran the hotel business on only several occasions and only for several years at a time. The bulk of his energies was put into a large farm in Voorheesville and a second on the Clipp. Later in life other business concerns would vie for his attention.

The first proprietor of the Grove (via lease, that is) seems to have been John Stafford who opened the doors about 1874 or 1875. Stafford was no novice to the hotel business, having begun operation of the Union Hotel in Altamont in 1869. He was perhaps persuaded by Fryer to help him get the Grove off the ground or maybe saw it as a second handsome business opportunity. After Stafford, Daniel Wormer ran the hotel for a while, then Fryer himself and in 1884, Solomon Sachs. Shortly after Sachs' tenure Morris Harris took his turn. Over the years there would be several more owners in George Hess, Thomas McGrath, J. C. Vines and C. W. Fick.

While the Harris House was indeed a quality hotel, the Grove was on another plane altogether. The three-story structure had at least 35 commodious rooms and its appointed sleeping apartments (some hotel guides say the Grove slept 50) were considered to be among the finest in the area. The well-arranged parlors and sitting rooms were enjoyed by boarders and travellers alike. The service was considered to be first rate and yet the rates were considered to be remarkably reasonable. The hotel Blue Book for 1886 indicates that the cost of a room was $1.50 a day, guests having the option of the American or European plan.

The Grove received its name from the beautiful well-kept grove situated in back of the hotel. This grove became increasingly well known over the years and was much sought after by church groups, business associations, lodges and other social organizations as a place to hold their annual outings. When Harris ran the Grove, as well as at other times, the grove and picnic area facilities in the rear of the hotel were made available to groups free of charge.

In the midst of the grove was also a spacious dancing platform that received frequent use by hotel patrons and members of visiting social groups. There was a bandstand and swings for young and old alike. In 1889 when Hess bought the hotel, he constructed a tennis court for use by the hotel's guests. Lawn tennis, in addition to golf and polo, had been imported from Britain in the 1870s and became increasingly popular sources of recreation at both hotels and resorts in the U.S. in the decades to follow.

Further back in the grove a baseball diamond was laid out on which the Voorheesville team competed against teams from neighboring towns and cities. At one time a race track had been built in the grove, its activities attracting some of the most illustrious citizens in town.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s when baseball wasn't being played, the racetrack was the place to be on a Saturday afternoon. Occasionally as many as 500 would show up to see some of the area's best horses.

The first track built behind the Grove seems to have been started in the fall of 1885 under the auspices of Frederick LaGrange a Voorheesville farmer. The arrival of the track clearly started a my-horse-is-faster-than-your-horse atmosphere because during the middle of the following winter Dr. Oliver and Frank Bloomingdale had already bet a box of cigars on the speed of their respective horses. In June 1886, the Voorheesville Driving Association met at the Grove and elected Frederick LaGrange president, Dr. Alden Oliver vice-president, Frank Vosburgh secretary, Issac Pearl treasurer and Morris Harris, who was running the hotel at the time, the track's manager.

Each spring the association would begin making the track ready for racing and open it up to the public for use. In 1887, for example, a trotting enthusiast could buy a membership to the association which included use of the track for the season. Sometimes the annual fee was set at $5 and at other times was only $2.50. In the spring of 1889 the trotting group was calling itself The Sporting Association.

With the new association, the rivalry that existed between Bloomingdale and Oliver continued unabated. Oliver saw the improved track as the perfect venue for showcasing the trotter he had bought in June in Columbia County. Indeed upon his return he began claiming that no horse in the area could match his new acquisition. Oliver's horse must have backed the doctor's word and encouraged Bloomingdale to look around for a faster steed. In the following year Frank Bloomingdale spread the word about town that his new horse, Prince, was the fastest around. But it was Dr. Oliver who continued to buy horses over the years and became known for his appreciation of these animals. Later at the annual fairs in Altamont he would bring his handsome steeds to compete among the best in the area and win often enough.

The races sponsored by the trotting association were usually held weekly and seem to have been limited mostly to the fall of the year. Generally the Driving Association would have a party to celebrate opening day. But when October rolled around in 1890, the Association announced that this year's opener would be a blast. In addition to the running, trotting and pacing races, patrons were offered a free clam bake to boot. Throughout the afternoon music was provided by the Voorheesville band, all for a 25 cents admission fee. That was for the men. Women were admitted free as they were at many events at that time.

The Association had advertised a larger-than-usual opening day celebration that year because there was competition at the other end of the village. In the spring of that year a second track had been built just west of the village by Alden McMillen on his farm. The new track could have been the result of a squabble among some of the racing enthusiasts or it might have been built so that people might be further away from the drinking that went on at the hotel adjoining the track. McMillen's track most likely didn't last long.

By August 1892 there was talk of another track being built in the village also on the land of Conrad Fryer, a track with more substance than its predecessors. A number of citizens wanted the new track to serve as the basis of the Albany County fairgrounds. The proposal for the new track was made in response to a meeting that had been held in Altamont the month before to discuss building a fairground in that village. By mid-September, a large number of Voorheesville residents gathered at the hotel to talk about turning a piece of the Fryer farm into the new fairgrounds. But the talk went to naught as the fairgrounds went to neighboring Altamont. That village hosted the fair for the first time the following year (1893). The fair was the first major event sponsored by The Altamont Driving Park and Fair Association.

Partially smarting from their loss of the fairgrounds to their neighbors in Altamont, a number of Voorheesville racing enthusiasts, perhaps Dr. Oliver leading the charge, joined together to build a new track anyway. When it was done, they remarked from time to time how much better it was than Altamont's.

But the Grove was not just the track. There were baseball games and dances, picnics and the vaudeville-type entertainment that was offered at the Harris House. On various nights of the year, villagers and boarders at the hotel might get to see Madame Celeste doing her bird and musical instrument imitations. They could catch Howard's Big Show or Doctor Gray's Wonderful Wonders or The Great New Orleans Show on the baseball grounds when the weather got warm.

The Grove, too, was used as a court room by the tax collector who came there to sit as well. The hall was also used for public meetings some of which were initiated and chaired by Fryer himself.

4. Fryer Himself

Conrad Fryer was basically a farmer working two farms, his Voorheesville tract and another on the Clipp. But he also leased a hotel and at various times initiated a host of other businesses. Some of these were housed in a large brick building he had erected next to the hotel in 1892. Here and in buildings in the back of the hotel he sponsored blacksmiths, shoemakers, basket makers and coopers. At one time he had six coopers working for him making barrels.[1] He also ran a butcher shop, a grocery and a livery stable behind the hotel.

At the time the Presbyterian Church was being built on Main Street, Fryer even began to build his own church. While this was going on, the village correspondent for the paper remarked that the village needed more people like "Coon" Fryer who's building his own church. At another time Fryer also began to develop a vineyard and he was as well a landlord owning a number of houses in what was then called "The Italian Quarter." One of his income properties was also referred to as the "House of all Nationalities."

In addition to being involved with these varied enterprises, Fryer also had the distinction of being the most colorful and seemingly the most contentious of village residents.[2] At the very least more was said about him in the weekly paper over time than about any other resident and for good reason. Fryer personified one of the two personalities Voorheesville had at the time. As Voorheesville was going through its great growth period, the village seemed to have two distinct and sometimes conflicting personalities. On the one hand there was a more serious business side as reflected in the lives of William Swift, Frank Bloomingdale and the Cummings brothers. At the same time there was a free-spirited or carefree side as reflected in the lives of Conrad Fryer, Ed O'Brien and even T. C. White.

Harrison Fryer, Conrad's oldest son, and wife Jennie in their later years (circa 1941). Harrison and his brother Ira helped Conrad manage hotel affairs from time to time.

Whether this characterization of Fryer (and the village for that matter) is valid or not, on the surface Conrad Fryer seems to have been involved in more squabbles than anyone else. Even when village residents made their first attempt to incorporate in 1892, Conrad Fryer was among those who began an anti-incorporation move and halted the village's activities in this direction for nearly seven years.

Regardless of what Fryer was involved in, he was a man who spoke his mind and spoke it directly and often. Often enough and directly enough that he found himself in court more times than he cared for.

For example, in December 1885 E. Wood was driving over the road (basically Grove Street) leading through Fryer's gravel pit (part of the land that later became the site of the Empire Cider and Vinegar Company). Fryer caught Wood's horse by the head and told Wood he couldn't use the road. Wood, not wanting to get into anything, jumped down from his wagon and left Fryer standing there holding the horse by the halter. After tying the horse to a fence for several hours, Fryer finally took it to Wood's house. But the situation was not over, for several days later Fryer was arrested on a warrant issued by Justice Couse of Bethlehem. The next month, when Fryer appeared in court and the case was heard, the judge found him guilty. He was fined $10.

Perhaps the biggest wrangle Fryer became involved in during his lifetime was a suit brought against him by the Kilmer Wire Co. In late winter 1886, Kilmer had shown an interest in starting a plant in Voorheesville. Cyrenus Wormer had purchased 29 acres for the firm situated on the northern edge of the village. But when the company could not get the right of a water course, they made the decision to locate in Newburgh.

The water course in question was most likely the Mudd Creek, a small creek that flowed from the Kilmer property under North Main Street and onto Fryer's land. There was considerable ill will toward Fryer on the part of many residents when the company was turned away because at that time, many of the men in the village were finding it difficult to get more than two days work each week.

But the community's ire was only half of Fryer's problem. In June of '86 the Kilmer Wire Company let Fryer know that they were bringing suit against him for the sum of $20,000 for making false statements about them. Nor did Kilmer back down, for the legal contest continued into the following year. In March, representatives from Kilmer met with Fryer and settled out of court. However, it's not known what the conditions of the settlement were.

Fryer found himself in court on numerous other occasions in contests over wages and on other occasions for slander. In the slander suits by Albert Klage and William Swift, Klage was awarded $101 in a trial in

BROOK VIEW HOTEL

E. E. ALBRIGHT, Prop.

Auto Parties Accommodated. Voorheesville, N. Y.

The Brook View was originally Nick Oliver's 'West End Hotel.'

Clarksville and Swift was awarded $500 at a circuit court hearing. When Morris Harris left the Grove and Fryer leased the hotel to George Hess in April 1888, Fryer himself initiated a suit claiming ownership of the furniture that Harris sold to Hess. A jury trial was held in the court of Justice Osborne in Altamont in which Harris and Hess also appeared.

What's most interesting about this case is how the three hotel owners matched up vis-a-vis their respective legal counsel. Harris had Smith O'Brien as his attorney. Hess hired the noted Mr. Keyes from Oneonta to represent him and Fryer had two heavies at his side:Hiram Griggs, future mayor of Altamont, and none other than the Hon. Alonzo B. Voorhees. How did Fryer manage to muster such big names in his corner? Clearly both Griggs and Voorhees must have had at the least a modicum of respect for Fryer. In any event, after four days of deliberation, the jury decided in favor of Fryer. This was one of the few times Fryer seems to have been successful in court.

For those not involved with Fryer in a suit, the legal proceedings he became involved in sometimes took on comic overtones. In June 1894 James McCulloch sued Fryer for $65 in wages for tending bar. McCulloch hired Smith O'Brien as his attorney and Fryer chose Abram Relyea, a friend, a justice of the peace and former deputy sheriff, as well as A.F. Mattice of Slingerlands.

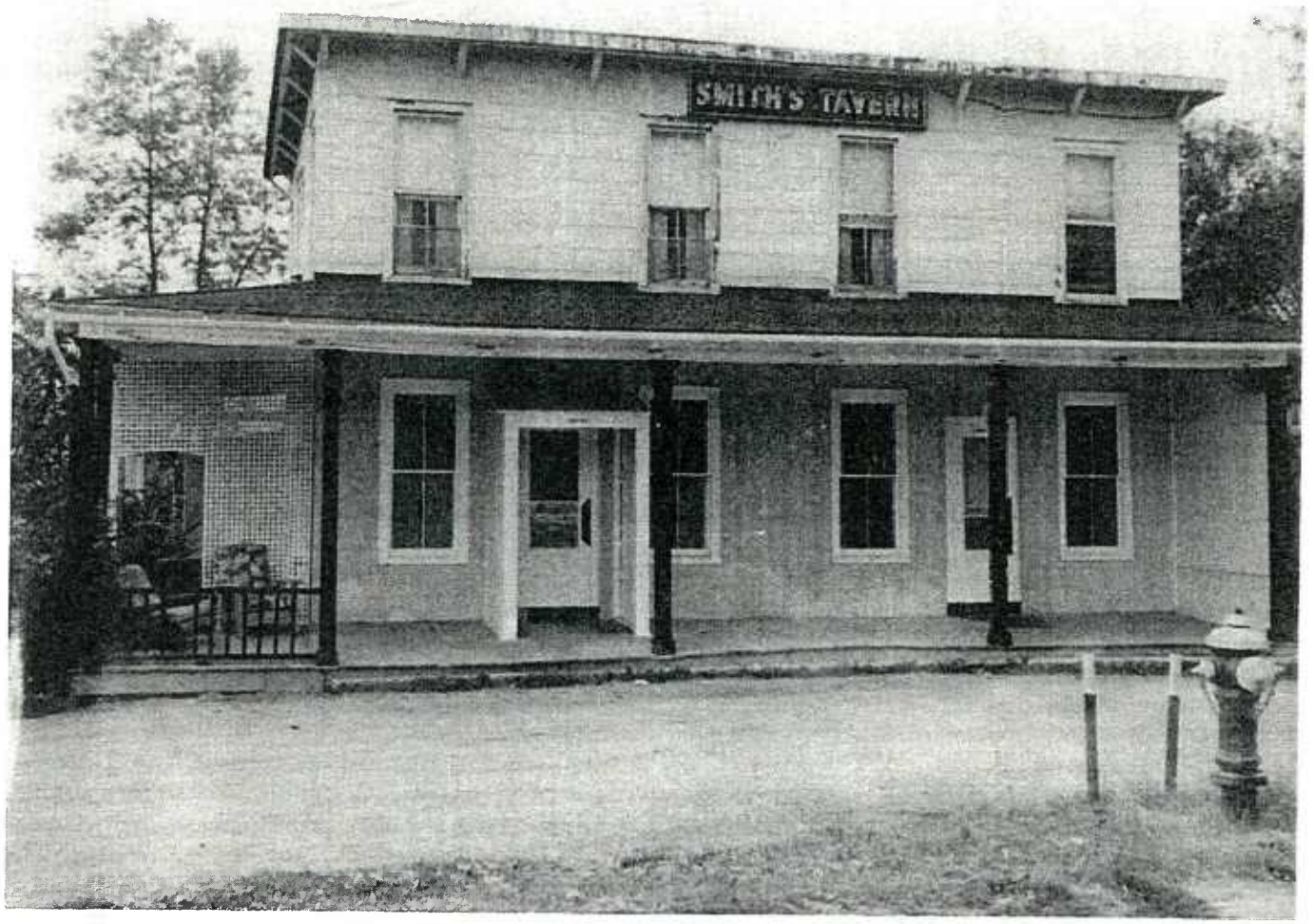
The trial began about 10 in the morning and went until 9 that night when it was adjoined until the following Saturday. During the marathon session, it was said that Coon and his two attorneys were getting the best of O'Brien. O'Brien sought help. At about 3 p. m , reinforcements arrived for him in the persons of John D. White of Altamont and Zeb Dyer, two noted attorneys. Shortly after their arrival, a recess was called. Then Mattice disappeared, and was said not to have been seen in the village for some time afterward. Abram Relyea and Coon then drafted S.J. Daring to take Mattice's place and the case proceeded again until nine in the evening when the trial was adjoined. On June 30, 1894 the jury returned a verdict of no course for action.

Fryer found his way into other squabbles but of a non-legal nature. In August 1894, the Odd Fellows Hall had arranged for their annual clam bake at the Grove but a disagreement arose between Fryer and the holders of the picnic over whether stands should be put up for the occasion. Fryer would not give in, so the 2,000 picnickers watched several trotting races on the track in back of the Grove and then headed across the tracks to have their clams and chicken and beer on Robert Coughtry's lawn (the former Voorhees house).

By 1897 Fryer, after having finished a stint of running the hotel for several years, had leased the business to Thomas McGrath of Boston for a period of three years at $75 per month. McGrath gave the hotel a new paint job, wallpapered the interior, put in a new bar and built a new track. Probably during this period the hotel looked the best it had in all its years of existence. Without a hotel business to worry about, Fryer was able to concentrate on his farming, which he did for two years. On a Tuesday in August 1899, after a day of drawing oats, Fryer went to bed and never got up again. He died next to his wife at the age of 70. To a certain extent he died in the same free-spirited way he had lived: he left no will nor had he made any arrangements for the disposition of his property.

Early the next year Peter Siver leased Fryer's Voorheesville farm. By 1909 the estate had been broken up into 50 building lots and by March of the following year the farm buildings, 50 acres of land, the Grove and Fryer's blacksmith shop were sold. His wife Margaret (Mathias) Fryer, died April 1915, at the age of 84.

When speaking of hotels, picnics and related social events, two other institutions need to be mentioned here as well: Joslin's Grove which was also used for picnics and Nick Oliver's hotel on Maple Avenue along the Vly near the grammar school. Joslin's Grove (essentially today's Orchard Park development) was



Smith's Tavern on Maple Avenue. Formerly the Brook View Hotel and earlier than that Nick Oliver's Hotel.

sought after by groups wanting some distance from a hotel-type atmosphere. Among these were temperance groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union(WCTU) who held their picnics at Joslin's Grove, the Bay View Club and the Voorheesville Grange.

As far as Nick Oliver's hotel goes, not much is known about it except that Oliver took in some boarders and served food as well as spirituous beverage. It clearly did not have the range and kinds of activities sponsored by either the Grove Hotel or Harris House. Later, when it was run by E. E. Albright, it was known as the Brookview Hotel and still later in its history it became famous for its quality pizza.

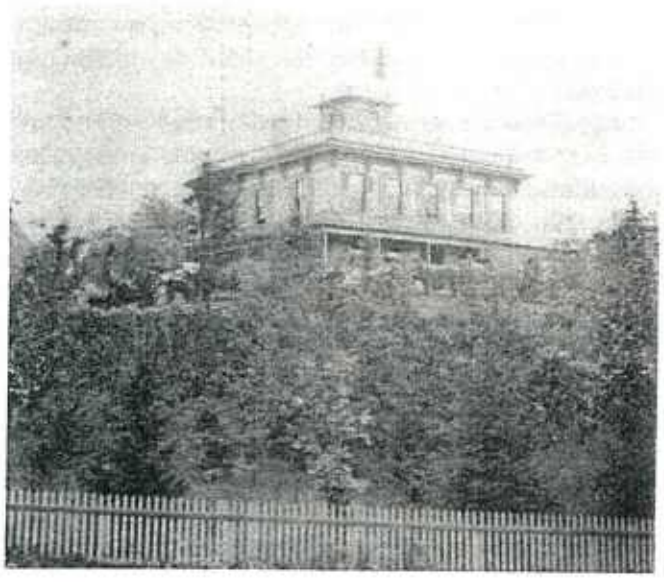
5. *The Boarding House*

While the hotels in the village served as excellent quarters for guests winter and summer, the boarding houses in and about the village were the mainstay for the dozens upon dozens of guests who came during the summer months. The boarding house was preferred over the hotels by many who sought to capture some of the quietude of the farm but without the chores associated with farm life. However, on occasion some did come to stay at one of the boarding houses as a working guest.

In most instances the boarding house was a slightly modified farmhouse with a large parlor for guests to congregate. Meals were generally eaten in common and the menu was what the woman of the house prepared, basically farm fare. Most of the houses were situated just outside the village limits although several inside the village had developed a fine reputation for quality.

One such boarding house was run by Mrs. Mahula Hoes (wife of S. V. R. Hoes) located in the original Voorhees house on the hill at the end of Prospect Street.[1] Mrs. Hoes was said to have attracted many wealthy Albanians from the time it opened about 1879 until her death in 1894. Part of this boarding house's attractiveness was due to its being close to the depot so boarders could make it to the trains without much fanfare. When a guest of some repute stayed at one of the houses in the village, such as that operated by Mrs. Hoes, that fact travelled around the small village in no time via the grapevine. Villagers were proud to have a guest of some repute staying in their midsts.

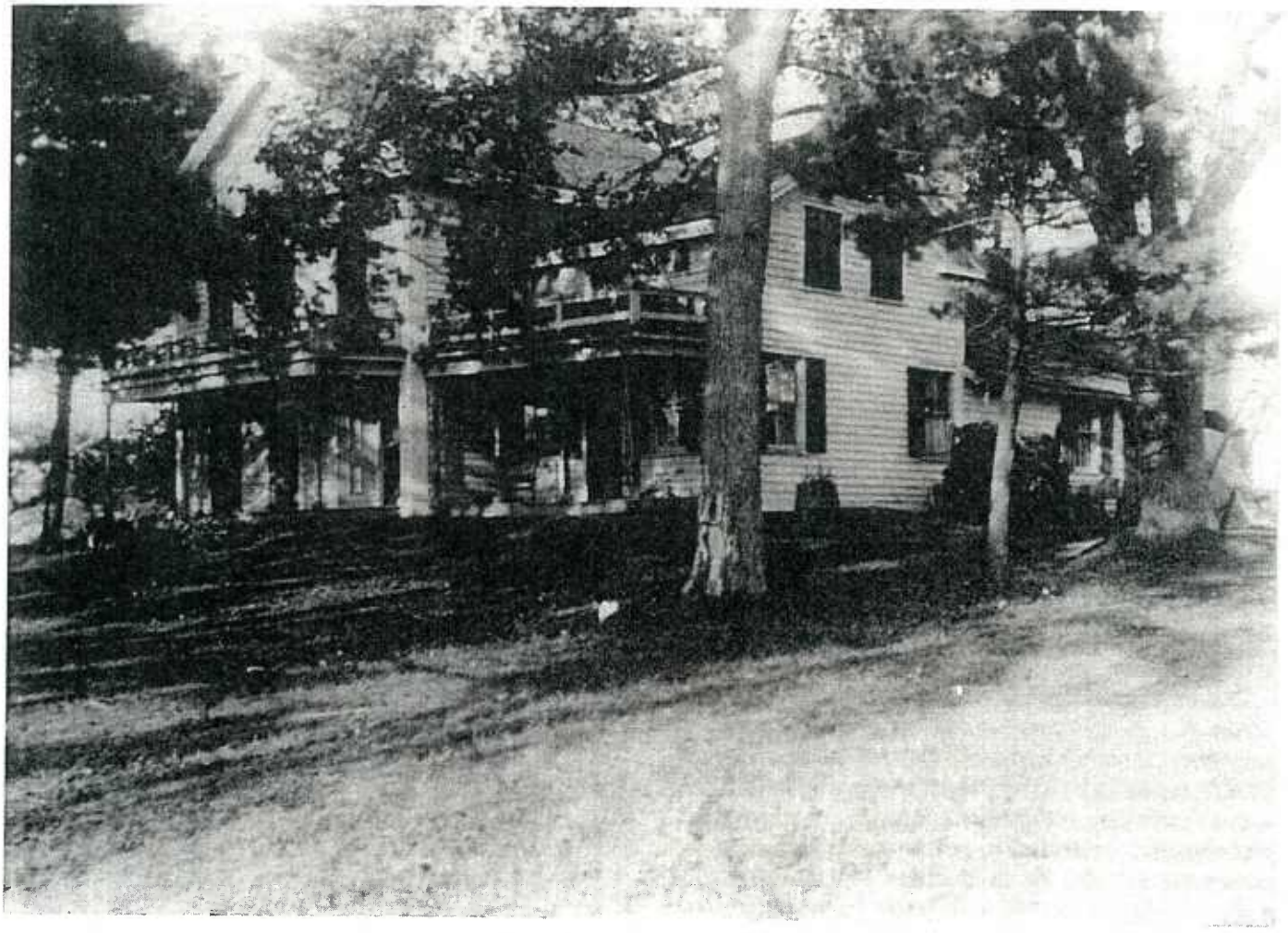
Most of the boarding houses had a name, usually one



The original Voorhees house. Later a boarding house owned by Stephen and Mahula Hoes and still later by Charlotte Coughlry.

appropriate to its physical location. Frank Van Auken's house on Van Auken Road (later Crow Ridge Road) was called the Valley View Farm, Silas Chesebro's was called Home Lawn Farm and William Relyea's was Mountain View because of its direct view of the escarpment. William Relyea generally boarded the largest number of guests each season sometimes as many as 25 or 30. The number of guests at the houses of Frank Van Auken and Silas Chesebro was usually not far behind. For example, in 1900 Relyea had 25 guests, Chesebro 20, Frank Van Auken and William Wormer had 10 each and James Goodfellow had three.

But, in addition to the larger and more established boarding houses, there were many others in the village. In these latter instances, a family might take in one or two guests for the season who would fit in with the family's routine. The family would not be in business per se and therefore not be set up to wait upon their guests in special ways. Running a boarding house was a full-time activity. The proprietors were busy morning, noon and night. They had to cook meals for the guests, make the beds each day as well as convey those guests,



Frank Van Auken's boarding house known as Valley View Farm. The house was located on Van Auken Road later changed to Crow Ridge Road.

SLINGERLANDS, N. Y.

Altitude, 214 feet. 7 miles from Albany. Fare 20 cents.

HOME LAWN HOTEL — Rufus Zelie, Prop. 1 block from station. Accommodates 50; adults $7 per week, children under 12 $3, transient $2 per day; pleasant drives.

VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y.

Altitude, 326 feet. 11 miles from Albany. Fare 33 cents.

Stage, daily except Sunday, to New Salem (3 m., fare 25c.), Wolf Hill (7 m., 50c.).

FAIRVIEW FARM-HOUSE — Wm. A. Winnie, Proprietor. P. O., New Salem, N. Y. 3 miles from station. Accommodates 20; adults $6 per week, children $4, transient $1 per day; modern improvements; good fishing and hunting; livery; located at foot of Helderberg Mountains.

GROVE HOTEL — C. W. Fick, Proprietor. Opposite station; apply for terms.

BROOKSIDE PLACE — Private Residence. Mrs. E. S. McIntosh, Proprietress, Clarksville, N. Y. 6 miles from station. Accommodates 10; terms $5 per week; special rates to families or for the season well shaded lawn; excellent water; fishing. Altitude 600 feet.

VILLAGE HOUSE — Mrs. A. Vanderpool, Proprietress, New Salem, N. Y. Accommodates 5; pleasant, shaded village house at the foot of the beautiful Helderberg mountains; 3 miles from station; terms $5.50 and $6 per week; plenty of fresh milk, eggs, etc.

VALLEY VIEW FARM — Frank Van Auken, Proprietor. 2 miles from station; on high ground; easy of access; pine grove and lawn; lovely view of Helderberg mountains; pure dry air; 467 feet above tide; large rooms. Accommodates 12; terms $6 per week.

HOME LAWN FARM — S. W. Chesebro, Proprietor. 1 mile from station. Accommodates 20; terms, $6 per week. Modern improvements; livery.

MOUNTAIN VIEW — Private residence. Wm. H. Relyea, Proprietor. 1 mile from Voorheesville; transportation free. Accommodates 20; terms $6 per week, children $4; fishing, livery.

BENNETT'S HILL FARM — Mrs. W. H. Rowe, Proprietress, Clarksville, Albany Co., N. Y. 6 miles from Voorheesville station. Accommodates 35; terms $5 per week, $1 per day. High altitude.

BROOK VIEW FARM — M. Pitcher, Proprietor. 1½ miles from station. Accommodates 10; terms $5 per week.

FARM HOUSE — Mrs. E. F. Bernholz, Proprietress. ¾ mile from station. Terms, adults $5, young children $2.50 per week, transients $1 per day.

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Boarding house directory for Voorheesville area from D&H's 1905 'A Summer Paradise'.

who continued to work in the city, back and forth from the station. The host might also have to take guests to the store for select items or shop for items guests requested from time to time.

The bustle would begin about the middle of June when the proprietors would start making all the necessary preparations for the visitors. By the end of the month, certainly by early July, the visitors would begin to pour in for their summer in the country. As mentioned, some visitors preferred to rent a whole house for the summer and fend for themselves. William Hotaling rented his home in 1894 to a group from Albany and then moved in with Myndert Blessing until the summer was over. Another summer Leroy Schell did the same but moved into the Harris House. The Leroy Schell family then went to the Adirondacks for their vacation, visited by daddy on several weekends during the summer.

Single boarders came, oftentimes retired couples came and occasionally an entire family would come to stay the summer or any part of it. Most of the visitors were from the city, some from Albany, others from Schenectady and occasionally some travelers came up the Hudson from New York City. In some cases, when an entire family came to stay the summer, the breadwinner would continue to go to work each day. He would board the train at the station each morning heading for the city after a hearty country breakfast. In the early evening, he would ride the train back, returning to the vacation retreat for more respite and quiet.

Watching these boarders get off the train in the evening was a ten-year old newspaper boy named Arthur Gregg. Gregg, the son of the Methodist minister (1897-1899) used to tell how he waited for the "The Flyer" to arrive each evening about 4:30 with copies of the day's Times-Union. These he peddled around the village to homes and in the taverns. Gregg recalled seeing at this time the buggies of boarding house proprietors waiting at the train station to convey their guests back to the house, noting that: "Late afternoon every available space about the depot and lower Main Street was crowded with conveyances large and small."

It's not clear why, but something about the boarders seems to have irked Gregg for he continues by saying the waiting surreys came: "to carry pompous derby-hatted papas to the arms of their families who all day long had been gorging themselves on the rich home cooking of the Frank Van Aukens, Isaiah Van Aukens, the Dandy Hank Relyeas, the Odi Youngs." [2]

Recreation for boarders during the summer was quiet and simple, oftentimes consisting of no more than several hours sitting by a stream or having an afternoon picnic or reading beneath the shade of a porch. During the day, some house guests might rent a horse and carriage and

The banks of the Vly Creek below La Grange Falls were a favorite picnic haunt for many boarding house guests in Voorheesville.

Some part of the boarder's day was spent writing wish-you-we-e-here postcards to friends and relatives. Here the writer announces a ball game betwee- Voorheesville and Delmar that's not to be missed!

take a ride up the mountain. Others might go for a nature walk in the woods or hike to the LaGrange Mill Pond and have a picnic or take a swim in the Vly below the gorgeous falls. While the pace of work life had been speeded up by industrialization, when it came to recreation, it was still the Victorian Age.

However, as summer progressed, these activities could become stale for some boarders who had grown accustomed to a faster pace of life in the city during the rest of the year.[3] A part of the work of each boarding house proprietor, therefore, was to schedule activities periodically for their guests' entertainment. This might be something as simple as an evening buggy ride to some unexplored area or a hay ride to hear the Voorheesville band play. Or, if there was a concert in Slingerlands or Altamont, a host might hitch up a team of horses to a hay wagon and take his guests there. As might be expected, often the ride to and from the event was as enjoyable as the event itself.

Some evenings William Relyea would schedule a recital in the common parlor where his boarders would gather to hear the performance. After dinner on a Saturday Relyea periodically held a kite-flying contest which his guests reveled in immensely. On one or two weekends he might hold a clambake on the grounds of his farm. This, of course, would include games and races.

We have some sense of how appreciative Relyea's guests were of his efforts. On one occasion, when the summer was drawing to a close, Relyea's guests held a little party for their host. During the get-together, the guests presented Relyea with a hand-painted honey plate, a fine whip for his buggy, and a decorated fruit disk and cake plate, tokens of their appreciation.

During this era when the temperance movement was strong, a major concern of many vacationers, when selecting a place to stay, was whether alcohol was served or even allowed in a given home. A significant number of vacationers wanted no part of John Barleycorn. Hence a special breed of boarding house emerged known as the temperance house. One such house was opened in the village by John Whitbeck in 1905. Like the hotels, many temperance houses received guests year round. There was no drinking allowed, of course, and meals and a room could be had for as little as a dollar a day. It's also likely that no alcohol was allowed at the boarding houses run by other members of the village such as the Van Auken family or Silas Chesebro because of their religious affiliation.

All the while we have been talking about paying vacationers but there was another kind of guest who visited the country when the weather got hot, the relatives from the city. When city temperatures reached the unbearable point in July and August, many city dwellers would take a ride to the country by horse and carriage or by train either for a day's outing or for a weekend to look up their long forgotten "country cousins." At the same time, it was not uncommon for nieces and nephews to spend their entire summer at their uncle's farm, helping out or providing companionship to their cousins they saw infrequently, if at all, during the school year.

As the 20th century rolled around, so did the automobile and the country cousins began going places themselves. The era of the tourist was beginning. In the summer of 1901 an article appeared in the paper talking about the merits of traveling to the city as a summer tourist. This was indeed a turn of the tables because it was the country that had been touted as the place to go until that time. When the automobile arrived en masse, there was no holding back the villagers from taking to their touring or pleasure cars to see the rest of the world. Ironically, the automobile which provided so much pleasure and freedom for Voorheesville residents provided the same opportunities for city folks. With roads providing thousands of more options for travel than the singularly limited track, people sought vacation

spots off the railroad's path and the once-loved boarding house vacation gradually became more and more an anachronism.

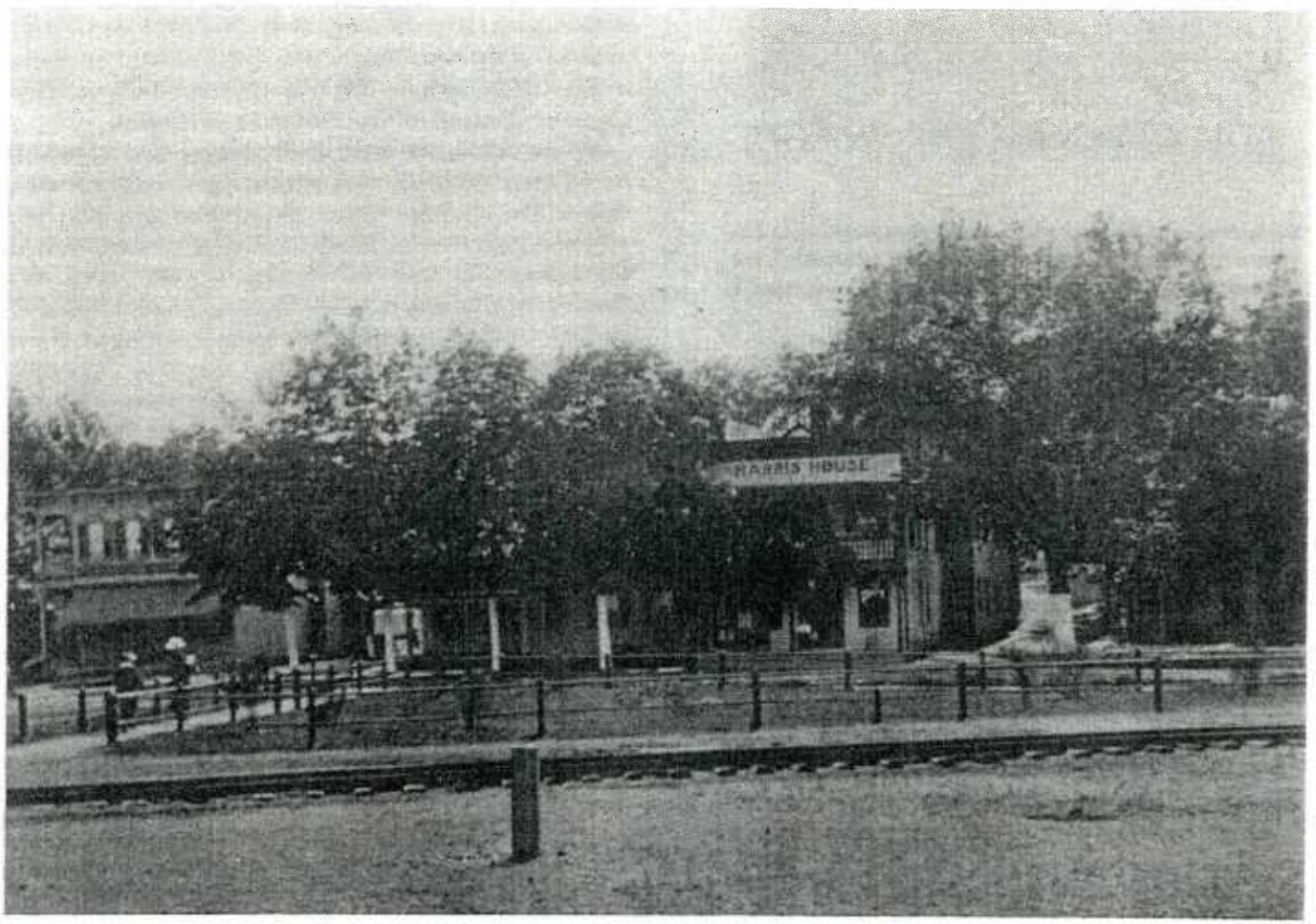
6. *Tourists Of The Boxcar Variety*

If tramps were a problem during hard times for towns along the railroad, Voorheesville's problems were doubled because two roads passed through the village. And because so many freights stopped at the junction to drop off and pick up cars along the several sidetracks, the village was made even more accessible for visiting hoboes. Once the boxcars sat along the sidetracks, they became an invitation to stay. From time to time the settled-in hoboes would venture for a walk along the quiet streets of the village.

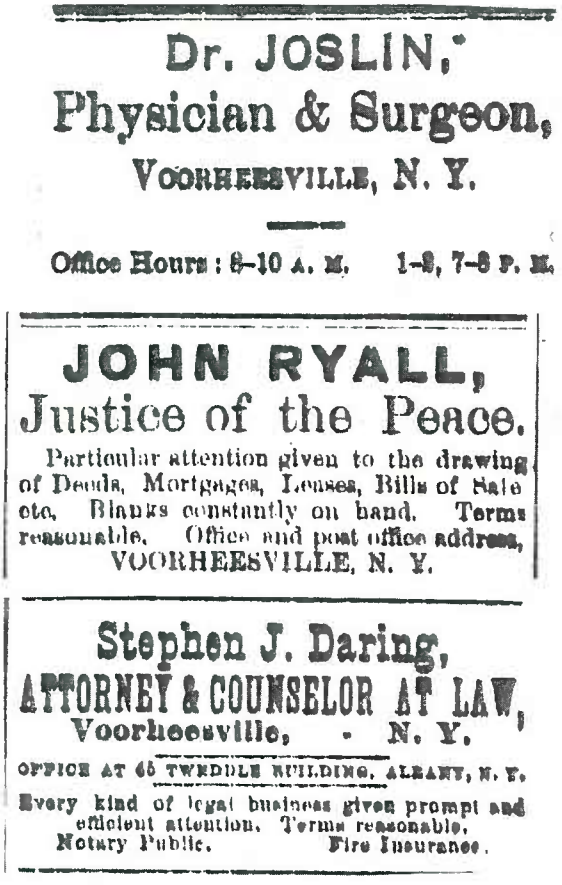
When economic recessions occurred and finding work became a problem, the number of "boxcar tourists," as some villagers called the hoboes, increased significantly. Indeed, for some, the hobo became a burden or at least a constant annoyance. Occasionally this annoyance would be expressed by a Voorheesville resident through a letter to the editor or a short article in the paper. In a July 1895 issue of the paper, an article appeared written in a not-too-friendly tone toward the tramps. Tramps, one section of the article read, "should not be allowed to loiter around even for a day, but should be fired off the cars, fired out of town, refused a single mouthful of food or a night's shelter and should be arrested and sent to work and compelled to it by the lash if necessary."

Certainly harsh words, but for a small village the size of Voorheesville somewhat understandable. First of all, along the tracks the hoboes would set up encampments. Sometimes a good dozen such encampments might be found. Arthur Gregg says that toward the end of the century from 10 to 15 lighted campfires could be seen along the West Shore tracks from the depot to the upper crossing. These encampments often included a shack or shanty which the hoboes built for protection from the elements.

When hungry and without food, many of the hoboes would oftentimes venture up Voorheesville Avenue to ask for a meal at one of the church parsonages or village homes, sometimes in exchange for work. Arthur Gregg, says that it was not uncommon for six or seven hoboes



The village park adjacent to the railroad station gave the entrance to Voorheesville an appealing look — to boxcar tourists as well. The park was used by children to play ball games.



Dr. JOSLIN,
Physician & Surgeon,
VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y.

Office Hours: 8–10 A. M. 1–3, 7–8 P. M.

JOHN RYALL,
Justice of the Peace.

Particular attention given to the drawing of Deeds, Mortgages, Leases, Bills of Sale etc. Blanks constantly on hand. Terms reasonable. Office and post office address, VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y.

Stephen J. Daring,
ATTORNEY & COUNSELOR AT LAW,
Voorheesville, N. Y.

OFFICE AT 45 TWEDDLE BUILDING, ALBANY, N. Y.

Every kind of legal business given prompt and efficient attention. Terms reasonable.
Notary Public. Fire Insurance.

When things got out of hand in the village, oftentimes the services of John Ryall, Fisher Joslin or Stephen Daring were sought.

to beg a meal at the parsonage then located at 8 Voorheesville Avenue. Gregg said his father always kept a load of wood on hand that needed splitting.

When the weather got exceedingly cold, some of these boxcar tourists would seek refuge in one of Frank Bloomingdale's several hay barns along the track. As mentioned earlier, on more than a number of occasions, fires lighted by the tramps to warm themselves would get the hay going and a fire was in full progress. Often enough the result was 60 or 70 tons of hay or straw literally gone up in smoke.

As is clear from the newspaper article mentioned above, there were times when the villagers would have their fill of the tramps walking through the village streets or loitering at its perimeter. Occasionally a roundup of the uninvited guests was called for. Those caught would be brought before the justice of the peace or put on the next train going out of town what was referred to as "boxcar justice." In May 1897, one such roundup occurred when a large group of residents started out on a Monday evening beating the bushes around the tracks looking for tramps. The group rounded up five and brought them before the justice of the peace. Two were discharged and the remaining three, John Ryan, George Choffin and William Copes, were sent to the county jail for 15 days each. The paper reported that Choffin and Copes were Black.

Perhaps what bothered villagers about the tramps most were the acts of petty pilfering they engaged in from time to time forcing residents to always have to be on the alert. When Cary Bradt was painting his house in the village during the summer of 1894, he took off his vest and laid it down with his gold watch in the pocket. In the meantime a hobo came along and asked Mrs. Bradt (Frank Bloomingdale's sister) for something to eat. She went inside to prepare something but when she returned with the food, the tramp had disappeared. About two hours later, when Bradt had finished his painting job and put his vest back on, he discovered that his watch was missing.

From time to time, a hobo would require the assistance of one of the physicians in the village when their attempts to board or leave a train were misdirected. Occasionally poor judgement resulted in the loss of an arm or leg so that the attending physician might even have to accompany the unasked for patient to the hospital in the city. At other times a tramp, trying to jump a moving freight, might not be so fortunate, fall flat under the train and be crushed to death.

7. A Few Inhospitable Moments

The story of Cary Bradt's pilfered watch, allegedly by a hobo, suggests that all was not calm and serene in Gotham at all times. Indeed there were more than enough occasions when disorderly and even criminal conduct made its way into the social life of the community. Some of these acts were regarded as simply annoying while others required serious attention from the constable and justice of the peace.

Jacob Jacobson thought the constable warranted a call because of an incident he was involved in at a joint Patrons of Industry and Farmer's league picnic in September 1897. Jacobson got involved in a shell game with two men who managed to grab his pocketbook which contained $60. The two con artists, John Hanlon and William Thompson, jumped an ongoing freight and beat it out of town. Jacobson immediately informed the sheriff who telegraphed ahead a description of the men. The men were tracked down and brought back to Voorheesville for a hearing. Jacobson retrieved the money he was swindled out of.

A similar kind of railroad getaway was orchestrated on another occasion by Luke White a railroad worker who was a boarder at the Grove Hotel. White checked out of the hotel somewhat surreptitiously one morning, failing to pay his bill of $21. Information about White's

description was telegraphed to Schenectady. There he was apprehended by city authorities shortly after.

There were other instances of criminal conduct. One night an unknown person shot a bullet through the window of Thomas Bewsher's store. No one was in the store and no one was hurt but Bewsher put a $5 reward for information leading to the culprit.

On another occasion in the fall of 1897, burglars unsuccessfully tried to blow the safe in Frank Bloomingdale's office.

In the fall of 1902 there was a brief flurry of speed racing up and down Main Street. In one case, Frank Bent, from the southern part of town, got drunk and rode through the street under the crack of the whip. Constable Tygert went into the street and hailed Bent down. He put his horse in the stable and then brought Bent before Justice Ryall who committed him to jail to sober up. The following day Bent pleaded guilty and was fined $3. Villagers were concerned because it was the second offense of its kind within a week.

At other times, gambling was seen as a problem. In 1909 a complaint had been made to the authorities that a gambling joint had been set up in the village. The existence of the parlor was reported in the papers and no more was heard about it afterward.

There were other occasions of rowdy behavior that some citizens found disconcerting. Sometimes this included tremendous fist fights in the street. At different times in the village's history, these fights seemed part and parcel of its ongoing atmosphere.

And as far as disorderly conduct went, there were times when George Hotaling, George Taylor or Ed Hotaling, truant officers at different times, showed up to look for students playing hookey.

"The first school I went to was in Voorheesville and it was located right on this spot but it was only three rooms. This building wasn't here at all and when I was in first and second grade we had a seat where 2 or 3 would sit on the same row and our desks were attached. We didn't have any inside plumbing—we had outside toilets and we had to get water from a pail and all used the same dipper."

— Gertrude Smith

CHAPTER FIVE

A Note on Provisions

1. Groceries and Meats

At the time Voorheesville was finally ready to incorporate in 1899, its population had increased to nearly 500, more than triple what it had been 15 years earlier. As the population of the village grew, so did the number of outlets for food, fuel, ice and other basic supplies residents needed for everyday sustenance. In 1854 when the Reids operated their tavern along the Indian Ladder Road (Altamont Road), there was only one general store in the village, that of the Stalker family situated on Maple Avenue. By 1866 the Stalker store was no longer in existence and the Reids had transformed their tavern into a general store, the only general store in the vicinity of the village. In 1870 Peter Wormer opened a store at the foot of Main Street across from the railroad depot and the village had two stores operating simultaneously. Clearly a sign of growth.

During this early Voorheesville era (1860s and 1870s)generally only one or at the most two grocery or general stores were in operation at a given time. Clearly this was sufficient for a village the size of Voorheesville at that time. But by 1890 when the cider factory was ready to open, it was as if an explosion had occurred. There were four grocery stores in operation. However, we might add that this was more the exception, the rule during most of that decade and the next being three grocery stores in operation at one time.

In 1890 Abram LaGrange had one of the four stores. This he had operated since 1877 and would continue to operate until his death in February 1894. A second store was operated by John Wands who had taken over the business from his son-in-law, William Swift, in 1888. Wands's store was the largest and seems to have had the widest selection of grocery items.[1]

Rufus Flansburgh was the third grocer, operating the store he had built at the top of Main Street the year before. Later this would become Levi Wood's store.[2] The fourth store in 1890 was run by Conrad Fryer. In April 1890 Fryer, who, as we have seen, was forever thickening the life plot of the village, had reopened the grocery store he had operated earlier. Fryer's interest in the grocery business would come and go and his store would follow suit.

Several years after Thomas Bewsher sold his hardware

Thomas Bewsher's grocery store on Main Street was situated between present day laundermat and Crannell's lumber. By this time Gilbert had taken over feed and grain business from Schell. The first location of the Odd Fellows Lodge.

How Much Could You Save by Selecting Your Food More Carefully?

About one-half the family income is spent for eatables. Every time you have to throw away food because you cannot eat it or don't like it, you are throwing away money. People who buy "our kind" of groceries don't need to do this. Everything we sell comes to you good and fresh and is guaranteed to be pure and wholesome; also the price is right. Try us and see.



HARRISON FRYER,

Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Boots, Shoes and General Merchandise.

VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y.

1903

Finds me doing business as before at the same place, thanking my patrons for past favors I would ask a continuance of the same. I am in a better position to do business than last year having added more goods to my stock and having learned the class of goods which give the best satisfaction, I am prepared to supply the best trade at lowest prices, which you will find to your satisfaction if you will call at my store where you will find a full line choice groceries of the most popular brands. A full line of

Dry Goods and Notions, Boots, Shoes and Rubber goods, Salt and Fish, Fruits, Nuts, Candies, Drugs and Patent Medicine.

Also a new line Wall Paper from 3 to 12½ per roll. It is fine, call and see it.

R. G. Bagley,

Licensed Druggist, Opp. Union Station.

Voorheesville, N. Y.

Don't Skip a Word

OR YOU MAY

Skip Dollars!

New ideas are to work here. Hammers and saws are to work here cutting and fixing up bargains and prices that must suit everybody. We can't change the government only once in four years, but we change Our Bargains all the while. We look to quality first of all. Nothing low grade, no matter what the price. We aim to give you every advantage, that knowing what to buy and when to buy and taking large and small quantities, brings to us.

Let us Look the Matter up Right Here!

Standard Granulated Sugar,	4½c lb
Columbia A. Sugar,	4½c lb
White Extra C. Sugar,	4c lb
Rock Candy Syrup,	70c gal
Maple Syrup,	$1.00 gal
Mixed Candies,	10c lb, 3 lbs for 25c
Bananas,	20c doz
Florida Oranges,	35c doz
Lemons,	20c doz
Hams, New Smoked,	12c lb
Full Cream Cheese,	12c lb
Buckwheat and Clover Honey,	12c, 15c lb
Ford Dates,	8c lb
Figs,	20c lb
Confectioners Pow'd Sugar,	6½c lb
Cut Loaf Sugar,	7c lb
4 Crown Raisins,	7c lb
New California Prunes, large,	8c lb
Ford Dates,	8c lb
Figs,	20c lb
Confectioners Pow'd Sugar,	6½c lb
Cut Loaf Sugar,	7c lb
4 Crown Raisins,	7c lb
New California Prunes, large,	8c lb
Ground Pepper, Cinnamon, Allspice, Ginger, and Mustard,	20c lb
Ground Cloves,	25c lb
Nutmegs,	7c oz
Cleveland Baking Powder,	40c lb
Davis O. K. Baking Powder,	20c lb
Our Own Brand,	25c lb
Diamond Condensed Milk,	2 cans 25c
3 Cans Corn,	25c
2 Cans Salmon,	25c
A Good Broom for	20c and 25c
Teas, Green, 20c, 25c, 30c, 40c and 48c lb	
Uncolored Japan Tea,	45c & 48c lb
English Breakfast Tea, (a fine one)	50c lb
A No. 1 Prime Java Coffee,	35c
Java and Mocha,	35c lb
Rio Coffee,	25c lb
French Breakfast Coffee,	22c lb
Rice,	5 lbs for 25c
Port Rico Molasses,	30c gal
New Orleans, (new crop)	48c gal
Brazil Nuts,	10c lb
Water White Oil, 150 test,	7c gal
Beans,	10c qt
Lard,	8c lb

Our extracts, such as Vanilla, Lemon and other flavoring, are No. 1.

Then we come to our Shoe Department. We can give you Men's Working Shoes, oil grain, closed front, at $1.60. Beats any $2.00 Grain you ever saw. Also a Men's English Cordovan Shoe, for light wear, good value at $4.00, our price, $2.25. A Men's Seal Grain at $1.50, worth $2.00. Boys' School Shoes at $1.25. Boys' Fine Sunday Shoe, for $1.50. They are stylish and well made. Now comes Women's Shoes. A Dandy Alpine Kid Shoe, square toe, all sizes, up to date shoe, real value $3.00, our price $2.00, also one that is of Dongolla mode, fancy for Sunday wear, $1.60, real value, $2.25. We have everything in shoes for Men, Women and Children.

A big assortment of New Designs in Calico just received at a Low Figure. Give us a Trial and we will convince you that we are correct.

J. B. Wands & Son,

THE HUSTLERS

Of Voorheesville.

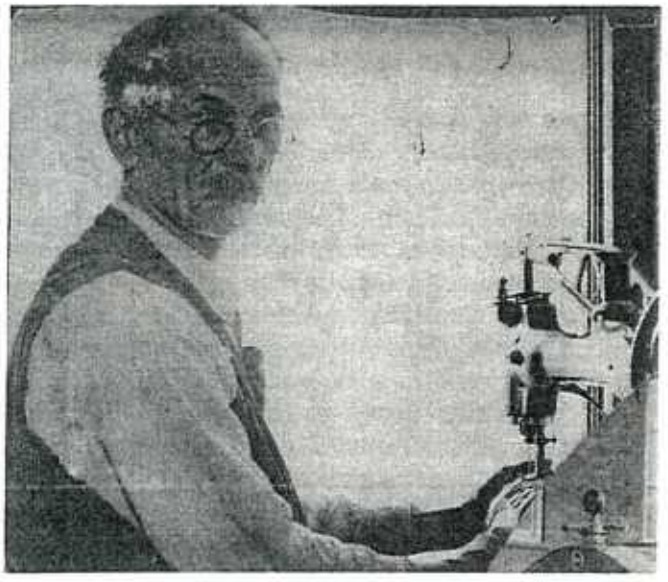
NEW GOODS!
NEW STYLES!
NEW COLORS!
NEW PRICES!

We are prepared to show you the largest variety of samples of Wall Paper this side of New York, at astonishing low prices. In three days notice we can supply all. Come and select your paper.

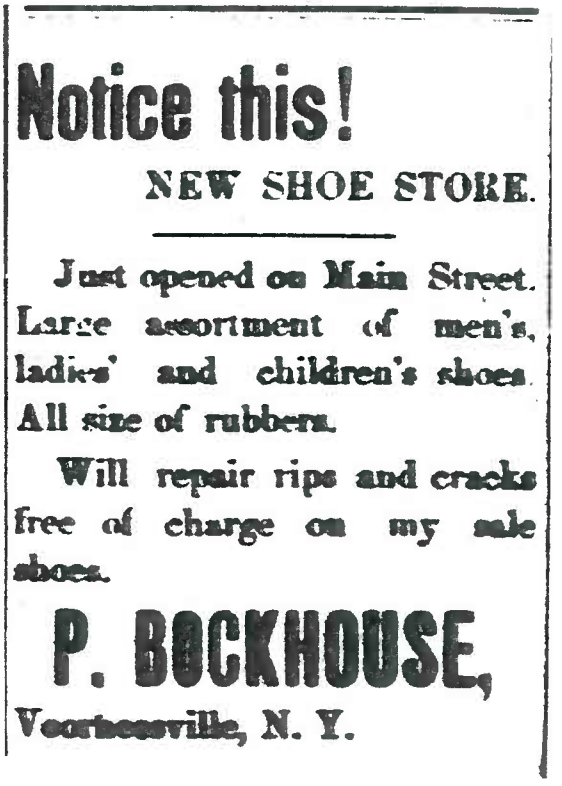
L. WOOD & CO.,

VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y.

A sample of ads for village grocery stores from 1895 (Wand's) to 1909 (Fryer's).



Peter Bockhouse, a German immigrant who became a U.S. citizen in 1892, served as village shoemaker for close to a half century.



Notice this!

NEW SHOE STORE.

Just opened on Main Street. Large assortment of men's, ladies' and children's shoes. All size of rubbers.

Will repair rips and cracks free of charge on my sale shoes.

P. BOCKHOUSE,

Voorheesville, N. Y.

store to the Joslin Brothers, he too opened a grocery store which was situated next to Leroy Schell's (later Gilbert's) feed and grain store. Bewsher's store, which offered a general line of groceries, seems to have been the least inviting of all those in the village.[3]

The village grocery stores were complemented by a number of meat markets which were run separately from the grocery business. While there was a good amount of turnover in ownership of the grocery stores in the village, the butchers seemed to go in and out of business like the proverbial fiddler's elbow, from this site to that and then onto another. Among the earliest butchers serving the village was John Livingston, who had opened a meat and oyster market toward the end of 1885.[4] About the same time E.R. Wormer and Son also had a meat market. But in 1886 they sold the business to Robert Wands and Jacob Markle. However, in three months Wormer was back in business.

Daniel Albright seems to have had the greatest longevity as a butcher in the village but he too had a checkered career. First he was at one location in the early 1890s, then he moved to another. By 1904 he was working for a trucking firm in Albany but, shortly afterward, he returned to the village to reopen another meat market.

While those in the butcher trade seemed to have the least longevity when it came to length of stay in business, it is worth noting that during this era, it was not uncommon for people to work at a number of different occupations during their lifetime. Moreover, as we saw with Frank Bloomingdale or Conrad Fryer, a person might have one main occupation or business and then generate several satellite business ventures. Al Borst, who had opened the first restaurant in the village, first studied to be a doctor, then he worked with John Tygert in his milk business, occasionally he speculated, he was also involved in the canning factory and then he opened his restaurant. John Tygert himself was involved in a number of different trades or businesses.

We might also add here that, while in the late 20th century such changes in work are looked upon as a character flaw, a century earlier the notion of having a fixed career and sticking to it for the remainder of one's life was not as rigid as today. To some extent life was more fluid and experimental. If something didn't work out, something else was tried.

For example, in the spring of 1899 Henry Bockhouse, the brother of Peter Bockhouse, the village shoemaker, moved to the village from Troy to open a meat market. The Trojan most likely came in response to an invitation from his brother, having been told of all the possibilities the growing village had to offer. When Henry arrived, the two brothers, immigrants from Germany, purchased a horse and wagon and began peddling beef throughout the countryside, perhaps going even as far as New Salem and up the mountain.

But for some reason Henry didn't find his life in the village as rewarding as expected. By December his attempt at rural living was through; he was on his way back to Troy leaving his brother Peter with both a meat market and shoemaker's business to care for. Within two weeks, however, the cobbler sold the meat market to Oscar Ferguson and concentrated on his shoes.

To add to the meat and oyster trade in the village,

from time to time a fish business emerged. This might be a fish market or a peddler who traveled through the streets peddling fish from house to house by horse and wagon. In April 1904 Nick Oliver, after he had opened a hotel in the village, added a fish market on the premises. Periodically Oliver would pack the fish in ice and peddle up and down the roads making his presence known through a peddler's call. Several years before the Oliver venture, a fish peddler by the name of Jones, travelled through the village streets shouting from his wagon: "Fruit, Vegetables, Fish! Here They Go!"

Whenever anyone did open a meat market, they were certain to make oysters a prominent part of their trade. This was an era of oyster mania. In cities, the oyster bar had become a part of everyday life and when a party or picnic was held in Voorheesville, oysters were usually an integral part of the menu. It was not uncommon for the paper, when reporting an outing or picnic, to tell just how many oysters had been eaten on the occasion. People couldn't get their lips on the shelled beings fast enough. It was said that the oyster express trains from Baltimore beat the government mail trains in speed to their destinations.[5]

2. *Bread and Lunch*

For many villagers in the thick of late 19th century life, it must have seemed strange that there was less and less time to do the ordinary things that used to get done. It's commonplace to suggest that industrialization had speeded up the pace of life but there were consequences to this speeding up that were serious. Increasingly people began to rely on the purchase of many of the services and goods they once did or made for themselves.[1] This included not only education but the taking care of roads and household activities such as baking, as is evident from the number of bakeries that sprung up at this time. While most housewives continued to make their own bread well into the 20th century, an increasing number chose or had to buy bread from a baker or at the grocer's. It was only a matter of time before Voorheesville had its first bakery.

That came in the winter of 1894. Altamont had had a bakery since July 1889 and Clarksville had its Wright's Celebrated Bread as well. In late 1893 T.C. White (the T. C. standing for Theophilus Civil) thought a bakery would go. He ordered an oven which arrived in January 1894. The oven was set up in the basement of Ed O'Brien's house next door to White's on Maple Avenue and the bakery was ready. White, however, was an entrepreneur of sorts, not a baker, so that in February, to help get things underway, he hired a baker from Albany. Villagers agreed that the new baker made very fine bread. White's sons, Ira and John, loaded the fresh-baked bread into wicker-type baskets and went door to door in the village to deliver the loaves that had been ordered.

But the new bakery under White's direction was short-lived. In March 1894, T. C. or "Orf", as he was better known, had an altercation with his baker and subsequently fired him. Without the skill to carry on himself, White looked to sell the business. In August he found a buyer in his neighbor Henry Bell. Bell did well with his new enterprise, in fact expanded the business, so that it was still going strong as the century neared its end. Surely open for debate is whether the product of the Voorheesville ovens was ever able to match the popular Wright's Celebrated Clarksville Bread.

Workers in the village and travelers getting off the trains at the depot were interested in something more substantial than bread to eat. After the Grove Hotel was built in the mid 1870s, anyone who arrived in the village by horse or via the railroad and wanted something to eat could stop at the hotel and repast at its dining room. Before that time a traveler might walk or go by buggy to Reid's tavern or perhaps grab a bite at Wormer's grocery store. But after the railroad was in full swing, a traveler desiring something quick and less elaborate than the fare at the hotel had no real option. That is, until Albert Borst leased property from the railroad in February 1892 and made preparations to open a restaurant near the depot. After advertising his new venture in the Farlin News-Letter, Borst opened the doors to welcome his first patrons on a Saturday in April 1892.

In addition to serving a regular menu of food at his restaurant, Borst also served ice cream during the summer months. During warm weather villagers would flock to his ice cream stand to taste Borst's homemade product. And when the fair rolled around, some years Borst would travel to Altamont and set up a booth to sell clams and oysters to the many fairgoers.

For travelers on the railroad, the restaurant or lunch counter at or near the depot was the fast food outlet of its day. Lunch counters became prevalent in or around train stations during this era. Cartoon posters depicted travelers gulping down their food to make their scheduled train on time. In April 1896 travelers and residents of Voorheesville alike rejoiced for not only did Borst revamp his eatery but was now prepared to serve lunch and at all hours of the day![2] For some reason during the fall of 1897 Borst spoke about giving up his business altogether but in 1898 he was still not only in business but had added a news stand to his restaurant.

He also continued with his ice cream. In the spring of 1900, Borst opened what seems to have been a second ice cream parlor in one of the small rooms of the Joslin flat iron building adjoining the hardware store. About the same time T.C. White also opened a soda fountain store next to the Harris House. Perhaps White bought out Borst's ice cream parlor the next year or so, for in 1902 White was running two ice cream parlors in the

THE KING OF ALL

Albany Ice Cream Company

Makers of High-Grade Cream and Sherbets

Fancy Moulds and Bricks a Specialty

Party Orders Solicited

Our Local Agent T. C. WHITE, Will Supply You

T. C. White's ice cream parlor and news stand was located at the foot of Main Street directly north of the Harris House.

village. The ice cream parlour business was seasonal, so those set up just for the warmer months would be closed by the middle of October. However, White kept an ice cream store and newsstand next to the Harris House until he died in the early 1930s. At one point it was also possible to buy a train ticket at his newsstand. Many observers of Dutch culture in the Hudson-Mohawk region comment on how Dutch continued to be spoken in some of its areas well into the twentieth century. White was one of those who knew and did speak Dutch at times.

3. The Village Milk Route

Not only did White and Borst have to buy milk to prepare their homemade ice cream but so did all village residents who had severed their immediate connections with the farm. At one time, of course, nearly every farm family provided for at least its own supply of milk. Those who did not, traded with a neighbor or purchased milk at the general store. Here customers brought their own bucket and ladled out a portion of milk from the large metal cans the milk was

Hoffmeister's Ice Cream Parlor (1928) at the corner of Center and Main Street. Originally the sight of Daniel Albright's Meat Market. In front of store (l to r): Hoffmeister, Billy Flansburgh, Gladys Flansburgh and McLarey. Shaffer store to right.

transported in by the farmer. Farmers also brought butter to the store in large wooden tubs or in two-pound loaves. To keep a steady supply of butter on hand the groceryman also traded farmers those goods which the farmer could not make himself such as teas, coffee, sugar, materials for clothing and shoes and hats.

The first mention of a regular milk route in the village is found in an April 1888 edition of the paper. John F. Tygert, after he had left the hay and straw and then the lumber business, decided to develop a door-to-door milk route. Tygert at the time was offering fresh Jersey milk at five cents a quart. Customers along the route would leave a pail on the porch and the dairyman would ladle out a quantity from one of the large milk cans in the wagon. While this method might seem quaint, on occasion it presented serious health problems. for diseases could easily be passed along through the milk.[1]

In addition to his house-to-house sales, Tygert also sold milk to the village storekeepers. At times this included dropping off a large can of buttermilk at Matthias' store in the village on a Saturday morning. Word quickly went about that the buttermilk was available and before day's end the contents of the can would be gone.

Tygert, however, always seemed restless when it came to business. Not only did his village milk business come on the heels of his two former business ventures but, by the end of April, he was planning to open a butter and milk business in the city of Albany. Tygert announced that the products for his new store would be furnished by the newly established creamery at Altamont.

When the Altamont creamery opened toward the end of April 1888, it became a source of milk and butter

To the People of Voorheesville.

We would be pleased to have you give our milk a fair trial as we guarantee it to be pure and clean and are ready to have it tested by the highest authority.

C. WORMER.

Cyrenus Wormer's ad letting residents know he was beginning a milk route (April 1898).

products for those who wanted to peddle milk door to door. What deserves some attention is the advertising it used when it first opened, for it reveals the basic reason housewives were given at the time to abandon doing things for themselves and to buy market-produced products. More often than not the reason offered was freedom from daily drudgery, as the Altamont ad read: "We congratulate good housewives who will be relieved from all the drudgery of buttermaking." With the machine age in full force, people generally were relying on the machine to do their basic everyday drudgery work. Housewives were hardly the exception and those who were selling products in the marketplace played upon this point directly and constantly.

The creamery ad was not far off in another comment it made in the line below, that the creamery would finally help people get "rid of strong butter." Making good butter was an art and agricultural journals spent considerable time offering suggestions to housewives about procedures to follow for good results. Indeed

GEORGE M. BELL

BREEDER OF

America's Best Buff Wyandottes

WINNERS AT NEW YORK, BOSTON AND
ALL THE LEADING SHOWS OF AMERICA

EXHIBITION BIRDS A SPECIALTY

Voorheesville, N.Y. 8/27/10 19

At the beginning of this century George Bell's Wyandottes were a source not only of pride for villagers but fresh eggs as well. Several decades earlier Conrad Fryer's flock usually took the lead in area production, offering over 900 dozen eggs a year.

The most demanding of all the village milkman's customers. Voorheesville's one room schoolhouse when it was New Scotland School Number 10. Photo taken about 1890.

The Severson (formerly Terwilliger) farm. At far end of Vly Creek Pond, where large barn stands, is where Stonington Hill Road runs into Salem Hills today. Pond was used as mill pond as early as 1787.

some areas were known for better butter and milk products than others. The late Phil Pettinger, a one-time Voorheesville resident, used to tell how his grandfather, a Guilderland Center merchant, tested any butter he was offered by a farmer in trade. Pettinger noted that his grandfather would take out his pen knife and dig deep into the center of the butter tub to see how much salt had been added. If the butter was too strong the grocer refused to take it in trade, not wanting to hear comments from his in-store customers. And customers tended to be quite frank with the village grocer when the quality of the merchandise sold was not up to par. In one instance, a Voorheesville shopper got into an argument with one of the grocery clerks and, as the paper reported: "the lady used her hands to good effect."

Voorheesville farmers did not give up on the possibility of setting up a creamery of their own. In early January 1896 a number of farmers held a meeting at the Harris House to discuss the possibility of building a creamery in the village but nothing ever came of the proposal.

John Tygert, on the other hand, did get to open his business in Albany. In May 1888 he leased rooms at 48 Hudson Avenue and with the help of Albert Borst (this was several years before he opened his restaurant) was peddling milk and butter. By September of the same year Tygert had picked up and moved into the city. But not for long. By 1891 he was out of the milk business and on his way to New York to work with Frank Bloomingdale's brother in the hay and straw business there.

It's unclear who took over Tygert's village milk business but we do find Daniel Wormer in 1892 with a new Moseley and Stoddard creamer and churn. Wormer may have had a small butter and milk trade going at the time. As the century drew to a close, the Terwilliger farm, later to become the Severson farm on Maple Avenue, became the main source of milk production. In 1898 James Crounse moved to that farm and carried on a milk business for a time. Perhaps Cyrenus Wormer was working with Crounse at the farm. Wormer himself began his own milk route through the village in late March 1898.

In the early 1900s Arthur Coughtry took over the milk business on the Terwilliger farm. Coughtry lasted about four years for in January 1904 he moved from there to

the Mrs. Edwin Wood farm and most likely out of the milk business altogether. Coughtry was succeeded in the milk business by the most famous and long-lasting dairyman in the village, Philip Severson. On April 1, 1904, Severson leased the Terwilliger farm for three years. In January 1908 Severson was sure he wanted to stay and bought the farm from John Terwilliger for $6,000. After the elder Severson died, Clifford Severson, his son, continued in the business for decades, well into the 1950s. Not too long after, the farm was turned into the Salem Hills housing development.

Shortly after the turn of the century the village was finally to get its creamery. In March 1905, F. W. Bird was making butter in the village and marketing his products as far as Albany and Schenectady. Later, in 1909 Luke Ostrander worked as a milkman.

Sometime before the spring of 1914, a milk depot had been built in the village at the D&H crossing at Fowler (Voorheesville) Avenue, for in June of that year notices were put up indicating that the depot was being repaired. The milk depot was part of the business operations of the railroad. It was a centralized place to which farmers brought their milk, sold it to the railroad and received payment each month from the railroad. The argument offered to the farmers for bringing their milk to the depot was that they no longer had to hunt down customers, pay heavy express charges and run into receivement-of-payment problems. Many farmers relied on it.

The Vly Creek was prized not only for its fine fishing and swimming but for its ice supply as well.

4. Ice, Coal and Lumber

Before electric refrigeration, the milk and butter men faced the same major problem as the homemaker: how to keep their products not only fresh but from spoiling. Ice was the savior. And the container to hold that savior throughout most of the 19th century was the ice box, with its characteristic drip pan below to catch the water. In many instances the ice box was kept on the back porch, enabling the ice man to make his delivery without bothering the housewife or traipsing through the house in the warmer weather with a dripping block of ice.

A major concern of both residents and businessmen each year was who would harvest the ice and when the harvest would begin. Harvesting entailed cutting ice on area ponds and streams and storing the harvest in the available ice houses before winter faded. Shortly after Christmas, those who were to harvest the ice that year would begin to make plans for the harvest in late January or February. During these two months when temperatures were lowest, the ice was generally thicker than at any other time. But even with the best of plans, occasionally the weather made it impossible to begin the harvest until early March. Regardless, toward the end of December those who planned to harvest ice that winter would begin making periodic testings to see what kind of yield they could count on.

LaGrange's mill pond at the juncture of Krumkill and Normanskill Roads was one of the best and most reliable sources of ice. The mill pond was 65 feet in diameter and 12 feet deep and always provided a plentiful supply. In addition to the mill pond, the Black Creek, the Vly and Tygert's pond in Guilderland were equally valued as sources of ice. Years later, when the Vly reservoir was built, that too was used.

Generally village businessmen took charge of organizing the team of harvesters. A number of these businessmen maintained ice houses from which area residents were assured a steady supply of ice year round. Therefore, in the early 1890s it was not uncommon to see William Swift, S.V.R. Hoes, Morris Harris, George Hess (owner of the Grove Hotel), Frank Bloomingdale and Thomas Bewsher among those gathering ice. Most of these men had ice houses for business purposes. Stephen Hoes, for example, relied on the stored ice for the boarding house he and his wife ran.

The number of ice houses in the village began to grow in the early 1890s. Frank Bloomingdale built his in mid January 1892 and in early January 1895 the Joslin Brothers built an ice house adjacent to the meat market they were

Crannell Brothers coal pocket which was built by Frank Bloomingdale in 1911.

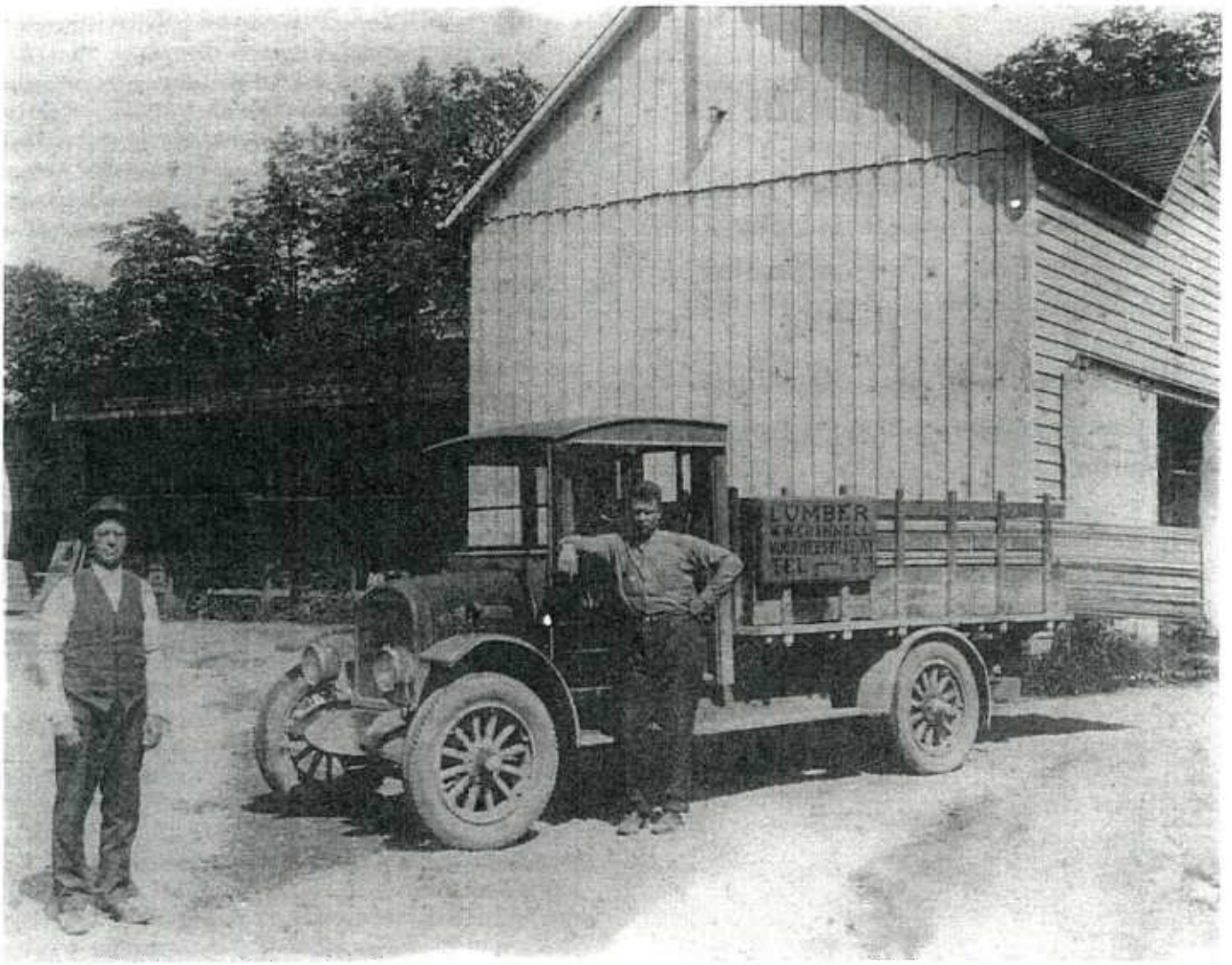
renting to McDougal in their flat iron building. Seven years later the Joslins erected a second ice house, this one located opposite their coal shed along the tracks. It was probably much larger than the first, the Joslins announcing that they would sell and deliver ice to residents during the summer months. There was also a company ice house built behind the Presbyterian Church on Main Street in January 1893. The church trustees would allow various residents to lease the property for a period of time. In January 1896, for example, the church trustees leased the ground to Flansburgh and Tygert for the year for one dollar.

As might be expected, the thickness of the ice varied from season to season according to weather conditions. For example, in 1890 the ice on the Vly had reached a depth of only five inches while in 1898 it was a solid 12 inches. In 1904 the ice at LaGrange's reached 16 inches, the temperatures that winter having plummeted to minus 26 degrees.

The harvest was usually finished in a couple of weeks depending on the weather and the thickness of the ice. In 1890 the then proprietor of the Grove Hotel, George Hess, had to take seven loads of ice from the Vly near the WSRR bridge. Hess had to take more loads than usual because the ice that year had reached a thickness of only five inches.

The harvesters tried to work fast when the weather was right in order to avoid getting caught in a snow storm. However, sometimes the best plans went awry. In January 1906 James Smith had built a dam across the Vly in the back of Mrs. Washburn's on Maple Avenue. Morris Harris began to cut ice there, but during the week 20 inches of snow fell and settled on the creeks, making it not only difficult but dangerous to continue harvesting.

Before the steam engine was developed, ice was cut by hand with a saw. Later when the steam engine was available, the saw was driven by a steam engine drawn along by a team of horses. The ice was cut into blocks, sometimes weighing 300 pounds each. These were loaded onto a flat sleigh and brought to the various ice houses around the village. Occasionally the ice would give way beneath the weight of the horse and the horse would go in. Ice crews had emergency strategies for getting the horse out before it froze. They pulled tight on a choke rope that was kept around the horse's neck



William Winslow Crannell and William Winslow Crannell Jr., aka 'Chappy', (leaning against truck) at lumberyard on North Main Street.

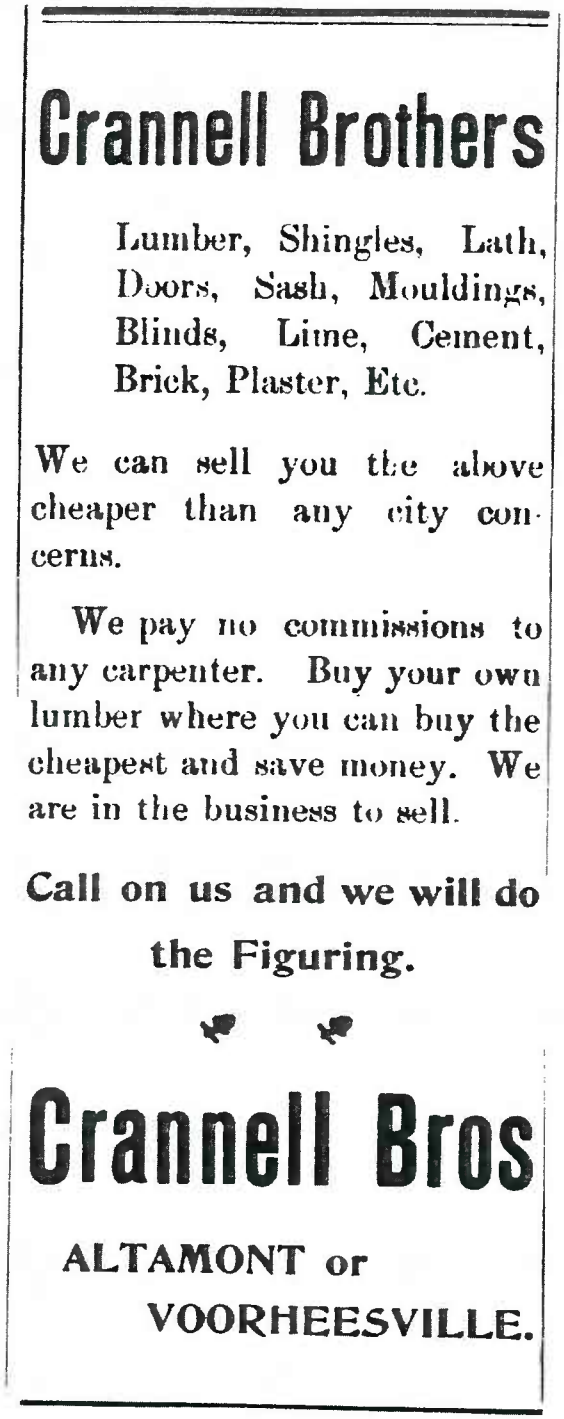
at all times. The tightened rope would keep air in the horse, enabling him to relax until another team pulled him from the water.

Ice houses were usually erected with double walls with a space from eight to 12 inches between the two walls. This space was usually filled with sawdust, hay, straw, shavings, whatever material was handy and that also served as a good insulator. It was also common to put a 10-inch layer of sand covered by a layer of straw on the floor as an insulator or simply a layer of sawdust or salt hay.

As ice was stacked, the ice men threw a layer of sawdust on top of each row of cakes for insulation. This aided in keeping the cakes separate during the summer months when the blocks of ice were more likely to melt into each other and make their removal more difficult. Sometimes a layer of 20 inches of salt hay was laid on top to keep the warm air from hitting the ice.

Of course a constant concern for ice makers during the whole process was sanitation. A paramount concern was the droppings from the horse on the ice. Each ice crew had a boy whose job it was to clean up the droppings with a broom and shovel as soon as possible.[1] But a concern over contamination was always there, particularly when ice would be used for drinking or sucking on in the hot weather. Village and town health officials were always concerned about a possible outbreak of typhoid, which did in fact occur periodically.

In 1914, Floyd McMillan was given permission by Voorheesville mayor Albert VanDerpoel and the water commissioner, Rufus Flansburgh, to cut ice on the village reservoir. However, at the meeting of the trustees, in which McMillan was granted that permission, village health officer Dr. Fisher M. Joslin insisted that the board insure that no unsanitary conditions be allowed while ice was being taken from the public water supply. Dr. Joslin's remarks must be given a 19th century context. They were made with a genuine concern for the health



Crannell Brothers ad in August 1902 Enterprise.

of the residents of the village, not out of a concern that the village might be sued for negligence or malfeasance. This was an era before people were prone to sue so readily over accidents that might occur due to a fault in services, particularly public services.

Two years later concerns such as those voiced by Dr. Joslin in 1914 would be less pressing, for 1916 witnessed the appearance of the electric refrigerator in America. This tool was one of the first fruits that emerged from the first fully electric kitchen which made its debut in the U. S. at the 1893 World's Fair (the Columbian Exposition)in Chicago. To housewives the refrigerator was another world–no more drip pans! By 1925, however, only about 40 percent of American homes still had ice boxes and the ice man was becoming a part of the past. By 1941 the price of the electric refrigerator had dropped to the point where it was affordable by most American families. At the very least, the refrigerator had come to be regarded as an indispensable part of the modern kitchen.

Just as keeping things cool in the summer was a concern, so was keeping things warm in the winter. For centuries wood had been the main source of fuel but with the advent of the railroad, coal increasingly became the preferred means for heating both homes and manufacturing plants. In 1860 the U.S. mined 13 million tons of coal; in 1880 that figure had risen to nearly 64 million tons and just 10 years later it leapt to 141 million tons. Indeed one of the reasons for constructing the Albany and Susquehanna rail system was to carry coal from the rich coal fields in the Susquehanna valley to eastern urban markets. Along the route, Voorheesville became a minor coal center as people came from as far away as Berne to the Normanskill to buy their coal.

As early as 1867, Peter Wormer had set up a coal business in the village three years before he opened his general store. When Thomas Bewsher opened his hardware store in 1880, a major part of his business was coal. For a time Bewsher sold the noted Old Company Lehigh Coal which was delivered to the rear of his flat iron building along the tracks. Bewsher might have had a small coal pocket at the time. In July 1888, in preparation for fall sales, Bewsher has 14 carloads of coal delivered. In the mid-1880s Conrad Fryer put still another iron into his business fire, having operated a small coal business for a time.

There was enough growth in coal sales in the village that by the end of the first decade of the 20th century the village had three large coal pockets. In May 1893 the Joslin brothers built a large coal pocket along the West Shore tracks. This was most likely the first substantial coal pocket built in the village.

A second coal pocket was built by the Cummings brothers in March 1906, also along the tracks and Frank Bloomingdale followed suit in December 1911. Later this coal business was taken over by the Crannell Brothers of Albany. Edward G. and William Winslow had purchased the lumber business of William Swift in April 1894 and in February 1897 bought Swift's property used as a lumber yard for $800. As partners, the two lumbermen also operated a store in Altamont but dissolved their partnership in July 1903. Crannell's current lumber and feed business on Main Street is the only business remaining from 19th century Voorheesville. Would Abram Relyea, Rufus Flansburgh, Frank Kaiser and Frank Osterhout carpenters of that era who frequented the yard on North Main Street nearly a hundred years ago, still recognize it today?

"If you went to school, you walked and if you lived up on the hill above the grocery store and you walked over to where the primary school is now, you had a good long walk and the weather was sometimes cold and sometimes rainy and, of course, you always dressed up for the weather but when it came to fifth grade my mother realized that the school was very poorly heated and it was an extra cold winter and, she having been a teacher all of her life, had the attitude that you had to be careful of your children's health as well as everything else and she found out one day that we went to school and there wasn't any heat in the school and the temperature was down so low we had to keep on our hats and mittens and coats and this was when I was in fourth grade, I guess. And she said: 'I am not going to have my child exposed to this kind of freezing weather' so she took me out of school and she taught me herself for the rest of the year and got me up so I could pass the tests to go into fifth grade."

— Frances Vosburgh

CHAPTER SIX

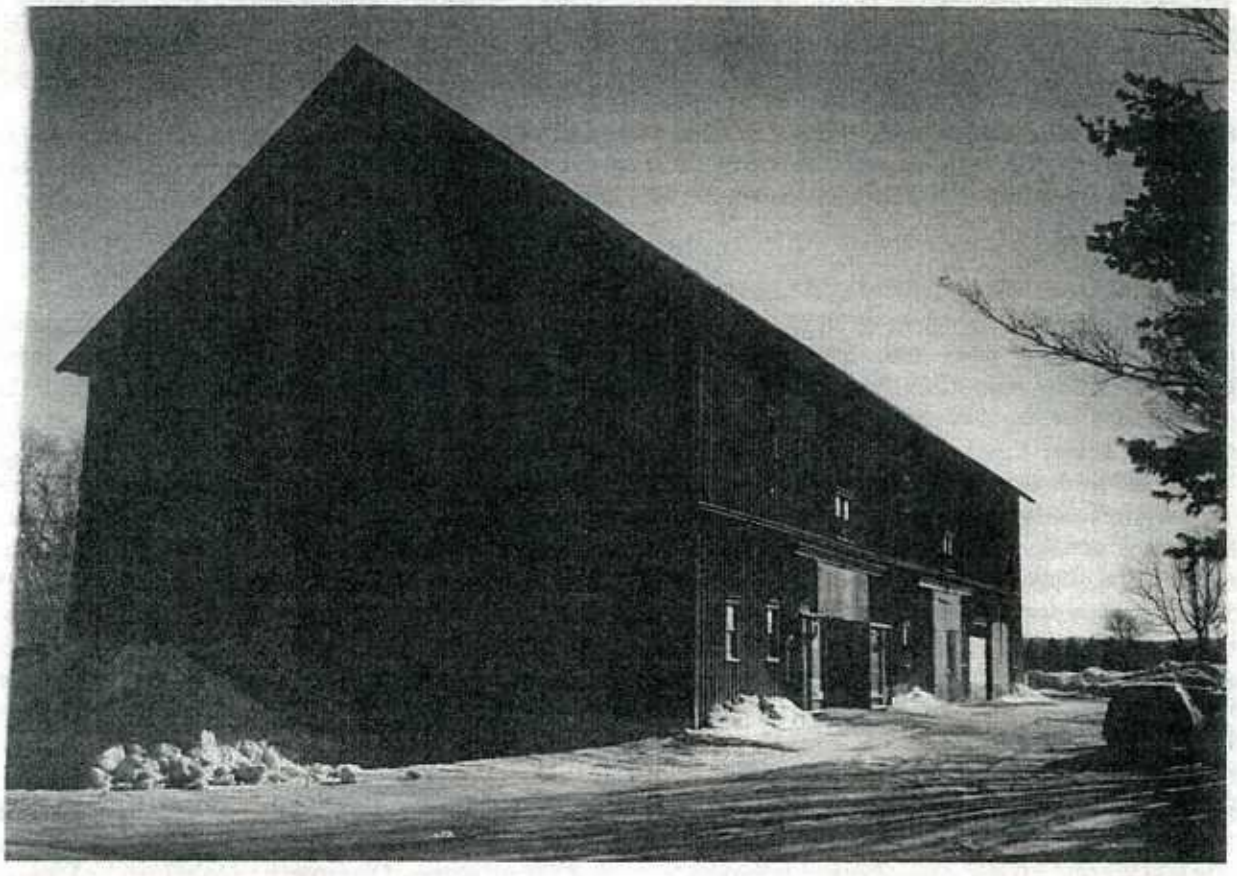
Everyday Social Life

1. Collective Work and Play

The social life of Voorheesville, as in the case of many small towns and villages in the 19th century, was filled with contradictions. On the one hand, the communities were very closely knit, there were innumerable shared activities and on the whole an ethic of shared responsibility for life prevailed. And yet, there was a remarkable diversity of interests and even social levels. There were wide differences in education, economic status and family background. At one end of the spectrum there were long-time residents with quiet wealth and, on the other, there were Italian immigrants some of whom rented living space in barns known as "tenement houses."

On one level, people kept certain differences in mind and kept within the boundaries that reflected those differences, boundaries that were not transgressed except in special circumstances. For some, their religious affiliation served as such a boundary; for others their affiliation with a temperance organization did. Stories are told how a member of one religion would not enter the house of a neighbor who practiced another, except when catastrophic weather conditions hit. Then the frightened neighbor would seek shelter next door despite previous concerns. But when the crisis was over, she would revert to the status quo.

Living together in the small, self-contained community was, therefore, somewhat of an art. And the art required constant cultivation because most people did not leave the village each morning to work elsewhere, everybody shopped in village stores for their daily supplies and relied on existing village institutions for their social life.



The Hilton barn on Route 85A next to Le Vie farm.

Voorheesville graduation class of 1924 in front of elm by Vly Creek. The Altamont Road in background. The eighth graders are (l to r standing): Gertrude Houck, Helen Wilsey, Marguerite Ricci, Josephine Tork, Marguerite Joslin and Nannette Garrison; (seated l to r) Earl Loss, Henry Salisbury and Milton Hotaling.

Despite the boundaries some might have clung to rigidly for psychological safety, everybody saw everybody else, everybody knew what was happening with everybody else. There was little if any place to hide, certainly no place for the kind of anonymity that could be found in the cities.

But despite all and any differences, when emergencies arose in the small community or when the needs of a neighbor were great, people of every ilk and sort responded to the crisis together. One such example of this collective response was the so-called "bee." When certain jobs needed doing that were too much for an individual or family or group, community members pooled their resources and completed in a day or two what it might have taken the individual weeks or months to accomplish. In October 1895, for example, when the Methodist Church sheds needed work done on them, a bee was held. A group came together and drew gravel to the site and leveled off the ground beneath the sheds. Tasks such as these could all be done in a day instead of weeks. Similarly, on several occasions, a bee was held to improve one of the cemeteries which had grown into disrepair.

One of the most monumental bees that villagers shared in toward the end of the century was the raising bee held on Hilton's Deavondale farm. In the first week of January 1897 the old Hilton barn had caught fire, destroying all its stored crops, eight horses, 10 cows and 56 sheep. After the charred rubbish was cleared away and timbers from trees on the farm cut and notched, it was announced that a barn raising would be held on Saturday, March 25 to replace the burned-down structure. Early that March morning 160 men showed up to help the Hiltons raise the 60 feet wide by 120 feet long by 60 feet high barn braced by timbers 30 feet high. Women came to provide food and nourishment for the men until it got dark and was time to go home.

Voorheesville carpenter Frank Osterhout, assisted by John Weidman, directed the crew as they assembled the precut timbers for the raising bee. Because the barn was so large, some of the men had to return on Monday and Tuesday to finish it off. Part of that included setting the 60 tons of gray slate that still covers the roof today. The new Hilton barn had been modeled after that of one-

time New York Gov. Levi P. Morton on his Rhinecliff estate, and was considered to be the largest barn in Albany County at the time.

The barn raising bee was only one of a variety of bees common then. There were spinning bees, husking bees, rag bees and apple bees as well. But the bee was only one of many forms of mutual aid demonstrated in the village. Help was also offered in the form of money and goods to be shared with those with temporary needs. On occasion, when a striking need was not being attended to, the newspaper correspondent would make that known to the villagers in the weekly column. This was the case when villagers were told that a woman in the village with two children of school (non working) age needed assistance. Those interested were told they could bring their donations to the store of Levi Wood. And when Richard Baker and his wife had planned to move to Troy in mid-January 1897, but didn't have the money for the move, villagers chipped in and paid their moving expenses.

Nor were the professions beyond picking up the slack for each other when the occasion arose. The village doctors, for example, did more than fill in for each other during vacation periods. In October 1918 when a grippe and flu epidemic hit the village, Drs. William Shaw and Alden Oliver were also hit as well and became bed-ridden. Dr. Fisher M. Joslin, still well, attended not only to his own patients but to those of Drs. Shaw and Oliver as well. In one day Dr. Joslin attended to 58 cases of grippe and influenza and each succeeding day seemed to bring little relief until his colleagues had recuperated.[1]

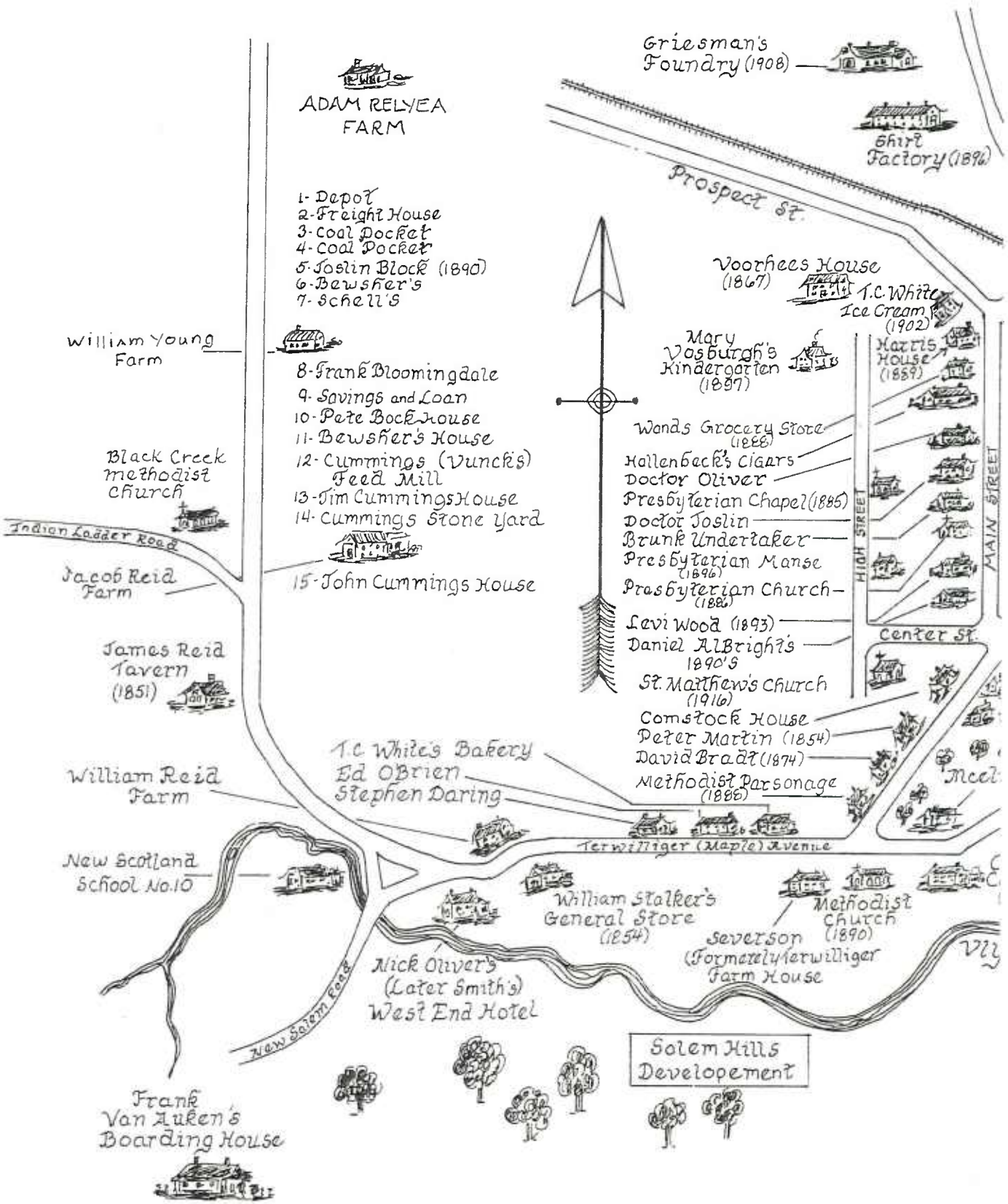
When time rolled around for a community's social event, such as a picnic or day excursion on the train, villagers genuinely seemed to enjoy each others company and the axiom "the more the merrier" seems to have prevailed. This was especially true when the warmer weather came and there was an opportunity to join in a day excursion. Excitement was especially high when several groups from different localities came together for the celebration.

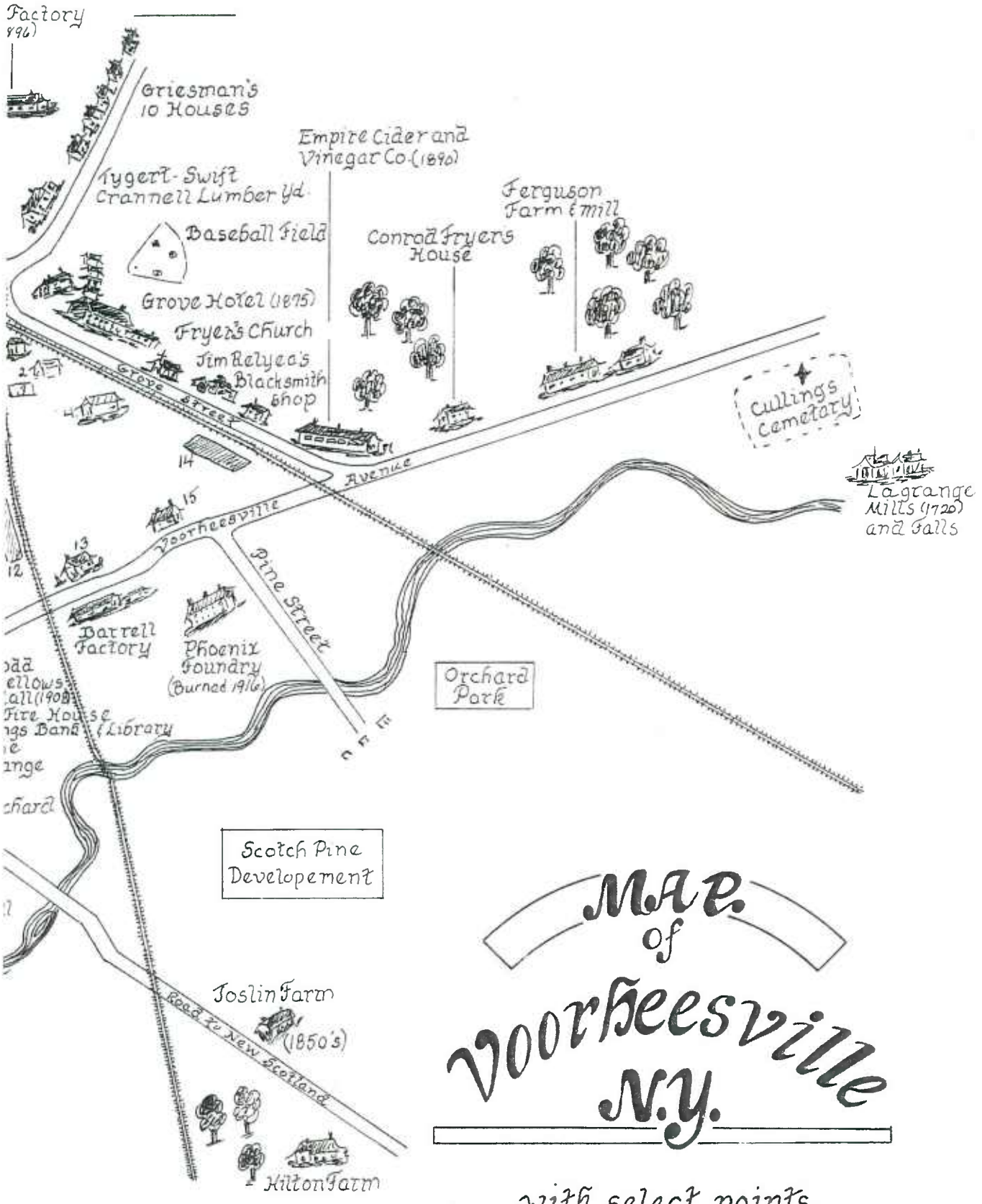
In September 1886, when the people of Voorheesville joined Bethlehem for a trip to Lake George, 12 coaches were hired for the day to haul the passengers from the two burgs. This trip must have taken longer than usual, or the weather been unseasonably hot, because the paper correspondent reported that, as soon as the train arrived at 1 p.m., people rushed into the hotel for drinks. At a later date, when the Methodist Church of Voorheesville went on an outing with the Clarksville church, 14 coaches were hired. This was said to be the largest excursion held at the time. On this outing, as in others, the excursioners were accompanied by the Voorheesville band which most likely serenaded them enroute as well as at their place of destination.

Winter brought its own special brand of get-togethers, which included tobogganing, ice skating on the LaGrange mill pond, evening sleigh rides and sleigh

Village doctor William Shaw and wife Ella (Wood) Shaw. Shaw served with doctors Alden Oliver and Fisher Joslin.

parties. It was quite common for several families to hook up their sleighs and take an evening ride and, while enroute, stop off at a neighbor's for something warm to drink. The late evening-early morning sleigh ride was also an opportunity for the younger set to find some excitement. For example, in late January 1895 when Mrs. C.E. Veder gave a sleigh ride in honor of her daughter, it was touted as the social event of the season. The group of sleighs left the village at 7:30 p.m. for Fowler's Hall in Guilderland Center. There a dance was held until 11:30 at which time sumptuous food was served. Afterward, the group played games before returning to the village in the early hours of the morning in a blinding snow. Whether used as a means to get to parties or work, the sleighs brought a sense of merriment because of their speed and agility and the smooth ride they afforded. Sleighers were freed from the rut-ridden roads that tested the wits of the most patient traveler during dry weather.


Griesman's Foundry (1908)
Shirt Factory (1896)
Prospect St.
ADAM RELYEA FARM
1- Depot
2- Freight House
3- Coal Pocket
4- Coal Pocket
5- Joslin Block (1890)
6- Bewsher's
7- Schell's
William Young Farm
8- Frank Bloomingdale
9- Savings and Loan
10- Pete Bock House
11- Bewsher's House
12- Cummings (Vunck's) Feed Mill
13- Jim Cummings House
14- Cummings Stone Yard
15- John Cummings House
Voorhees House (1867)
T.C. White Ice Cream (1902)
Mary Vosburgh's Kindergarten (1897)
Harris House (1859)
Wands Grocery Store (1888)
Hallenbeck's Cigars
Doctor Oliver
Presbyterian Chapel (1885)
Doctor Joslin
Brunk Undertaker
Presbyterian Manse (1896)
Presbyterian Church (1886)
Levi Wood (1893)
Daniel Albright's 1890's
St. Matthew's Church (1916)
Comstock House
Peter Martin (1854)
David Bradt (1874)
Methodist Parsonage (1886)
HIGH STREET
MAIN STREET
Center St.
Black Creek Methodist Church
Indian Ladder Road
Jacob Reid Farm
James Reid Tavern (1851)
William Reid Farm
T.C. White's Bakery
Ed O'Brien
Stephen Daring
Terwilliger (Maple) Avenue
New Scotland School No. 10
William Stalker's General Store (1854)
Severson (Formerly Terwilliger Farm House
Methodist Church (1890)
Nick Oliver's (Later Smith's) West End Hotel
New Salem Road
Solem Hills Developement
Frank Van Auken's Boarding House



MAP of Voorheesville N.Y.

with select points of 19th C. interest

Compiled by Dennis Sullivan

Drawn by Constance Burns

2. *Weddings and Socials*

One of the greatest sources of merriment for villagers was on the occasion of a wedding. And the wedding included not only the celebration on the wedding day itself, but a second celebration when the newlyweds returned from their honeymoon or "wedding tour" as it was called. The bride and groom's re-entry into the community was celebrated with the lighting of bonfires and the singing of songs. Some of the men would gather for a good cigar with the groom while friends of the bride would gather with her at the couple's new house. In October 1885, when Morris Harris and his wife returned

Sleighers on Main Street looking south. Photo taken shortly after the turn of the century.

from their honeymoon in Washington, D. C. (another indication of the kind of person Harris was) they were greeted with bonfires and a display of fireworks. When Winnie LaGrange and his wife returned from their wedding tour in January 1889, about 35 men gathered at Mattice's store on a Saturday night to light up a cigar in the couple's honor. This might even include doing homage to a jug or two.

The size of the to-do upon the newlyweds' return was determined to a large extent by how popular a person was among the residents. For example, Frank Coughtry, the general station agent (about 1890) was well-liked by members of the business community with whom he had day-to-day business dealings at the depot. If you'll recall, this was the era when there was no freight building at the depot. Therefore, when Coughtry and his wife returned from their wedding tour in May 1891, they were greeted by the mellifluous sounds of the Voorheesville band. A large bonfire was started into which numerous fire-crackers were thrown. After the band finished with several numbers, a truck was drawn in front of the house carrying a handsome set of bedroom furniture. Elmer Cory, manager of the cider mill gave a brief speech and offered the furniture to the Coughtrys in appreciation of the station agent's work for the Voorheesville business community. While Coughtry was recuperating from being stunned at the size of the gift, in accordance with the ritual, cigars were passed out to all the men who enjoyed a good smoke together.

Among the various weddings held in the village at that time, the paper offers brief descriptions of several that provide some insight into the wedding day itself. For example, in most instances the wedding ceremony took place in the bride's home, as was the case when Emmet Smith of Dunnsville married Lydia G. Wormer of the village on December 22, 1892. Lydia was the daughter of Voorheesville speculator (and later milkman) Cyrenus Wormer. The Smith-Wormer wedding was said to be the most lavish of any in the vicinity. After the couple's marriage vows were pronounced at 1:30 p.m., food was served to the 85 who attended. Then there was dancing to the three piece orchestra of Frank Loudis. At 4:20 the bride and groom got into their carriage amid a showering of rice and pairs of old boots and shoes. The group of well-wishers shouted "Much Joy!" as the couple boarded a carriage and drove to the station to board the 4:40 train to Middleburgh where they planned to spend their honeymoon.

Whenever a wedding in the village included a guest out of the ordinary (as was also the case with noted boarders) that fact was made known throughout the village. The village correspondent would also be sure to have that fact among the items listed for the week's column. At the Wormer wedding, for example, special note was made that a certain Abel Spawn of Australia was there as well as T.S. Kilmer and a Mr. Davis of the Kilmer Manufacturing Company of Newburgh. The father of the bride had acted in behalf of Kilmer when he contemplated building his wire plant in the village. However, as mentioned, that effort was blocked by Conrad Fryer.

Another wedding which took place the following Christmas season is also worth mentioning. That was between Alva J. Fuller of Canajoharie and Estelle McMillen of the village. This wedding also took place at the bride's residence, on a Wednesday evening, December 21 at 6:30 p.m. Christmas weddings were as much sought after by couples as June weddings were at a later date.

The ceremony was held in one of the parlors of the house which were decorated with evergreens, holly and mistletoe. Afterwards the guests were served refreshments. Then shortly after, the bride and groom were brought to the station in a carriage beneath a showering of rice to catch the 8:47 to Albany. Bonfires were lighted and tin horns were blown by the guests in their honor. After the couple was seen off at the station, the guests returned to the house for an evening of dancing and games.[1]

In the same way that villagers came together to share in joyous events such as weddings and social outings, when tragedy struck the entire village was affected as

Brunk Brothers in front of funeral home on Main Street.

well. This was clearly the case when someone's house or place of business burned or when a family member lost a limb in a piece of farm machinery or in a train accident, as happened often enough. But the event that seemed to strike hardest at the community's heart was the result of an outbreak of scarlet fever in 1893.

The fever hit the homes of Methodist minister, Rev John Fisher, and James Relyea, one of the village blacksmiths at the beginning of February 1893. On Tuesday the 7th, the youngest child of Relyea succumbed and was buried the same day. On the following Saturday, the 11th, Fisher's two year old son Vincent died and was buried almost immediately. Then Relyea's three other children caught the fever and on Tuesday the 14th, Relyea's oldest son, a nine year old, also died.[2]

For the village the deaths were a traumatic shock to its system, the newspaper describing the situation as "one of the saddest afflictions that ever happened in this village." Fearing that an epidemic might break out at school, school officials closed down the school that very week. The fever did not spread and by Sunday the 26th, the worst seemed to have passed. The Rev. Fisher, after being quarantined for a month, was able to return to preach to his congregation that day.

Part of what bonded people together, so as to withstand such traumas, was daily conversation. Sometimes this included more than occasional gossiping about what was going on in the remotest parts of the village—that is, a quarter mile down the road. A good part of that conversation took place at the village grocery stores in the evening, particularly on winter evenings. Farmers gathered in a circle around the stove, some lighted up a pipe or a cigar and most, if not all, got into the act of solving the world's problems.

Indeed, at various times, an attempt was made to give these discussions a more structured format. Grocer William Swift did just that when in mid-January 1886 he set up a debate between his one-time partner, John Tygert, and carpenter Abram Relyea. The two debated the resolution: "That the Republican Party has been more benefit to the nation than the Democratic Party." Relyea, at that time a staunch Democrat, held the negative while elder statesman Thomas Tygert sat between the pair with an ax helve to keep order.

Later that month, Swift, the Tygerts and Relyea, among others, called a meeting of interested citizens at the little (Presbyterian) chapel on Main Street to discuss the possibility of starting a Literary Association, what amounted to a debating society. Not surprisingly, Swift was elected President. The group only lasted a short

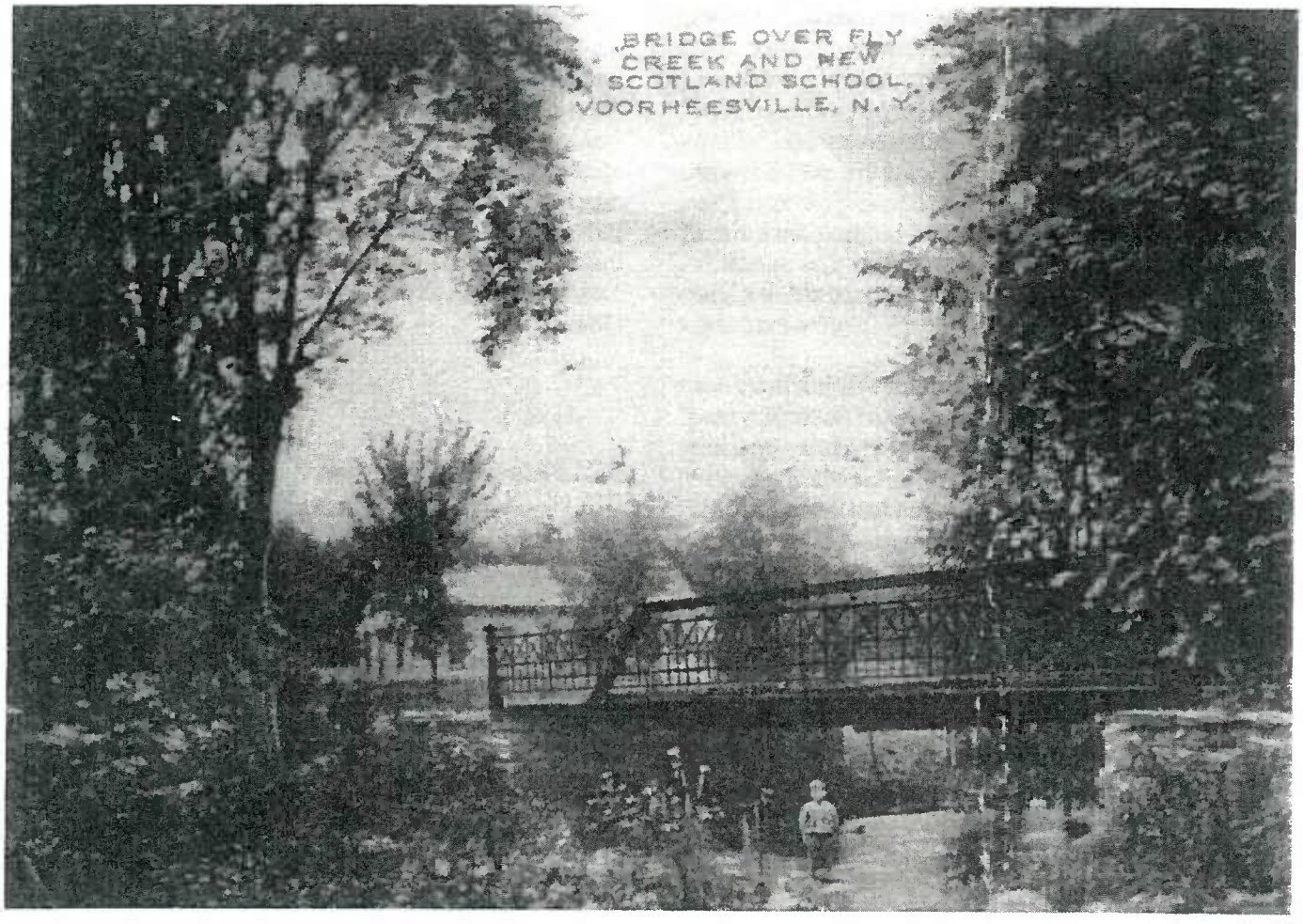
H. B. and Charles Lloyd were the first undertakers in the village (about 1894) followed by Shafer and Bartlett (about 1898) and then by the Brunk family after the turn of the century.

time but in the first week of February 1890, it was revived. Once again Swift was elected president, A.F. Mattice and Al Borst vice-presidents, Jesse Joslin secretary and Abram Relyea, treasurer.

The first scheduled event of the new club was set for February 11, when John Ryall and Abram Relyea would debate the resolution: "That City Life Is Preferable To Country Life." Ryall, seemingly the more cosmopolitan, most likely took the affirmative. While such a topic might not seem too timely a hundred years later, at the time it was quite relevant as an increasing number of farmers were leaving their homesteads for life in the city. Later debates of the group focused on other contemporary issues such as "That Rum Has Caused More Misery Than War." This too was an especially timely topic, as temperance advocates in the community brought continuous attention to the misery demon rum wrought, in fact more continuous than many wished to hear.

When debates weren't the order of the day at one of the stores, the evening crowd might play or watch being played a game of checkers. When one of the villagers got to be especially good, a challenge might be issued to the best in a neighboring community. Occasionally the champions of Voorheesville and Guilderland Center would clash with double and triple jumps, rooters from each community silently cheering on their contender. Dr. Oliver was said to be Voorheesville's best.

A number of other events that occurred toward the end of the 19th century offer additional insight into how different life was at the time and what people had to do to cope with certain situations. For example, in late December 1895, there was not only an extreme cold wave to plague residents but extraordinarily high winds. Gale winds blew so hard that on one evening the chimneys from 17 houses were blown down. Some must have been left without a means for heat and had to move in with a neighbor for a time. Three months later, after the wind storm, when the snow from the especially harsh winter was melting, the Vly rose so high and its



The Vly Creek overflowed above this bridge near the grammar school during many spring thaws making it impossible for children to get to school.

waters rushed so hard that the bridge at the eastern end of Maple Avenue was torn from its embankment and carried 75 feet downstream.

The Vly flooded so high so many springs that school children were not able to cross the bridge. Sometimes they had to be carried across in a wagon. But when that was not possible, school was called off until the waters subsided, sometimes for a week. In the winter of 1893, the area was hit with the largest snowstorm since the blizzard of 1888. In May of that year, with snow melting rapidly, the creek rose higher than it had in 25 years. During the prior flood 25 years earlier, waters raged so hard that all the bridges along the Normanskill were washed down stream. It was probably the case for the bridges along the Vly as well.

But area creeks were not always a threatening force. Indeed during more clement seasons the creek was a source of joy for swimmers, fishermen and picnickers. The Vly was considered to be an excellent trout stream and an excellent source for eels as well. By the early 1900s the stream was being stocked regularly. In June 1904, for example, Fred Wilder had emptied 1000 trout into the stream.

With the new addition to social life brought by industrialization, namely leisure time, there came in force "the social group" and their vast array of social events. Voorheesville was not without its share of either. We already mentioned the Literary Association and the Debating Club that grew up in Swift's grocery store. There was also an Independent Book Club in the village, a Thursday Afternoon Sewing Club, a Pinochle Club, a Fortnightly Embroidery Club, Fortnightly Bridge Club, the Kill Kare Club and Bay View Club and Five Hundred Club.

If someone considered none of these worthy of his or her time, there was at various times the Euchre Club, the Grangers, the Odd Fellows, the Young People's Industrial Society, the Christian Endeavor Society (later Epworth League), the Tobeggan Club and Patrons of Industry, the Missionary Society, the Young Ladies Glee Club, the Voorheesville Serate, and Philathea and Baraca Classes.

And of course no club would be complete if it did not sponsor at least one grand social a year. So at various times there was held a clothes pin social, or ice cream social, or oyster supper social or peanut social; there

were common sense socials, and musical socials and pound socials among others. During or after the meeting/social, those who had gathered might sit for a while to hear an informal recital in the parlor. The host might have a newly-purchased piano to show off. That was more likely to be the case in the spring of 1889 when a number of residents had purchased pianos. Later William Swift joined in as did A.F. Mattice, the railroad agent. So many village residents bought pianos at this time that villagers wondered whether some day there wouldn't be a piano in every home. Their wondering was not far off.

Villages seemed to show a similar fascination with the bicycle. With the introduction of the "safety bicycle" (with pneumatic tires) in 1884, bicycling became accessible to everyone. By 1893 a million bicycles were in use in the U.S. As would happen at a later time with cars, when a resident of the village got a new bicycle, perhaps a new Cleveland model, it was news. And when the weather got warmer, dozens of bicyclers would spend the entire evening riding up and down Voorheesville Avenue from Maple Avenue to the depot, back and forth and back and forth in near slow motion until it got dark.

As the bicyclers rolled down Main Street those evenings, they would still see shoppers in the village stores because in the 1890s nearly every store stayed open until 9 p.m. or even later. In addition, many of the stores, particularly the grocery stores, were open for business every day of the year including Thanksgiving and Christmas. But, by the turn of the century, the storeowners wanted a larger slice of leisure pie for themselves and decided to close on both Thanksgiving and Christmas.

In June 1902, the business community then let people know they would also close on the Fourth of July. And beginning on November 16, 1903 the merchants closed every night at 7:30 except Saturday when they remained open until at least 9 p.m. Residents commented on how dreary the village looked after supper in the evenings. Two years later, on October 15, 1905, the dreariness came earlier as 7 p.m. became the usual closing time, again except for Saturdays.

The change in store hours was just one of the many changes that the more mature village of Voorheesville was experiencing as the 20th century progressed. The village seemed to become increasingly self-contained. The world became more divided: there were residents of the village and there were outsiders. And then there were outsiders who moved in, some still looked upon as outsiders after living in the village for decades. Ironically, most of the major figures who had contributed to making Voorheesville the prosperous village it had become, were all outsiders: Bloomingdale, Fryer, Harris, Schell, the Cummings brothers, Vosburgh, Guffin, Griesman and a host of others.

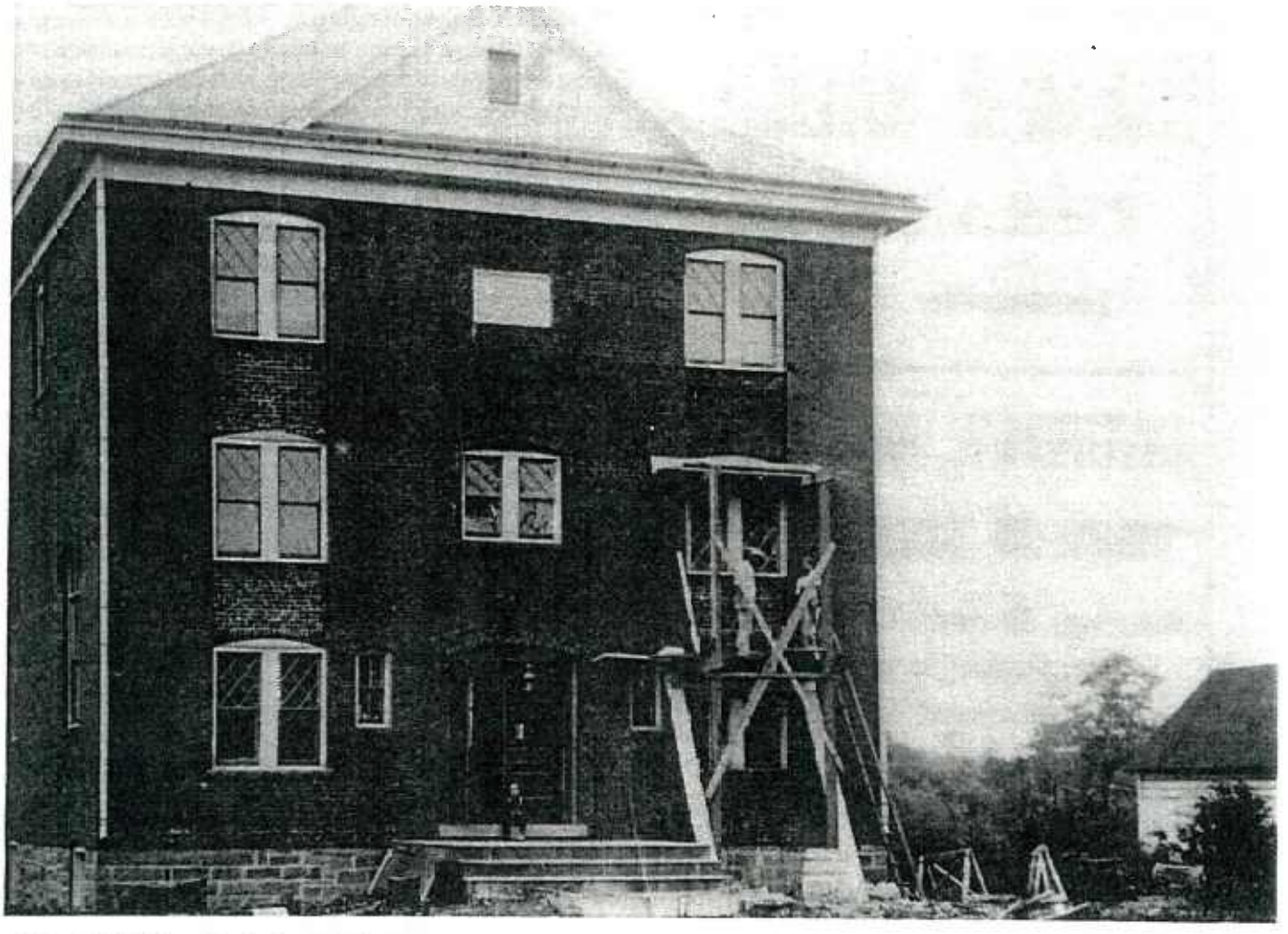
By the fall of 1907, a new form of the we-they division was becoming apparent, that between the villagers and city folk. Some evidence of this can be found in the complaints villagers made that fall about the presence of hunters coming from the city to bother them. They wanted to know what the law could do to control the behavior of city hunters. The village would remain relatively self-contained until the late 1950s and early 1960s when a new wave of outsiders made its way into the village in full force via the village's second and third major housing developments, Salem Hills and Scotch Pine.

3. A New Social Center

Throughout the 19th century, a good part of the public social life of most residents took place in their respective church societies. But with the arrival of industrialization, there came a host of new social and political issues that seemed too secular or too far-out to be included in the relatively conservative church groups. Therefore, when the Voorheesville Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows opened its new lodge hall on Voorheesville Avenue in 1909, it filled in a large gap in the village's social life. In addition to serving as a meeting place for the fraternal organization, the new temple opened itself up to the varied modes of current political thinking and culture, thereby becoming the community's new and eclectic social center. For decades the building's theater served as a venue for both entertainment and so-called political mass meetings. When movies became a part of American culture, Saturday night shows in the hall's theater were looked forward to with the greatest anticipation by young and old alike.

The Odd Fellows was a fraternal organization similar in aims and design to the Masons and Knights of Pythias. Its first principle was fraternity which required the practice of true friendship and brotherly love. In practice this included visiting the sick, relieving the distressed, burying the dead, protecting and aiding widows and educating orphans. And the various lodges were quite generous in pursuing these social ideals. The first lodge was supposedly begun in Baltimore in 1802. By January 1885, the Order had increased to over 18,057 lodges with an active membership of 532,467.

The Voorheesville Lodge had its beginnings on Valentine's Day 1893. Morris Harris was the main impetus behind the group and understandably so. Harris and his family were the only Jews in the village at the time and therefore were without the usual social connections that came with being part of one of the established churches in the village. For Morris Harris, therefore, the Odd Fellows served as the basis of his social life, his own church as it were.



New Odd Fellows Lodge being built in 1908. Little house to the right is the original building used to house fire company's hose cart.

Harris was responsible for sponsoring the Valentine's Day exhibition at his hotel as a fund-raiser to get the fraternity underway. With adults charged 20 cents and children under 12 a dime, the group had received some of the money it needed to begin renting space above Leroy Schell's feed and grain store for a lodge.

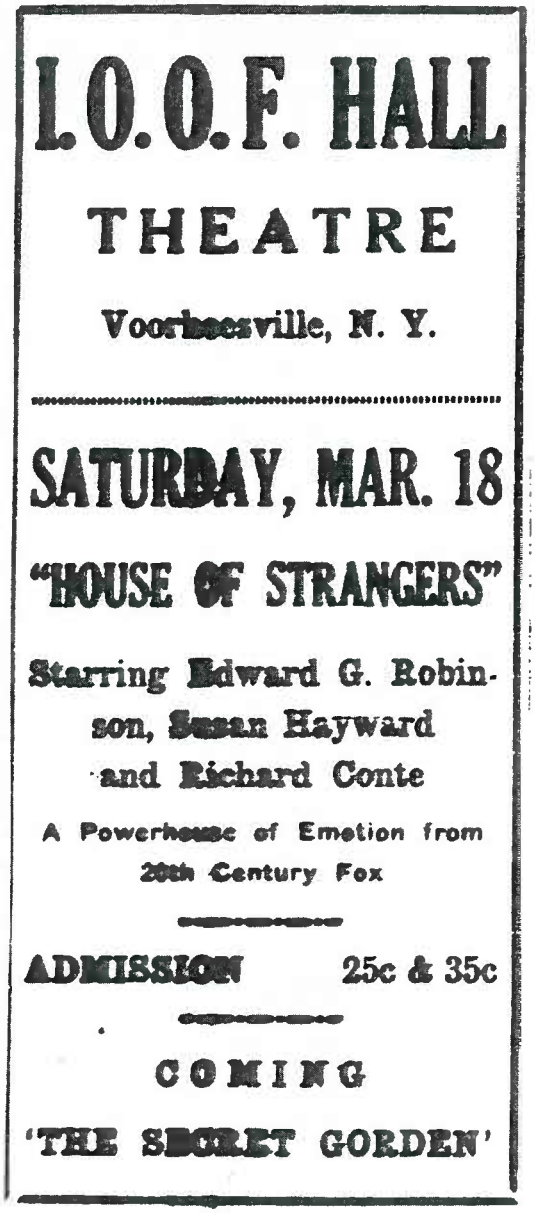
By April 1893, a public installation was held and Lodge 668 was official. Over the years the Voorheesville Lodge had a number of members involved in the state organization but its crowning achievement came when Stephen Daring was elected to be grand warden of the State in 1908.

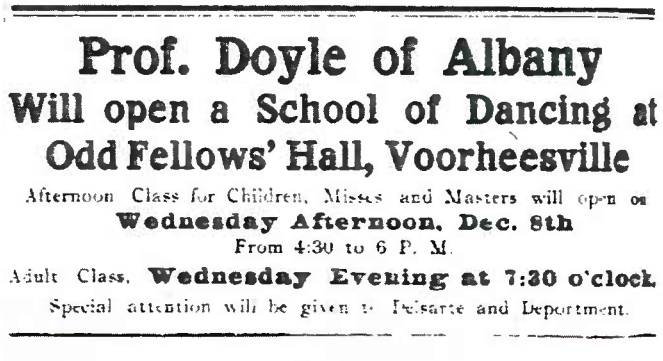
Perhaps it was Daring's achievement that moved the members of the Voorheesville Lodge to think about new quarters. By summer these thoughts had become reality as the foundation of the new lodge hall was being completed. By November of the following year, the temple was fully completed and a fair was held to celebrate the opening of the community's new social center. The building had a seating capacity of 350 on the main floor with additional room for 100 in its balcony. The 22 X 38 foot stage was perfect for large scale dramas and tableaus and its large dancing floor could hold at least 50.

Community organizations such as the hose company made use of the hall whenever they held one of their large social events. Talent shows were sponsored, political meetings were held there and each year the trustees made an attempt to schedule an interesting program of concerts.

In February 1915, for example, a concert was held featuring a musical rendition of several poems by local poet Magdalene LaGrange Merritt. LaGrange had become relatively well known for her two books of poetry. *Songs of the Helderbergs* (1893) and *Helderberg Harmonies* (1909). For the special event at the Odd Fellows Hall, Boston composer Emma Willer French had put a number of Merritt's poems from *Helderberg Harmonies* to music. Before the concert was given for the hometown crowd at the Odd Fellows hall in February, however, French's compositions had already been performed in Old South Church in Boston.

As indicated, the lodge hall was also used for political mass meetings so prevalent in the late 19th and early





The Odd Fellows Lodge served as the village's social center for nearly half a century. In these two ads, Professor Doyle opened his school in December 1909; "House of Strangers" played in March 1950.

20th centuries. In the autumn of 1914, when women's suffrage was a key political issue, a number of representatives of the Albany Anti-Suffrage Society spoke at the lodge hall against women's suffrage. The active Albany group included among its membership Mrs. John V.L. Pruyn, Mrs. Robert C. Pruyn, the Misses Fenimore-Cooper, Mrs. John Boyd Thatcher, Mrs. George Curtis Treadwell, Mrs. W.W. Crannell and Mrs. William Bayard Van Rensselaer. In addition to traveling about Albany County voicing their views, the group also set up at summer and fall fairs to spread the word.

The democratic nature or open-mindedness of the Odd Fellows' philosophy can be seen from the appearance of a group the following February (1915), speaking in favor of women's suffrage. This time representatives of the Empire State Campaign Center sponsored a number of speakers including Judge E.V. McNamee who spoke on "Why Men Should Demand Votes For Women."

In conjunction with this talk, students at the school conducted a debate on the suffrage question. Mildred and Alice Osterhout and Clarende Pearl argued in behalf of women's right to vote and Royal Coughtry, Earl Pfannebecker and Albert Batcholts argued against. The judgement of those present was that the anti-suffrage group carried the day.

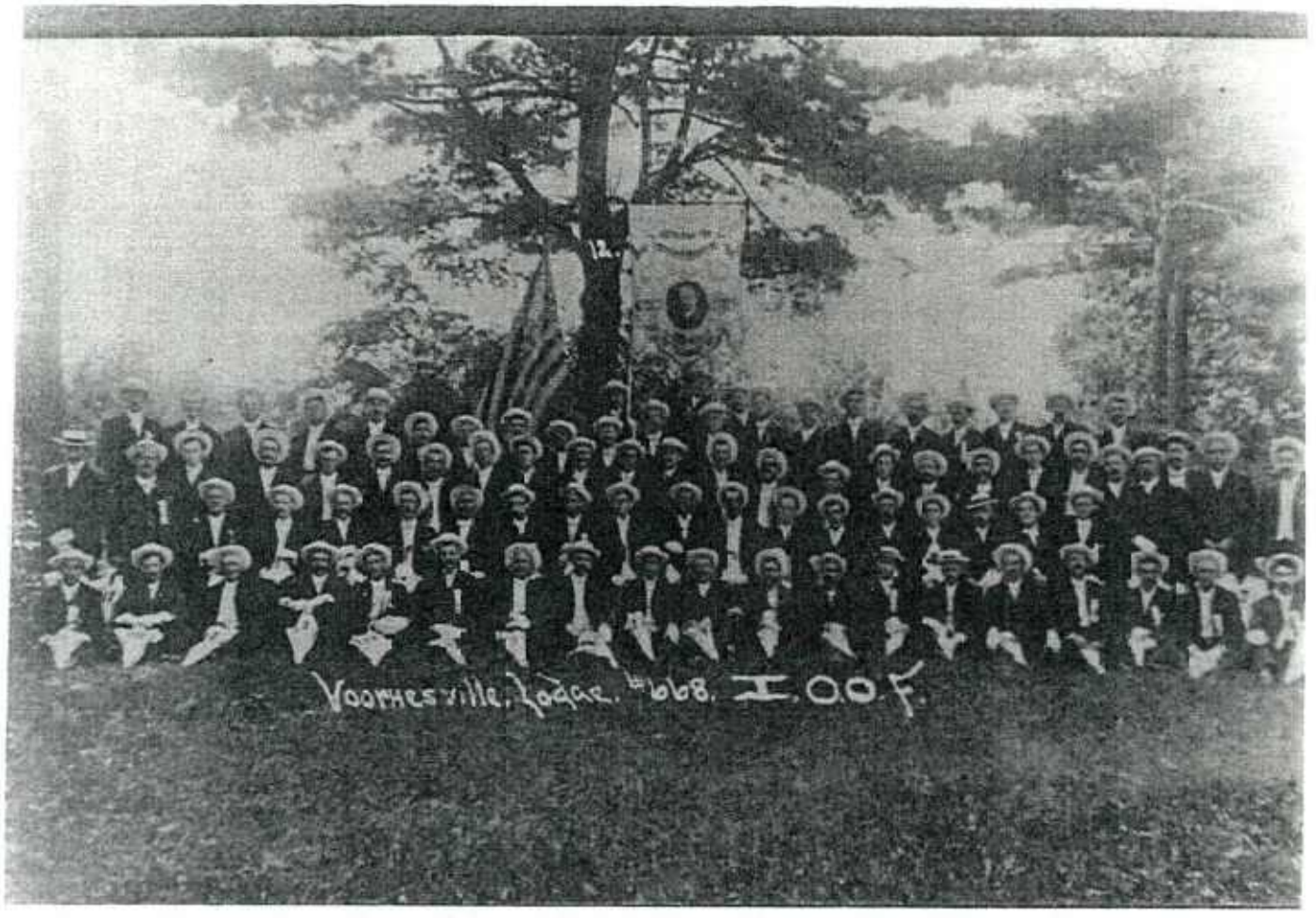
The Odd Fellows hall was also used for community talent shows which were extremely popular at the time. When the library arranged to have a fund-raising benefit in 1916, they scheduled their talent show for the Odd Fellows theater. But throughout the years the hall seemed to receive its greatest and most frequent use when movies made their way into American culture.

Each Saturday night village residents and those from the outlying areas poured into the hall to see silent films as Bessie Van Wormer, Flossie Cummings or Gert Smith as a fill-in for Van Wormer, played the piano in accompaniment. These Saturday night shows continued well into the 1950s.

4. While the Band Played On

For many of the small towns that sprouted up in rural America after the revolution, it was only toward the mid and latter parts of the 19th century that a real sense of community began to develop. The painful isolation of the previous century gradually vanished as small towns and villages throughout the state formed social groups and associations. As noted earlier, at one point there seemed to be a club or association for every possible taste and interest in Voorheesville.

But there was one group that seemed to find its way into every village and town in America in the 19th century no matter what its interests or size, namely, the



Members of Voorheesville Odd Fellows Lodge 668 in 1908 when Stephen Doring was elected to the top post in New York State, that of Grand Master.

brass band. This was the era when John Philip Sousa was composing his famed marches and conducting his own bands. In 1888 he had composed "Semper Fidelis" and in 1892 began his own band after completing a stint as director of the U. S. Marine Band. By 1896, when Sousa had finished his famous "The Stars and Stripes Forever," the brass band had become a communal fixture of towns and villages across the country.

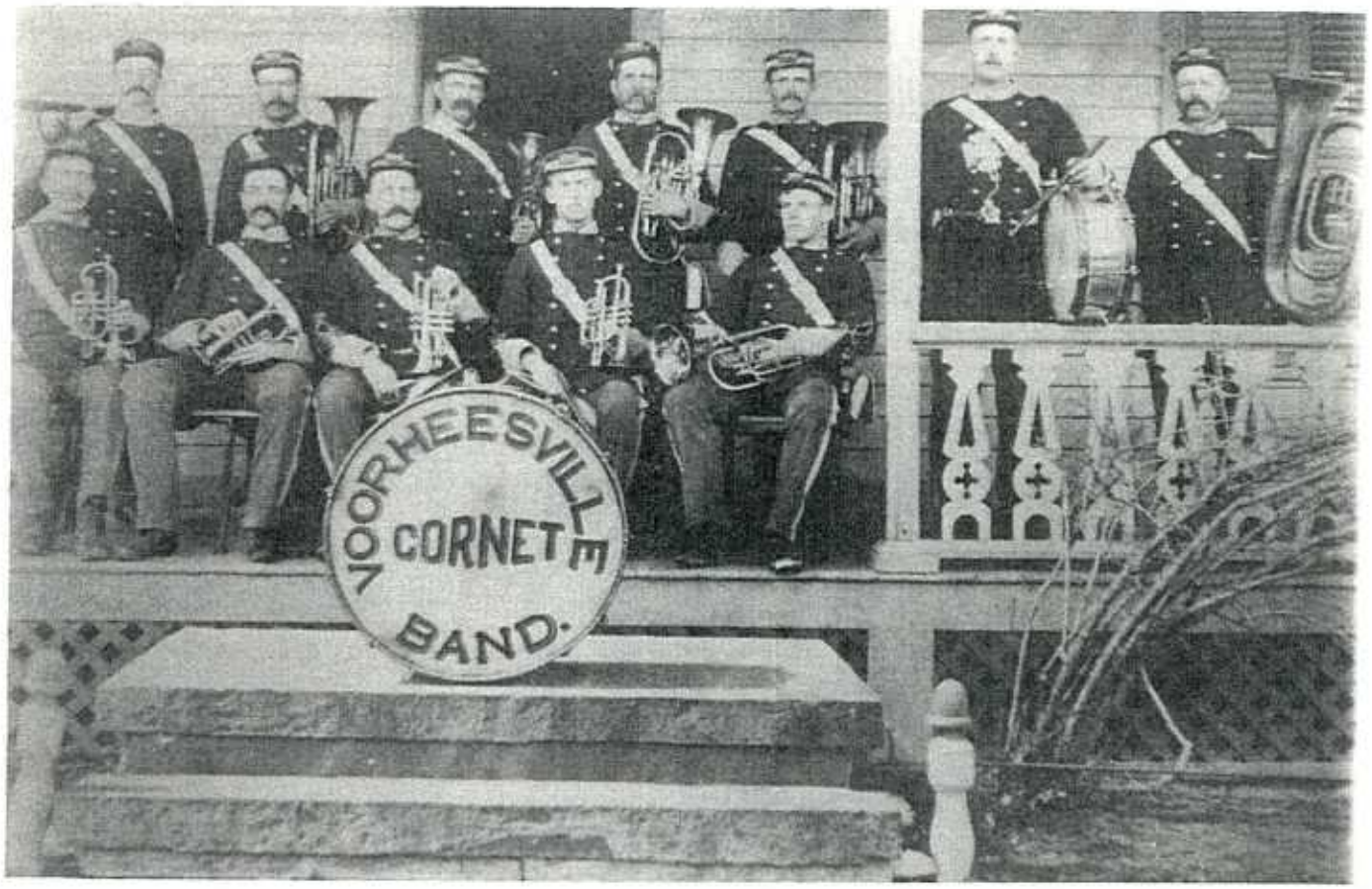
Indeed so many bands had sprung up during this era that by 1895 it was estimated that 10,000 bands were playing Sousa's compositions across America. If each of these bands had between 10 and 15 members, the number of Americans involved in playing an instrument in a band at the time numbered close to 150,000. This growth in community bands continued unabated until about 1908 when their number had reached a peak of 18,000.

During this era of the brass band, Voorheesville's enthusiasm for communal expression ran high. It's no surprise to see that a number of citizens came up with the idea of forming a band. The idea for the band germinated in January 1887 while a number of people were sitting around the stove in the market of Smith and Warner. Perhaps one of the villagers found a newspaper article describing some other town's band activities or perhaps saw an ad by Charles H. Van Wie, a noted organizer of bands in Albany.

Regardless, the conversation turned to how great it would be if Voorheesville had its very own band. There was agreement. One of the villagers contacted Mr. Van Wie and asked him if he'd be willing to help the village organize a brass band. Part of Van Wie's business, in addition to helping communities organize a band, was selling musical instruments and giving lessons.

Van Wie agreed to help. His first list of recruits included Avery Warner, Abram Relyea, Frank Kaiser, T. C. White, Frank Van Auken, Aiden McMillen, Fred McMillen, William H. Young, William D. Relyea, Myron Van Auken and Nelson Comstock. Frank Kaiser served as the group's president, Frank Van Auken its secretary and Abram Relyea as treasurer. Once the band had made contact with Van Wie, they purchased from him musical instruments to the tune of $200 and began taking lessons from the maestro. For these he charged $4 an hour.

In February, Winnie LaGrange had replaced William Young and by fall James S. Relyea took the place of



The Voorheesville Brass Band. Front row (l to r): _____, Frank Van Auken, Robert T. Coughtry (leader), Fred MacMillan and William Flansburgh; back row (l to r): William Relyea, Myron Van Auken, Abram Relyea, T. C. White, Frank Kaiser, Charles Winne and James Relyea.

Alden McMillen, but all along the young band kept practicing in the Presbyterian chapel every Monday night. When the chapel was not available for some reason, practice would then be held in the house of one of the band members. Working in earnest and proud of their efforts, the band reported to the community that they hoped to be ready to play their first public engagement by the fourth of July.

It's amazing in how short a time the Voorheesville band and other brass bands at this time learned to get a small repertoire together. By the last week of May the band had travelled to New Scotland to play its first engagement. The musicians received rave reviews from the townspeople; they were a hit!

Since the band played free, it had to rely on the efforts of various church groups to raise monies to finance its activities. Periodically, a social would be held for this purpose. For example, in June 1887 the members of the Methodist church held a strawberry social and raised $40. Other groups chipped in as well by holding clam bakes. For a number of years the receipts of an annual strawberry social served as the key means by which the band stayed in the black.

Until the spring of 1888 the band was essentially civilian looking but, by the end of May, they had purchased and received their first set of uniforms. In June, proud to display their new duds, they played a dual concert with the Fuller's Station band in the square in front of the stores. The Fuller's Station band had traveled over to the village for the day.

Increasingly the band became in demand. Its presence was considered to be an essential part of any social outing, particularly picnics and train excursions. When the New Scotland school went to Round Lake for its annual excursion one year, the band went along to play. It played at town picnics and political flag raisings, political campaigns and clam bakes. By 1896 the band had expanded to 19 pieces, prepared to play at Guilderland and French's Mills at Decoration Day services.

But after this time the band's activities began to become somewhat erratic. In 1897, the enthusiasm that had once been its calling card seemed to wane a bit. When spring rolled around, the band members did not emerge from hibernation the way they had in previous years. Some villagers began asking whether the band would play again. It's questionable whether it played at all that year, but the following year it was back in full swing and in early 1900 the Voorheesville band could be heard playing at a politically-related event in Altamont

Progress captured in the act. In the foreground stands the old Voorheesville Elementary School watched over by the new and still current grade school building (to the upper left rear).

under the name of the Rough Rider and MacKinley and Roosevelt Club. But after that, it became increasingly difficult for the members to get together. By 1901 there was talk of a reorganization and there might have been one for a while, but within a short time the band's presence was but a faint memory.

In 1906 when the village fire department was planning to march at a firemen's convention in Rensselaer, it had to hire eight musicians to play martial music at $3 each. And when the Odd Fellows Hall opened in November 1909 the Altamont Band was invited to play. Frank Kaiser, who loved music so much, had joined that band. By 1911, Kaiser was still traveling to Altamont to play in its band.

There was one other band in the village as well. This began in March 1887 shortly after the brass band had been started. A number of residents with more classically-oriented interests who played string instruments, formed a string band. This faded for a

In later years musical feats were tackled in the school. Here Lois Alkenbrach (at the piano) gets vocal assistance from classmates (l to r) John Hallenbeck, Richard Lockwood, Dominic Tork, Jack Herwig, Myndert Crounse, Florence Rzany, Marjorie Albright and Gerald Kling (about 1929-1930).

while but in November 1893 it was resurrected for a short time.

In 1913, lovers of barbershop quartet music were happy because John Hennessey, Charles Relyea, Jesse Joslin and Ad Albright combined their talents to form a barbershop quartet. This group performed not only in the village, but traveled to South Bethlehem and other villages as well to perform. They even performed as part of the Oneonta Church Society in 1913. But little more was heard from them after that.

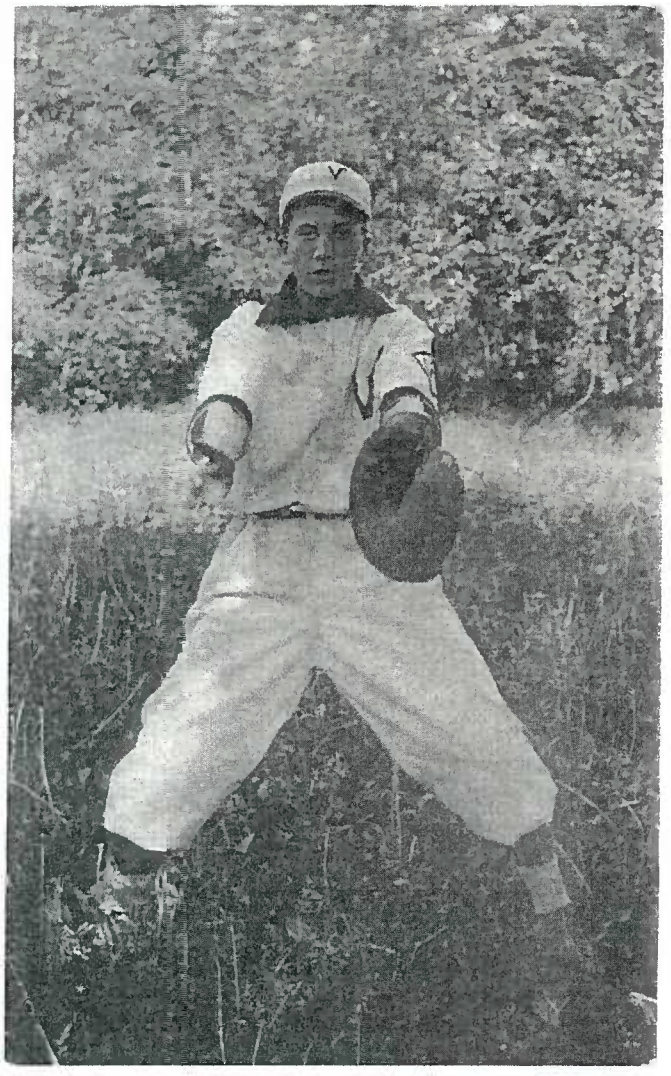
5. *Then There Was Baseball*

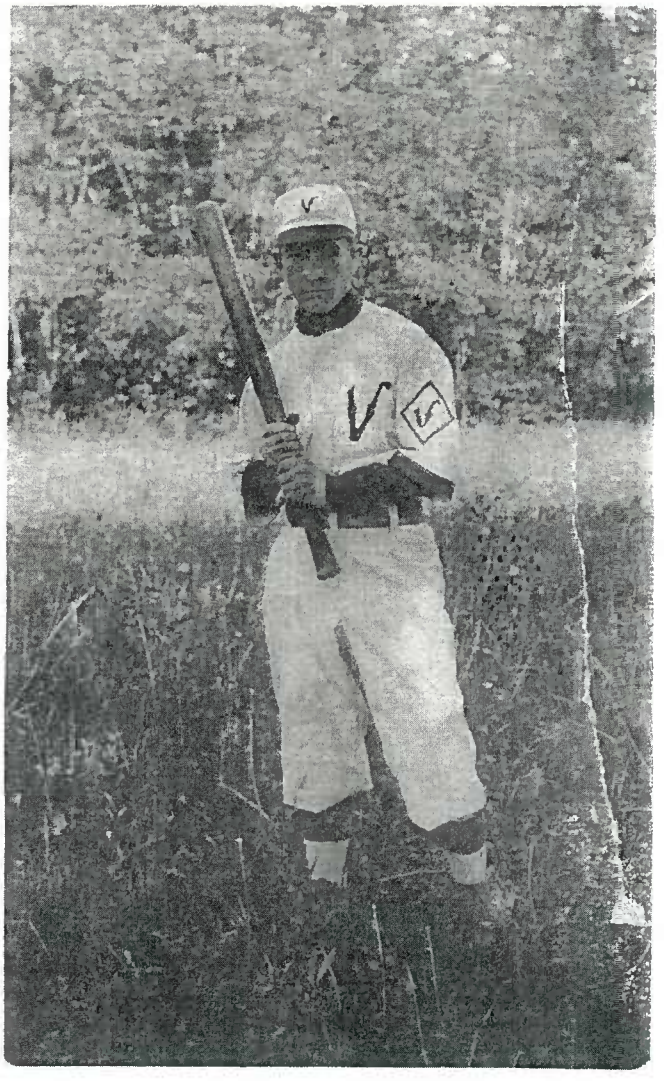
After the first national post-season championship was played in baseball in 1884, forerunner to the World Series, baseball entered the American psyche in a quick and permanent way. In the same way that the smallest of communities managed to organize a band, most of these communities also made an effort to field a baseball team to go against neighboring communities on a Saturday afternoon. For some the Saturday afternoon baseball game became the social highlight of the week, particularly when it meant playing one's next door neighbor with whom a rivalry had developed. For the Voorheesville squad such a rivalry could usually be found in Slingerlands and to a lesser extent in Altamont.

From its early days of being involved with the sport, Voorheesville fielded a variety of teams which played under different names and in different leagues. The earliest mention of a village team in the newspaper is found in 1885 when the village team known as the Lights was playing. The following year the team called itself the Short Horns. These early teams competed against Delmar, Altamont, Bethlehem and the noted Stars from Thompson's Lake. As in the case of the band, the ball club depended on fund-raising events for its financial support since spectators usually paid no admission to see a game. The fund-raising event might include the usual clam bake, dance or strawberry social.

Some years it seems the village did not field a team at all, at least an organized or formal team. For example, there is no evidence of a team for one or two years in the early 1890s, then a team started up anew in 1894. Perhaps fans were appreciative of the renewed efforts of the ballplayers to make a go of it, because a grand ball was held at Fryer's Hall in the Grove Hotel to raise money for the players. As the seasons progressed, the village

1907-1908 Voorheesville baseball team. Front row (l to r): Gotts Abele, Charles (Toad) Kaiser, Stanley Fryer, Willie Baxter and Jack Smith; back row (l to r): Len Boom (manager), Arthur (Sliver) Relyea, Ray Van Auken, Fred Relyea, Herk Camadine, States (Stats) Elkington, Dave Wayne, Steve Daring (manager).





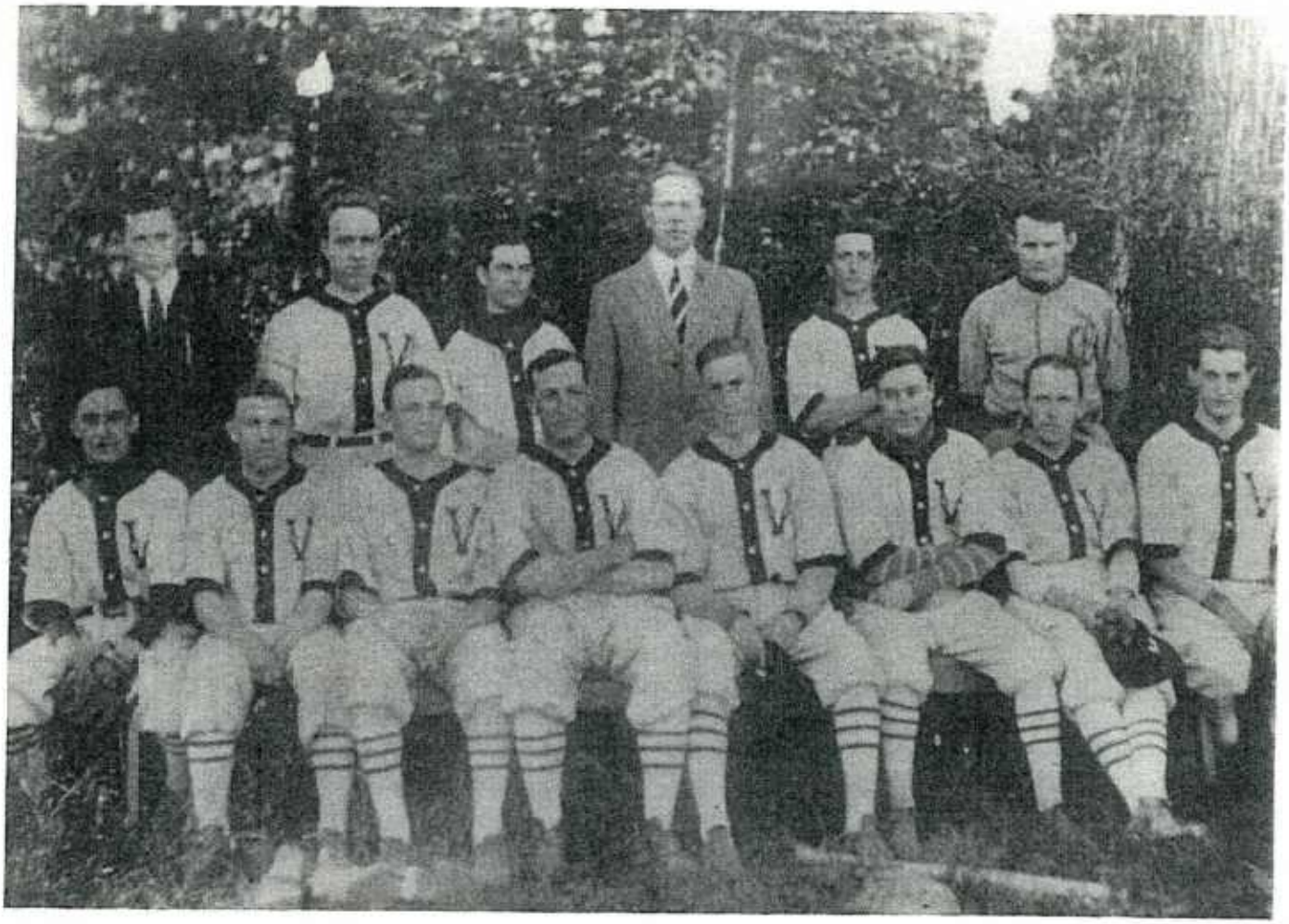
Two of Voorheesville's finest baseball players: Stanley Fryer (Conrad's grandson, with catcher's mitt) and Mike Pafundi (with bat). Pafundi was also an excellent basketball player. He was active in sports for decades, pitching fastpitch softball into his fifties.

team expanded its schedule to include local teams from Coeymans and New Salem and later teams from Albany and Schenectady. In the summer of 1891, after a number of consecutive wins, the Farlin team song was "We are the people." Its members boasted of being able to beat the much-heralded Buffaloes from Albany. During several seasons, the village team fared so well against the city teams that it had developed a minor reputation for itself.

As the sport became more organized and leagues formed, rivalries also solidified. The local teams were followed with such keen interest that oftentimes the results of a Saturday afternoon's diamond activities were front page material for the Enterprise. The emphasis is on "Saturday afternoon" because Sunday afternoon baseball was not permitted by law. However, the law did not seem to stop some enthusiasts from playing a game now and then on a Sunday, but not on the diamond behind the Grove—that would be too visible—rather outside the village on a makeshift diamond. In October 1889 when a number of village moralists got wind of this, they made a complaint to the justice of the peace saying they had seen a number of young men playing baseball about a mile from the village on Sunday afternoon. Word got out that if the Sunday afternoon baseball continued, some arrests would be made. Therewith ended Sunday afternoon baseball in the village.

The games themselves were something to behold. As today, there were always a number of vociferous fans who during the game made their disagreements known to the umpires in no uncertain terms. But it was not uncommon then when a disagreement occurred for fans to run on to the field or rush the mound to confront the umpire.

What aggravated the situation was that umpires were often suspected of being homers. In July 1903, when Voorheesville hosted the Switzers of Albany, a large and enthusiastic village crowd began booing the umpire in the early innings. It had been rumored about earlier



1914 Susquehanna League Champs. Back row (l to r): _____, _____, Jack Smith (manager), O.B. Vunck (president), Ray White, _____; front row (l to r): Mike Pafundi, _____, Fred Relyea, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____. The following were also on the team but it is impossible to place names with faces: R. F. Perkins, J. J. Flanagan, P. E. Berrigan, C. L. Hagan, J. H. Rosler (captain), R. T. Elkington, J. H. Ryan, F. A. Sandy, J. F. Wewmeyer and F. A. Wilson.

by several spectators that the umpire had been bought by the visiting team with a quart of peanuts and the promise of red lemonade. However, the tune of the Voorheesville fans changed later in the game as the home team went ahead, finally winning 4-1.

After a game any hard feelings that might have arisen during the contest dissolved, as the two teams often celebrated with a barbecue or clam bake. It was not uncommon for the Voorheesville team to sponsor a dance later in the evening in the pavilion behind the Grove. After the dance the visitors would head for the depot to wait for a train home. This was usually an uneventful wait unless something happened to the train. Such was the case when Voorheesville played an Albany team in 1887. When the evening's festivities were done, the away team discovered that the scheduled train would be six hours late. Coming to the rescue, Lansing Relyea hitched a team of horses to a hay rigging and took all 13 players back to the city.

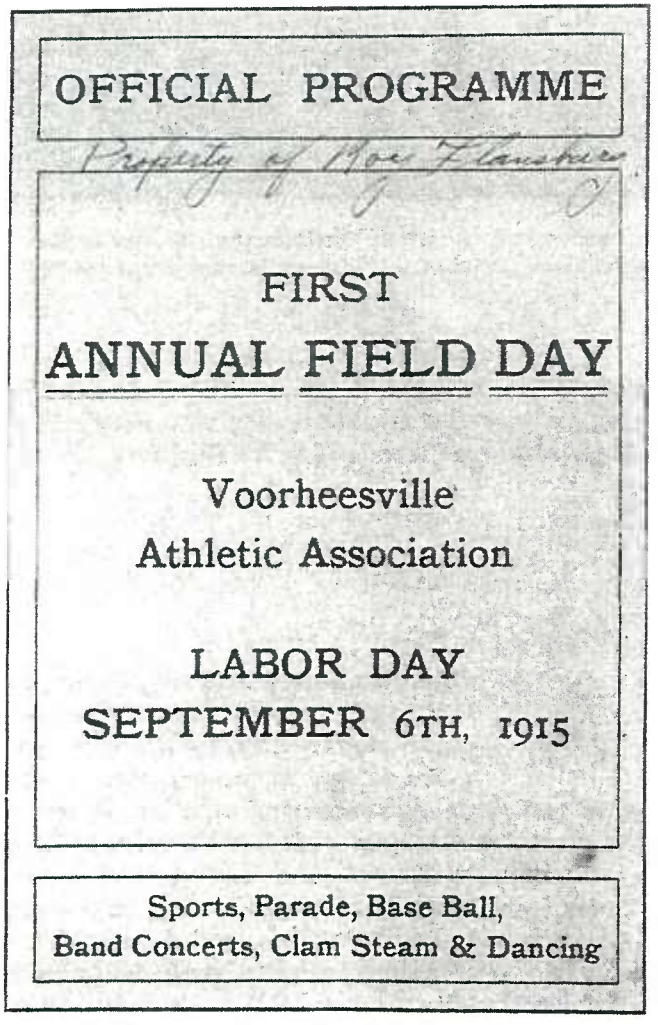
In the 1902-1903 seasons, the village had put together two extraordinary teams, beating nearly every club they came across and by big scores. If the village coasted through the 1902 season they soared through 1903. They defeated the Hurleys of Albany 10-0, Esperance 22-0, Roaches 12-0, Cobleskill 8-0, Guilderland 15-0, Vischer's Ferry 30-0 until they finally suffered two losses in a row at the hands of two Albany teams. No doubt Voorheesville's reputation had preceded them and the city teams were out to teach the country bumpkins a lesson.

Despite the sterling efforts of the Voorheesville team on the field, the villagers did not seem to back their teams with their pocketbooks as well as they did with their vocal cords. In a July 1908 edition of the paper, the criticism was leveled at the Voorheesville fans saying they were remiss when it came to supporting their team financially. A comparison was made with Slingerlands' fans who were said to back its team in every way. The charge was made that Voorheesville provided no stands for its fans to sit on and often crowded onto the diamond to cheer their team on. This might seem like an insignificant complaint but for the fans present it was

not. Games between Voorheesville and Slingerlands often drew close to 1,000 spectators.

In 1914 baseball in western Albany County took a more serious turn. In early May of that year, representatives from Delmar, Slingerlands, Voorheesville, Guilderland, Delanson and Altamont met in Altamont at the First National Bank to discuss the possibility of forming a well-organized league. As discussion took place about how to set up the league, a major concern of those present was whether outsiders (ringers) would be able to play for a community team. The concern was well-founded because certain communities were not beyond bringing in ringers. Scanning the boxscores of several games played by the Voorheesville team, it is hard to recognize some of the names as belonging to village families.

The following week, the league representatives met again at the Commercial hotel in Altamont and the Susquehanna League was formed, the league taking its name from the division of the Delaware and Hudson along which most of the towns lay. The season was scheduled to open on May 23 with Altamont pitted against Guilderland in a game at the fairgrounds beginning at 3:30.


OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

Property of Mrs. Flanagan

FIRST

ANNUAL FIELD DAY

Voorheesville

Athletic Association

LABOR DAY

SEPTEMBER 6TH, 1915

Sports, Parade, Base Ball,
Band Concerts, Clam Steam & Dancing

Cover of program of the Voorheesville Athletic Association's First Annual Field Day.

To get ready for the season Altamont and Voorheesville played a practice game which ended in a 4-4 tie. Altamont let it be known that hers was a local team, with all but one player coming from the village and vicinity. While league reps were engaged in dotting the i's and crossing the t's, residents of Voorheesville held an informal fund-raising dance on May 14 at the Odd Fellows Hall from 8 p.m. to 12 midnight. The Voorheesville Baseball Association, which was sponsoring the team, netted $30. The following week a second dance was held and an additional $40 was raised. The team had already selected its officers: Oscar B. Vunck was elected president, Arthur Relyea recording secretary, Fred Relyea financial secretary and W. Albright treasurer. John Smith would manage the team, Joe Rosler was to be captain, E.R. Van Wormer would serve as the official scorer and Stanton Relyea had the odious task of umpiring.

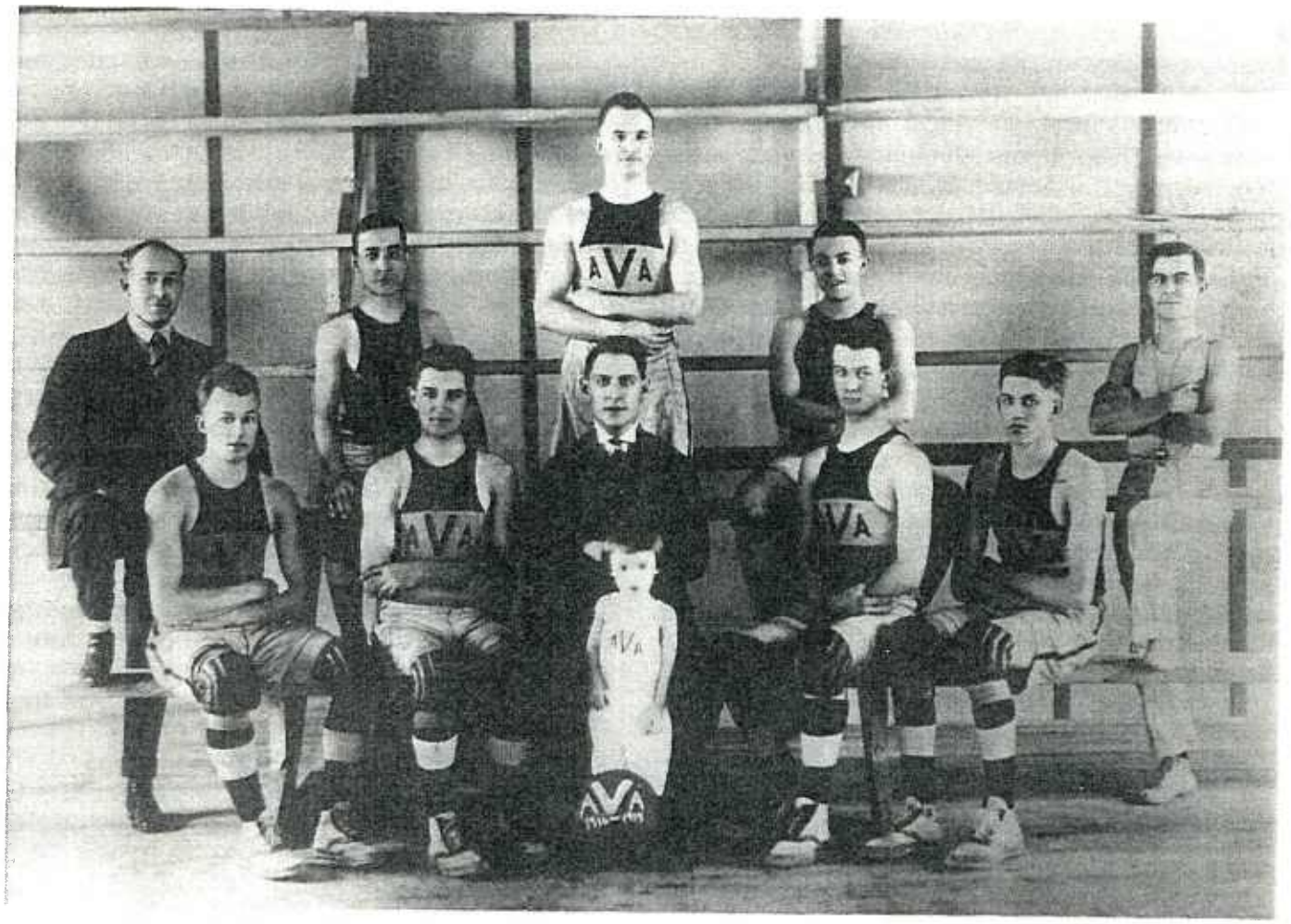
Spirits were high during the entire season and the Enterprise covered the games more closely than a presidential campaign. Scores were pasted across the front as the week's lead. After a number of closely fought contests toward the end of the season, Voorheesville finally finished as league champions with a 13-7 record. Slingerlands finished in second place (12-7) and Delanson third (12-8). Delmar, Altamont and McKownville finished fourth, fifth and sixth respectively.

Toward the end of October, Voorheesville was awarded the Spaulding trophy which was brought into the village and placed in the window of F.R. Wiltsie's store for all to see. On the trophy body was inscribed the names of the victors: John Smith (manager), R.F. Perkins, J.J. Flanagan, P.F. Berrigan. C.L. Hagan, J.M. Rosler (captain), R.T. Elkington, J.H. Ryan, M.J. Pafundi, F.A. Sandy, Oscar B. Vunck (president) Raymond White, J.F. Weymeyer, F.A. Wilson and F.L. Relyea.

During the next two seasons the village teams did not fare as well. Castleton joined the league the second year and won the trophy. However, the league continued to prosper until the war came. Then the draft made players so scarce that Slingerlands and Voorheesville formed a joint team, alternating games at their respective home fields.

In the spring of 1918, the Albany County League was formed with Elsmere, New Scotland, Guilderland and McKownville combining to form a successful first season. The following year, with the bulk of the live draftees back home, the league expanded to eight teams which included Altamont, Voorheesville, Delanson, Slingerlands, New Scotland, McKownville, Elsmere and Guilderland. Slingerlands with a 17-3 record handily won the first season.

A note needs to be added here about the village's first efforts at another sport- basketball. By 1914 basketball had become a part of the village's winter life when a



Voorheesville Athletic Association's 1916-1917 basketball team. Front row (l to r): Paul Fredenburgh, Ray White, Earl MacMillan (manager), Chappy Crannell, Earl Slabon and Ray Pafundi (mascot). Back row (l to r): Elwood Albright, Mike Pafundi, ____ Relyea, Dick Elkington, Jack Smith (referee).

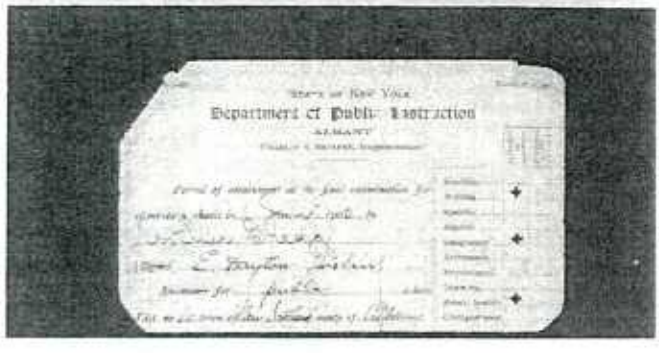
team was formed under the auspices of the Voorheesville Athletic Association.[1] On November 21, 1914, a Saturday night, the Voorheesville All Professional Basket Ball Team played its first game at the Odd Fellows Hall. It was the first game of basketball ever played in the village. The home team, comprised of Joe Evers, H. Runsley, M. McGrath, W. O'Brien, E. McGraw and P. Berrigan, defeated the Troy Mystics before an enthusiastic crowd.

By 1916 the Athletic Association had finally built a clubhouse in the Schell block. The Voorheesville team, decked out in its new suits of garnet and white, beat the Crimson Five of Albany, 54-11, in its first game there. Octogenarian and life-long resident of Voorheesville, Roy Flansburgh, says the crowds at these games became so enthusiastic at times that fights were more than an occasional occurrence. Flansburgh says that on one occasion a fan jumped out of the stands and went through the floor above the store.

Each year the Athletic Association sponsored a gala field day in an effort to raise funds for its activities which was attended by large crowds. About this time track had also become part of the village's sports schedule. While it seems hard to believe, in May 1919 an indoor track meet was held in the Methodist Church hall.

6. *Wanting A Place To Read*

As the village grew and solidified into a community, a small but enthusiastic group concerned itself with establishing a free library in the community. The group was made up of those who had an interest in reading and generally in more intellectual or cultural activities. Part of the group included Mary Vosburgh, Lavinia Joslin and Mrs. Stephen Daring who, at an earlier date had started a local chapter of the Bay View Club. This was essentially a study group dedicated to larger world cultural issues.[1] But these three women and other early supporters of a free public library found the project an uphill battle every step of the way.



(Top) E. Dayton Joslin (1864-1923); (bottom) Arthur Gregg's 5th grade report card for 1898 when he was a student of Joslin's. Gregg who later wrote 'Old Hellebergh' in 1936, said his interest in history was fostered by Joslin nearly 40 years earlier.

The man responsible for the very first library in the village was E. Dayton Joslin. Joslin had been a school teacher before opening a hardware store on Main Street with his brother, Jesse, in 1890. E. Dayton, always an avid reader, worked toward getting the State Circulating Library into the village. That came in 1901 after arrangements had been made for the library to be set up in the rear of Albert Borst's restaurant. This effort of Joslin's was symbolic of his efforts to encourage learning in the community at all age levels.

As a teacher and principal in the Voorheesville grade school and later as school board member, Dayton Joslin was responsible for cultivating as much love for learning among the young as anybody in those years. Former students still recall what a profound influence he had on their love for reading and learning generally.

The State Circulating Library remained the main source of reading materials in the community until late 1914, when a number of residents began to talk about securing "subscriptions" for a new free library. According to former village resident Marion Vosburgh, Frederick Griesman had been a major influence in arranging for the library. Vosburgh, who served as a volunteer in the library herself for a time, says the foundry owner was interested in getting books in foreign languages for many of his workers who were Poles, Slovaks and Italians. By the first week of January 1915, $100 in subscription monies has been collected for the library which prompted those interested to talk more specifically about its formation.

By mid January, a number of residents met on a Saturday afternoon and established the first free library. During the meeting the Rev. S.M. Adsit, the Rev. George W. Easton, Stephen J. Daring, C.V. Griesman. E. Dayton Joslin, Mrs. Fisher M. Joslin, Mrs. Oscar B. Vunck, Mrs. John C. Guffin, Mrs. Franklin E. Vosburgh and Miss Eleanor Fisher were elected trustees. The chief benefactor of the library during its earliest days was none other than Griesman himself. He not only donated monies for its development but at one point purchased a parcel of property for the library on Main Street.

In January 1915, the newly elected board of trustees lost no time in getting things off the ground. The new library was open for the purpose of lending books on Saturday, January 23. Library hours were from 2 to 6 p.m. and each subsequent Saturday. Addie Bewsher, daughter of grocer Thomas Bewsher, served as the first librarian on a volunteer basis. She was later followed by Mildred Guffin (circa 1932-1937) after Guffin had finished a formal library degree at Columbia University.

For residents of the Voorheesville school district there was no charge for lending books but those outside the district were required to pay 50 cents a year for the privilege. However, a $1 annual fee was charged to become a member of the library. For $25 a person could become a life member. These funds were used for both the maintenance of the library and for the purchase of

Frederick Griesman (d. 1932), builder and owner of the Albany Malleable Iron Works Foundry, was a major supporter of the Voorheesville Free Library from the outset.

new books. The decisions about new acquisitions were made by Mary Vosburgh and Flora Guffin, wife of the secretary of the Savings and Loan Association. During this period the library was located in the village hall in a room it shared with the savings and loan association.

Within a year, by January 1916, great strides had been made in the library's expansion particularly in its number of acquisitions. The trustees were proud to announce that there were now over 700 books available to Voorheesville residents as well as those available from the State via its traveling library. The Library Association also boasted of 122 contributing members and its expanded circulation hours. In addition to being able to borrow books during four hours on Saturday afternoon, villagers could borrow books on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8 p.m.

But financing still proved to be a problem for the trustees. In December 1916 a home talent show was organized to raise funds for the continuation of the library. The show was to be under the direction of Anna Lilyan Dunkel, a professional stage coach known for bringing in the crowds. It's not known how much was made at the talent show but several months later,

HOME TALENT SHOW

ODD FELLOWS' HALL, VOORHEESVILLE, N. Y.

Monday Eve., Dec. 4th, 1916

BENEFIT OF VOORHEESVILLE FREE LIBRARY.

Reserved Seats 35c. General Admission 25c. Children 10c.

Tickets on sale at Pitcher & Wayne's.

PROGRAM.

I. MARRIAGE OF TOM THUMB.

Bride ..... Marguerite Joslin
Tom Thumb ..... Donald Vosburgh
Flower Girls ..... Margaret Torlish
Virginia Smith
Muriel Radcliffe
Cupid ..... Clayton Pitcher
Maid of Honor ..... Gertrude Houck
Ringbearer ..... Donald Long
Ushers ..... John Lange
Clifton Wood
Bridesmaids ..... Harriett Rivenburg
Lorna Reed
Minister ..... Ivan Osterhout
Father of Bride ..... Milton Hotaling
Mother of Bride ..... Mildred Guffin
Grandparents of Bride ..... Patrick Simmons
Ruth Ostrander
President and Mrs. Wilson ..... Earl Rivenburg
Josephine Simmons
Old Maid Friends ..... Helen Ricci
Great Aunts ..... Helen Pitcher
Leta Brunk
Cousin from Italy ..... Nuzian Sacco
Father and Mother Thumb ..... Gordon Reed
Stella Brunk
Old School Friend ..... Rose Simmons
Cousin from Mexico ..... Josephine Tork
Aunt from New York ..... Louise Hotaling
Old Beau ..... Newton Relyea
Great Grandfather ..... Stanley Horner
Great Grandmother ..... Ruth Young
Sister of Bride ..... Marie Russo

WEDDING SONGS

"Oh, Promise Me" ..... Miss Helen Vanderpoel
"I Love You Truly" ..... Miss Gertrude Coughtry

Pianist, Miss Adelaide Bewsher.

II. DANCE OF THE GIDDY GIRLS.

THE GIRLS—Misses Florence Ferguson, Laura Van Wormer, Marguerite Elkinton, Katherine Wayne, Carrie Martin, Verna Severson, Florence Gilbert and Mrs. Gertrude Ochampaugh.

THE MEN—Willard Brady, Kenneth Martin, Floyd Smith, Royal Coughtry, Walter Wood and Floyd Brunk.

Accompanist, Miss Harriett Bell.

III. 1916 OLD MAID CONVENTION.

Dramatis Personae

Josephine Jane Green, President ..... Mrs. Mary Vosburgh
Rovilly Abigail Hobbs, Secretary ..... Mrs. Flora Guffin
Ruth Jane Seeknofurther, Treasurer ..... Mrs. Lillian Joslin
Augusta Prim (deaf) ..... Miss Eleanor Fisher
Susie Sorrowheart ..... Mrs. Minnie Michel

"Shure from Cork."

Jerusha Matilda Spriggins ..... Miss Laura Coughtry
Frances Lucretia Lasthope ..... Miss Gertrude Coughtry
Portia Olivia Bennett ..... Miss Dora Cummings
Gloriana Gadabout ..... Mrs. Cora Crounse
Peachy Pinky White (chronic giggler) ..... Mr. Henry Crounse
Penelope Gertrude Doolittle ..... Mrs. Hattie Joslin
Sallie May Willing ..... Mrs. Amanda Vanderpoel
Tabitha Tattlefacts ..... Mrs. Helen Ogsbury
Priscilla Akemequick ..... Mrs. Ella Shaw
Gloriana Popover ..... Mrs. Harriet Gilbert
Betsey Bobbitt ..... Mrs. Millie Bagley
Violet Ann Twaddles ..... Mrs. George Taylor
Mary Jane Leftover ..... Prof. W. T. Radcliffe
Charity Longface ..... Mrs. Lavinia Joslin
Priscilla Hope ..... Mrs. Lottie Radcliffe
Nerissa Ethel Huggins ..... Miss Myra Osterhout
Jane Maria Coy ..... Mrs. Lizzie Jones
Melinda Lovejoy ..... Miss Adelaide Bewsher
Dottie Sweetness ..... Mr. Peter Michel
Patience Desireman ..... Miss Ida Oliver
Professor Makeover ..... Prof. W. T. Radcliffe
Doctor Crackenbones ..... Mr. Henry Crounse

Madeovers

The Bride ..... Miss Laura Van Wormer
The Reciter ..... Miss Mabel Horner
The Brunette ..... Mrs. W. T. Radcliffe
The Man ..... Mr. Willard Brady

Accompanist, Mrs. Mary Daring.

DANCING AFTER THE SHOW. GOOD MUSIC.

Playbill for 1916 library fundraiser at Odd Fellows Hall.

February 1917, the friends of the library asked that a proposition be put on the March ballot asking residents to vote for an annual $200 stipend to keep the library going. At this time the library had over 1,000 volumes with 4,000 books loaned out during the year.

The proposition was actively lobbied for by the Library Association and its then president, Stephen J. Daring, but to no avail. It was defeated soundly by a margin of 40-21. The farming-business community was not ready to pay taxes for book learnin'. To soothe the pain of the defeat, the board of trustees voted the following week to donate the use of the trustee room in the hose house to the library without charge. They were also given the privilege of renting to the loan association. The rent money would be theirs but the library had to furnish its own heat if the building's heating system proved inadequate for them.

Daring, a highly respected member of the community, was incensed at the defeat of the proposition during the election. He wrote an open letter in the April 13 issue of the Enterprise telling the community that "a library cannot be run without funds any more than any other business or enterprise." In a direct and serious tone, Daring asked that each member of the community pledge at least $1 for the library to compensate for the defeated proposition. It is not known how many dollars Frederick Griesman contributed at this time but he was once again mentioned in the paper as one of its major supporters.

Despite the lack of aid of public monies, the library continued to prosper. At its fourth year's end, in July 1919, it had built its collection to 1,437 volumes and had a list of 406 regular borrowers. The average number of books loaned each week was 87. The young Mildred Guffin, daughter of John Guffin, was its best customer, borrowing as many as a half dozen books each week.

For a time the hours of the library remained the same, four hours on Saturday afternoon and one hour on Wednesday evening. Something new was added for the summer months in 1919, a story hour. And in addition to the readings offered the young, a balopticon was used to show slides furnished by the state.

"I would say the one thing in my childhood that stands out and I often think about is when gypsies came around. They used to come periodically through our village in wagons and had furniture and we were always told they would steal children and my friend and I would run and run but I remember every summer they would come and I remember one time when I was sitting in the fifth grade a whole bunch were outside. They had fancy dresses, bright colors and they always had their furniture piled up and their animals with them and when I think of my childhood I always think of them and I was afraid of them."

— Vera Schultz

CHAPTER SEVEN

Government and Public Service

1. Incorporation

Throughout the afternoon of May 8, 1899, 60 residents of the unincorporated village of Voorheesville walked up the long flight of stairs to the justice of the peace courtroom on the second floor of Leroy Schell's feed and grain store to vote. Town Clerk Levi Wood had prepared the single proposition on the ballet asking voters from the unincorporated village whether they wanted to officially set themselves off from the rest of the town through incorporation. As we have seen, for several decades prior to the vote, the village had already set itself apart from the town both economically and, to a large extent, culturally. Although geographically situated in the once-forgotten north central part of town, within a matter of decades the village had become New Scotland's hub.

But for some residents, the decision to set up their own government was not an easy matter. They and their families had been part of the town since its beginning nearly 70 years earlier. For them incorporation had a ring of treason they wanted no part of. For others there was concern that, with a new government, they might not only be saddled with more taxes, but also, with the center of government situated closer to their daily activities, find their actions more closely scrutinized

Of the 60 who voted that Monday afternoon, 39 voted in favor of incorporation and the rest (21) against. making Voorheesville its own political person.[1] Those who favored incorporation were jubilant not just because of the favorable outcome of the the vote that day but because it brought a halt to a stalemate that had lasted for seven years. Seven years earlier the issue of incorporation had been raised in the village but discussion was tabled almost summarily when an anti-incorporation group raised its voice in protest.

OFFICIAL BALLOT FOR CHARTER ELECTION, VILLAGE OF VOORHEESVILLE, JUNE 2, 1899.

VILLAGE.

Leroy S. Schell,

Village Clerk.

Cover of ballot for Voorheesville's incorporation vote.

The first serious mention of incorporation came in June 1892 when a number of interested citizens called for a meeting on the 15th of that month at the Grove Hotel. To facilitate matters, they had invited two guests from neighboring Altamont, John D. White and Orville J. Hogan, to speak about that village's experience with its own incorporation two years earlier. The words of the two visitors were well received by the 10 who showed up. Toward the close of the meeting, an informal ballot was cast; all present voted in behalf of pursuing the issue further. Then three prominent businessmen, William Swift, Frank Bloomingdale and Leroy Schell were chosen by the group as a committee to draft a resolution concerning incorporation and to circulate a petition around the village for the necessary signatures. Twenty signatures were required to put such a proposition on the ballot. A second meeting was scheduled for the following week.

But, at the next meeting, the committee reported that it had not as yet completed its assignment and requested of the larger group two more weeks before coming together again. Obviously the three representatives were having a hard time getting the required number of signatures. A wrench had been thrown into the works of the little movement. And that wrench had been thrown by none other than Conrad Fryer. Just before the incorporation group was about to meet for the third time, Fryer with two associates, T.C. White [2] and Ed O'Brien, had called their own meeting in behalf of anti-corporation. This, too, was scheduled for the Grove.

Fryer was most likely the brains behind the move. First of all, there was the matter of his land holdings. When the village did finally incorporate nine years later, it contained 367.13 acres within its boundaries. Fryer owned 100 of these including a hotel, his brick building, barns, livery stable and more. Part of his resistance to the move to incorporate, therefore, had to do with his fear of greater taxation. Furthermore, incorporation meant that government would be closer to Fryer's backyard and for him that meant greater scrutiny and perhaps more control. Free spirit that he was, Fryer, above all, would see incorporation as little more than a burden.

However the three anti-incorporationists managed to do it, they brought about a halt to the proceedings. Two

The junction of the two roads that made incorporation possible.

months after the 10 businessmen had held their first meeting, aglow with enthusiasm, formal action to continue the process had stopped. In the August 1892 edition of the paper, the correspondent asks rhetorically whatever happened to the incorporation movement.

No formal action was taken on incorporation one way or another until March 1899, nearly a full seven years later. Early that March a notice was sent about the village stating that a voluntary meeting of the leading businessman and citizens of the village would be held in the front room of the second floor of Schell's block at 8 p.m. The purpose? To discuss the advisability of incorporation.

The minutes in the village books referring to this meeting indicate that "the issue was freely discussed" which means a good argument ensued. Moreover, as in the case of seven years earlier, those present voted in favor of moving ahead with incorporation. This time, however, 34 residents signed a petition for an application to the town for incorporation. Interestingly among the list of signatures on this petition was the name of T.C. White. Clearly he had changed his point of view since the earlier encounter. However, still absent from the list were the names of Conrad Fryer and Edward O'Brien.

The application was filed with the town clerk and a public hearing was scheduled before Town Supervisor Albert Vanderpool on Monday, April 10. It was still anticipated by those in favor that strong opposition to the proposal might be mustered at the last minute, but it never was. This time Fryer's efforts were not successful, in large part because, in the seven years since he first opposed the move, too much interest had developed in self government. Plus, there were too many newcomers in the village with clout such as the Cummings Brothers. Besides, Fryer was in his 70th year and though still seemingly spry in body and spirit, he probably had less energy to take on the rest of the village. Perhaps his rheumatism had gotten the better of him. Regardless, within three months he would be dead.

As we began at the outset then, on May 8th, the vote was presented to the entire community and Voorheesville became an incorporated village. As part of the incorporation papers, the village boundaries were set. The entire village consisted of only 367.13 acres and a population of 487. On May 19, Leroy Schell was appointed temporary village clerk.

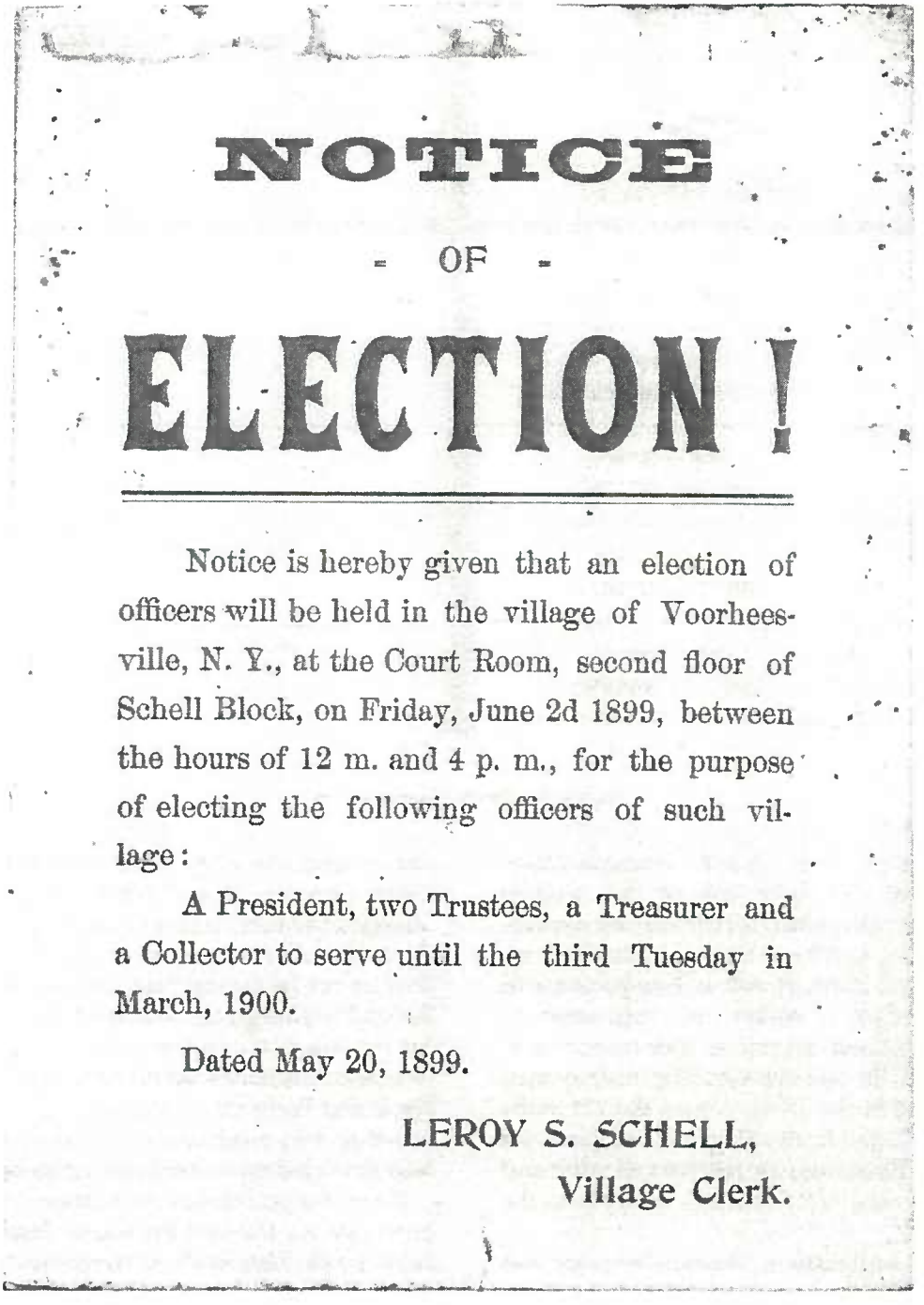
How strange that, throughout the pages of the town's record books, there is no mention of the village's move to incorporate. The only evidence that something happened to some residents of the town is found in lines drawn through the names of Voorheesville residents on the annual tax assessment rolls.

2. *A Government Is Established*

As village clerk pro tem, Leroy Schell's first job was to make arrangements for a villagewide election for government officials. He drew up and posted a notice in conspicuous places about the village informing residents that an election of public officials would be held on June 2 at the courtroom on the second floor of Schell's block from noon to 4 pm. Ballots would be cast for president, two trustees, a treasurer and tax collector.

The notices, a legal formality, were superfluous except maybe for time and place of the election because negotiations were already under way as to who would constitute the first government. On May 24 a mini-bipartisan convention was held at the Grove Hotel for anyone interested in selecting a ticket for the upcoming election. Here it was decided that only one ticket would be put on the ballot, perhaps in the name of expediency, perhaps because the most viable candidates would come from the unified pool of incorporation supporters. Nevertheless, each major party made its respective nominations.

For president (mayor) the Republican nominee, as



NOTICE

- OF -

ELECTION!

Notice is hereby given that an election of officers will be held in the village of Voorheesville, N. Y., at the Court Room, second floor of Schell Block, on Friday, June 2d 1899, between the hours of 12 m. and 4 p. m., for the purpose of electing the following officers of such village:

A President, two Trustees, a Treasurer and a Collector to serve until the third Tuesday in March, 1900.

Dated May 20, 1899.

LEROY S. SCHELL,
Village Clerk.

Notice of first village election.

THIS BALLOT SHOULD BE MARKED IN ONE OF TWO WAYS WITH A PENCIL HAVING BLACK LEAD.
TO VOTE A STRAIGHT TICKET, MAKE A CROSS X MARK WITHIN THE CIRCLE ABOVE ONE OF THE PARTY COLUMNS
TO VOTE A SPLIT TICKET, THAT IS, FOR CANDIDATES OF DIFFERENT PARTIES, THE VOTER SHOULD MAKE A CROSS X MARK BEFORE THE NAME OF EACH CANDIDATE FOR WHOM HE VOTES.
IF THE TICKET MARKED IN THE CIRCLE FOR A STRAIGHT TICKET DOES NOT CONTAIN THE NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR ALL OFFICES FOR WHICH THE ELECTOR MAY VOTE, HE MAY VOTE FOR CANDIDATES FOR SUCH OFFICES SO OMITTED BY MAKING A CROSS X MARK BEFORE THE NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR SUCH OFFICES ON ANOTHER TICKET, OR BY WRITING THE NAMES IF THEY ARE NOT PRINTED UPON THE BALLOT, IN THE BLANK COLUMN UNDER THE TITLE OF THE OFFICE.
TO VOTE FOR A PERSON NOT ON THE BALLOT, WRITE THE NAME OF SUCH PERSON, UNDER THE TITLE OF THE OFFICE, IN THE BLANK COLUMN.
ANY OTHER MARK THAN THE CROSS X MARK USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF VOTING OR ANY ERASURE MADE ON THIS BALLOT, MAKES IT VOID, AND NO VOTE CAN BE COUNTED HEREON.
IF YOU TEAR, OR DEFACE, OR WRONGLY MARK THIS BALLOT, RETURN IT AND OBTAIN ANOTHER

	UNION TICKET.	BLANK COLUMN.
		THE ELECTOR MAY WRITE IN THE COLUMN BELOW, UNDER THE TITLE OF THE OFFICE, THE NAME OF ANY PERSON WHOSE NAME IS NOT PRINTED UPON THE BALLOT, FOR WHOM HE DESIRES TO VOTE
	For President, FRANK BLOOMINGDALE.	For President,
	For Trustee, RUFUS FLANSBURGH.	For Trustee,
	For Trustee, ABRAM RELYEA.	For Trustee,
	For Treasurer, LEROY S. SCHELL.	For Treasurer,
	For Collector, JAMES S. RELYEA.	For Collector,

Ballot for first village election.

might be expected, was Frank Bloomingdale. Bloomingdale was not only one of the leading businessmen in the village but had served two terms in the state assembly from Albany County's First District. He was known, well-liked, as well as a major factor in making incorporation a reality. In opposition to Bloomingdale the Democrats put up their favorite son, E. Dayton Joslin. Joslin was also a leading businessman and well-respected in the village. From the 121 votes cast in the mostly Republican village the outcome was hardly a surprise. Bloomingdale received 93 votes and Joslin just 28. Bloomingdale, therefore, would head the ticket.

For the position of treasurer, Thomas Bewsher was nominated but turned the invitation down. In his place was nominated Conrad Fryer who was slated against Leroy Schell. Seventy votes were cast in this contest. Fryer received 21 and Schell 49, making Schell the village's first nominee for treasurer. Later in the meeting James Goodfellow was nominated for the position of trustee but he turned that nomination down. Finally, Rufus Flansburgh and Abram Relyea were nominated for the two open trustee positions and both accepted. The four candidates would make up the single ticket of the Union Party for an election that was scheduled for less than two weeks away. On the paper ballot space was provided on one side for write-in candidates.

When the poll closed on election day, 107 votes had been cast for the first President. Frank Bloomingdale received 64, John Ryall, 42 (write-in votes) and Conrad Fryer, 1. There is no question as to who thought Fryer should be president and cast the single vote for him(self)!

But Ryall with 42 votes? Ryall, an Irish immigrant, stood among the most popular and influential members of the village. A four-year veteran of the Civil War, Ryall had also served as town justice of the peace for four consecutive four-year terms and had been the U. S. loan commissioner for Albany County. The large number of votes cast for the justice of the peace is an indication that the Democrats made a second and strong effort to defeat Bloomingdale. However, to no avail.

Three days after the election, Bloomingdale called together the newly elected officials for an organizational meeting at his office on Main Street. The first order of business of the novice administration was to appoint a permanent village clerk. Attorney Stephen J. Daring was nominated and approved 3-0. James Goodfellow, who during the convention had declined the nomination for village trustee, was appointed street commissioner. He too received a favorable 3-0 vote.

At the next meeting, on the 14th of June, the trustees laid the legal groundwork for assessing residents by deciding to have an official survey made of the village. They passed a resolution to hire Altamont surveyor Leslie Allen to make both an official survey and a map of the village. Allen had both of these completed and in the hands of the trustees by their September 3 meeting.

But since the new government hadn't had an opportunity to raise revenue through taxation, it was without monies with which to run governmental operations, particularly services such as all-important road work. The trustees passed a resolution therefore to borrow $200 from Catherine Flansburgh and later $15 from C.A. Van Auken.

During the first fiscal year which ended on February 28, 1900, the village's expenses totaled $169.85. Most of that, $108, went to Leslie Allen for his survey and map. Having begun with $200 the balance for the year was $30.15. While preparing the fiscal report, Schell made some projections for the upcoming year. He estimated that $300 would be needed to keep things going, $250 of which would go toward road maintenance. Another $215 would have to be raised in order to pay Flansburgh and Van Auken what was owed them.

In the newly constituted village, term of office for all positions had been set up for only a year so that, before the new ticket had a chance to do much of anything, the time for nominating officers for the second year had already rolled around. This time the political parties were more serious about drawing party lines. They held two separate caucuses from which evolved two separate tickets to be presented to the voters on election day.

Throughout the years, however, the two-ticket system remained the exception in Voorheesville's electoral history. Another two-party ticket would not come along until 1907 and the one after that not for another seven years. Beginning with the second election, one of the trustees would be elected for a two-year term in order to provide some continuity to the administration.

REPORT OF THE

Treasurer of the village of Voorheesville

For the Fiscal Year Ending Feb. 28, 1900.

GENERAL FUND.

RECEIPTS

From trustees		$200.00

DISBURSEMENTS.

Altamont Enterprise	5 00	
Leslie Allen	108 00	
Rufus Flansburgh	9 00	
Abram Relyea	11 00	
O. S. Pullman	7.40	
S. J. Daring	17.50	
L. S. Shell	4 50	
Albert Vanderpoel	6.00	
Morris Harris	1 45	169.85
Balance on hand		$30.15

OUTSTANDING INDEBTEDNESS.

To Catherine A. Flansburgh	200 00
To C. A. VanAuken	15.00
Total	$215 00

L. S. SCHELL, Treasurer.

Dated March 5th 1900.

The board of trustees make the folowing estimate of the amount of money necessary to be raised by tax for the fiscal year ending Feb. 28th 1901:

For General Fund	$75 00
For Salary Fund	25.00
For Street Fund	250.00

In addition thereto it will be necessary to raise the sum of $215. to pay the claims of Catherine A. Flansburgh and C. A. VanAuken, making the total amount to be raised for the fiscal year, $565.

FRANK BLOOMINGDALE, Pres.,

RUFUS FLANSBURGH. } Trus.
ABRAM RELYEA, }

S. J. DARING, Clerk.

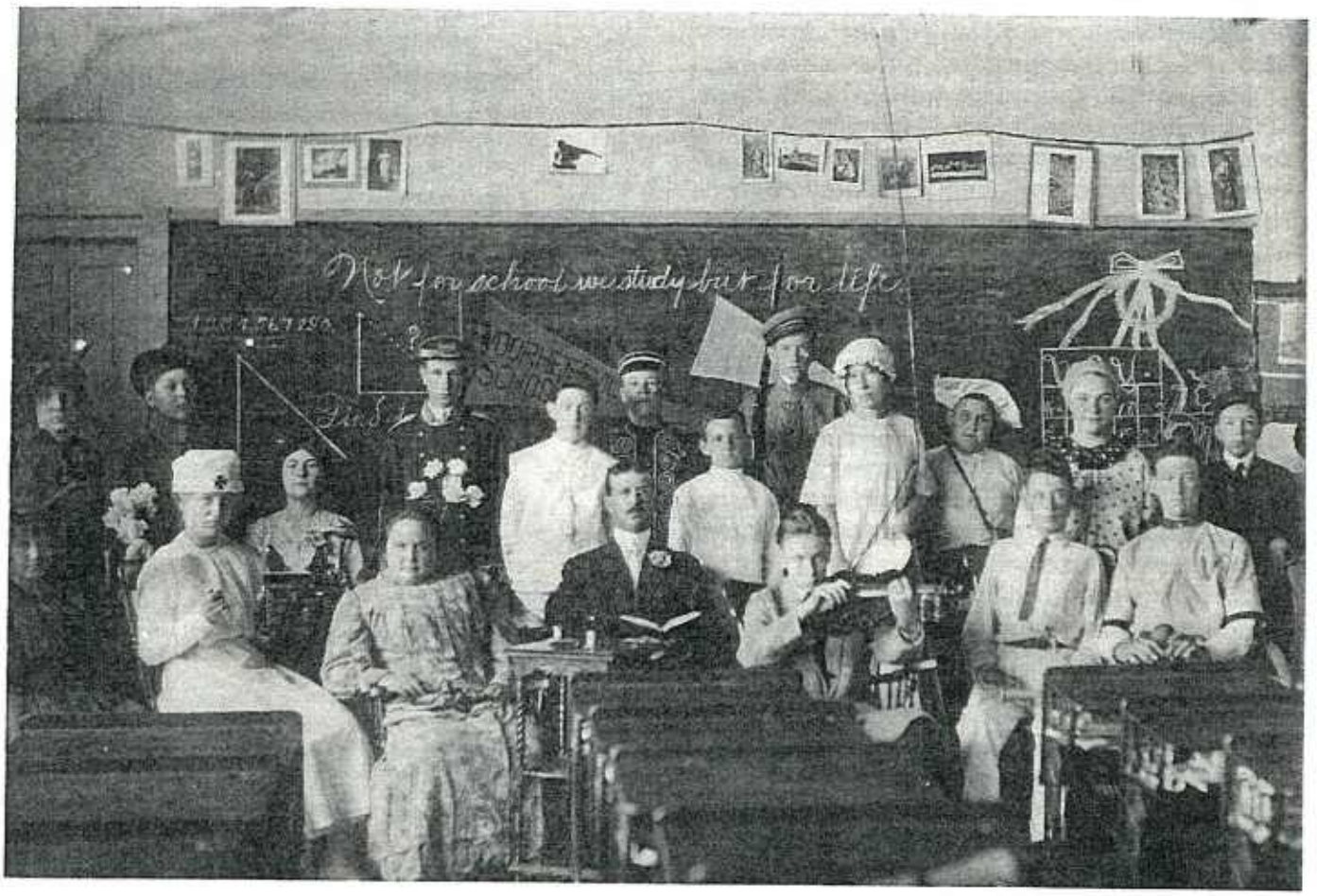
Dated Voorheesville, March 5th 1900.

Village expenditures for first year of operation.

However, the office of president would continue for a year until 1927. At that time the term was extended to two years and the title of the office was changed from president to mayor.

In the March 1900 election, the Republicans scored heavily again. Bloomingdale was elected for a second term as president, defeating Frank Kaiser, 78-40. Indeed Bloomingdale would hold this office more than any other person in the history of the village, 15 times all told, from 1899-1905, from 1908-1910 and from 1916-1920.

The rest of the 1900 Republican ticket was also handily elected. Rufus Flansburgh defeated E. Dayton Joslin for the two-year trustee position by a margin of 76-41. Abram Relyea defeated John Cummings for the one-year trustee position also by 76-41. For treasurer William Shaw defeated George Relyea 77-40 and James Relyea



Voorheesville grade school players in the early part of the century. Front row (l to r): Marguerite Elkington, Dorothy Gillett, Alice Osterhout, C. L. Baumes (teacher), Royal Coughtry, Howard Ostrander, William Crannell; back row (l to r): Mildred Van Auken, Henry Martin, Ruth Williams, Mildred LaGrange, Walter Wood, Henry Relyea, Earl Slabon, Laura Relyea, Novice Osterhout, Mildred Osterhout and Ira Ferguson.

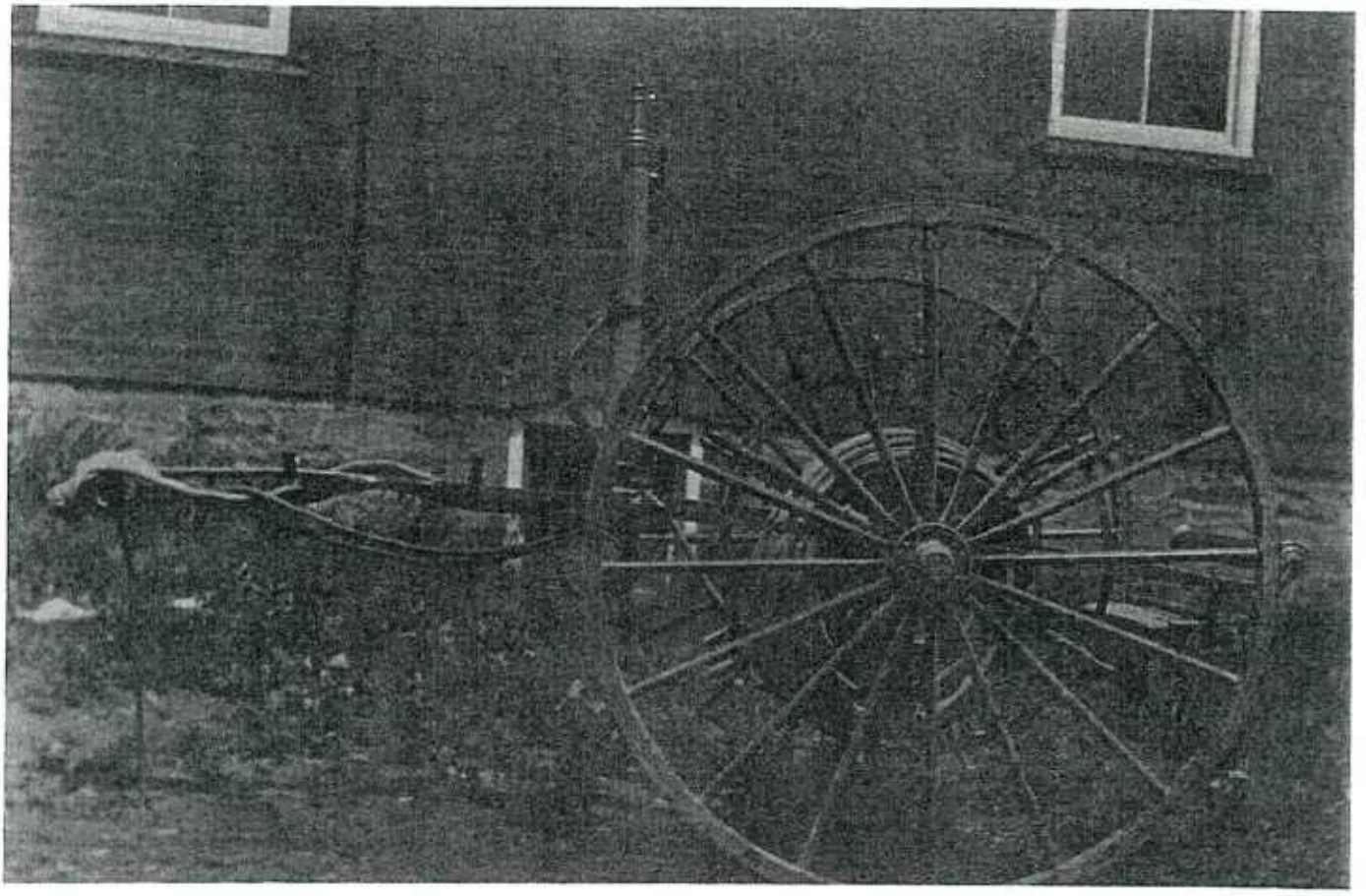
defeated Adam Relyea 77-40 for tax collector.

At their meeting on the thirty-first of March 1900, the trustees passed the first village ordinances. One of these stipulated that all residents of the village make sidewalks in front of their homes; the second that sidewalks be kept cleared of snow and dirt and all other substances. Furthermore, anyone desiring to put up a building would henceforth be required to obtain a building permit.

The rest of the ordinances were concerned with the maintenance of basic public order. There was to be no horse racing in the street. That meant no one could exceed a speed of eight miles per hour within village boundaries. Moreover, no cattle, swine, mules, horses, were to be allowed to run at large in the streets or public areas and those found guilty of public intoxication would be fined.

In order to carry on with public works, the village began to purchase needed equipment. This it purchased from various merchants in the village. Seemingly, during this era the question of conflict of interests was not a significant concern. We find numerous examples of an individual as public official signing a purchase order, then as a businessman selling those items to the village and then, back as a public official, paying the bill. In August 1900, for example, the village under the leadership of Frank Bloomingdale decided to purchase a plow and related highway equipment. These items were sold to the village at the cost of $21.55 by Frank Bloomingdale. There are may other examples of public officials selling materials to the village as private businessmen. But when there was only one place in the village to buy such items, the only alternative for the village administration would have been to purchase the items in another village. To what end?

In the next several elections, greater concern was shown for providing basic public services such as fire protection and water. On the 1902 ballot, several propositions were offered to the public and passed: on having a police justice, establishing a Board of Fire Commissioners and bonding the village for $4,000 to pay for a village water system.



The hose company's first piece of fire fighting equipment.

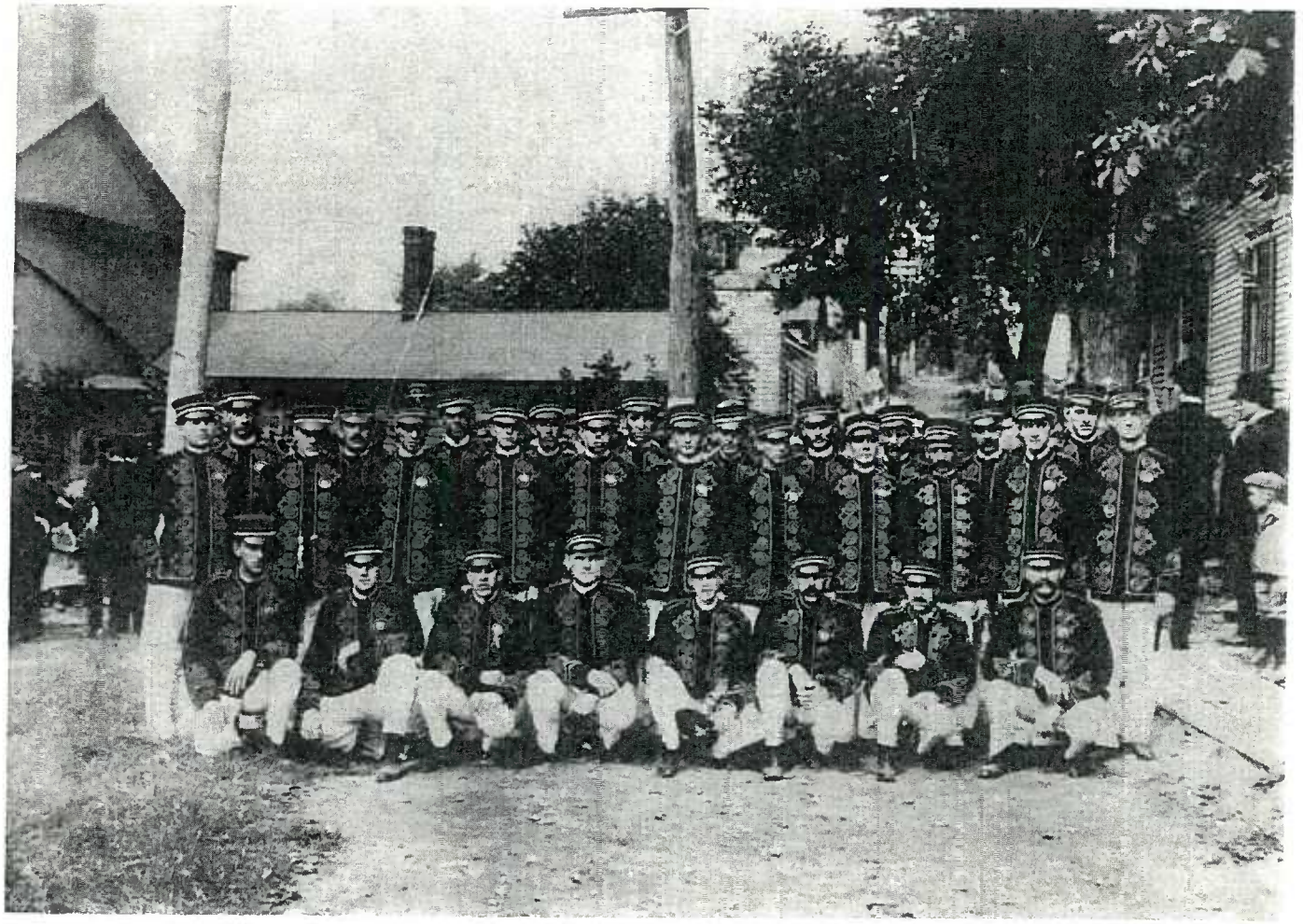
3. Hose Company No. 1

No citizen in the village wanted and perhaps needed an organized fire department more than the village's hay and straw merchant and first mayor, Frank Bloomingdale. As we have seen, with Bloomingdale's business, not too much time would pass before a fire would break out in one of his barns often resulting in the loss of an entire barn of hay or straw and sometimes expensive equipment. In 1888 Bloomingdale had lost 60 tons of hay and a barn and again in January 1897 another 60 tons with damages estimated at $3,000. The nature of the materials of his trade tended to put a damper on the most enthusiastic response of those who came to the rescue. In the 1897 blaze, for example, the alarm sounded immediately, 100 men showed up in minutes with buckets in hand, but all they could do was stand and watch the barn burn to the ground.

It is understandable, therefore, that when the first two propositions on the ballot of the March 18, 1902 election passed by a wide margin, most villagers were pleased, but Bloomingdale was ecstatic. These two propositions permitted the village administration to first set up a board of fire commissioners and secondly to spend some money to purchase fire equipment. This equipment would turn out to be nothing more than a hose on a two-wheeled cart that had to be pulled by hand from the hose house where it was kept to the fire. But such was state of the art for its day. However rudimentary, the cart-pulled hose would prove to be more efficient than water-filled buckets passed from hand to hand along a line of men.

Two weeks after the propositions about starting a fire department were passed (April 1, 1902), a meeting was held at the Odd Fellows Hall (then located above Gilbert's Feed and Grain), for those interested in organizing such a department. Frank Bloomingdale, the village president chaired the small group and George Hallenbeck served as secretary. After some discussion, an election was held and the village's first fire hose company officials selected. LeRoy MacMillan was elected foreman (chief); Frank Osterhout, first assistant foreman; Leroy Schell, representative and Fred Curry secretary. The new company was to be known as Voorheesville Hose Co. No. 1. A committee was selected to solicit members for the new department and to work on a set of by-laws.

How uncanny that the newly constituted department



Hose company No. 1 in 1908.

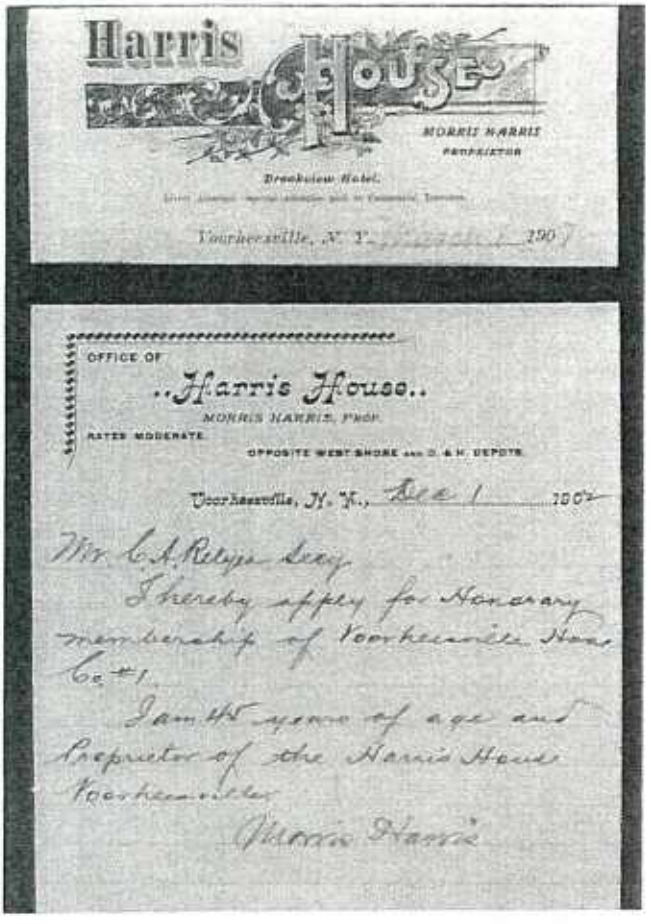
nearly had its first opportunity to show its stuff on the very night of its organizational meeting. While the meeting was in progress, W.S. Pomeroy's blacksmith shop on Main Street caught fire. But nothing came of it as Pomeroy was able to put the fire out without much ado. Even if the newly organized department had responded, its methods would have been no different from what they had been for decades.

While the new department was filled with enthusiasm, it had no money in its treasury to operate. The fire commissioners, therefore, encouraged citizens of the village to help out by making contributions as soon as possible. Among the first to do so was Frank Bloomingdale who offered a gift of $5. To help raise additional funds, the company also sponsored a number of social events, dances and ice cream socials from which it raised fairly good sums of money.

Those citizens interested in joining the department made formal application via letter. Usually the application was brought forward at a meeting, tabled for a week for consideration, after which the nominee was voted in. Applicants were placed either on active or inactive (honorary) duty. Occasionally a fireman might be moved from one category to the other and later back again. In the earliest days, the number of men ranged from between 15 and 25.

The organization itself was run in a quasi-military manner. For example, those who missed a meeting were fined, albeit a small sum of money, usually 10 cents. On some occasions the stakes were raised to 25 cents and when Leroy Schell missed the 1903 annual meeting, he was fined a half dollar. Moreover, when dues were not paid after a period of time, the delinquent fireman was given a warning. If he didn't respond after a time, he was expelled from the company.

After being in operation for about a year, the decision was made that the department begin drilling. Each Wednesday, when the men gathered, therefore, the company's drill master would conduct a drill for a period of time. By March 1905, the department decided to go the full nine yards. At the third meeting of the month each of the men was measured for a uniform and an order was placed at M. C. Silley Co. for 30 at a cost of $325. The spiffy new outfits consisted of white duck trousers, a red coat and red hat. Residents of the village didn't have to wait long to see their department in its new duds for the men showed up at the Decoration Day dance that year in full dress. In August, so that the outfit


Harris House
MORRIS HARRIS
PROPRIETOR
Brookview Hotel.
Voorheesville, N. Y. 190
OFFICE OF
..Harris House..
MORRIS HARRIS, PROP.
RATES MODERATE
OPPOSITE WEST SHORE and D. & H. DEPOTS
Voorheesville, N. Y., Dec 1 190
Mr. C.A. Relyea Sec'y
I hereby apply for Honorary membership of Voorheesville Hose Co. #1
I am 45 years of age and Proprietor of the Harris House Voorheesville
Morris Harris

Morris Harris' application to be an honorary member of the fire department.

might look complete, the men were ordered to buy a pair of white gloves at the cost of 13 cents a pair.

As the department became more proficient in its drills, the men sought to show off what they had accomplished. From time to time, they would appear as a unit in full dress and put on a drill at one of the department's social functions to the delight of their audiences. However, the new department was not all footwork and fancy dress. Shortly after the board of fire commissioners was first organized, it did purchase a hose cart and in May 1904, it erected a small structure to house the cart across from Comstock Corner on the site where the first fire house was later built.

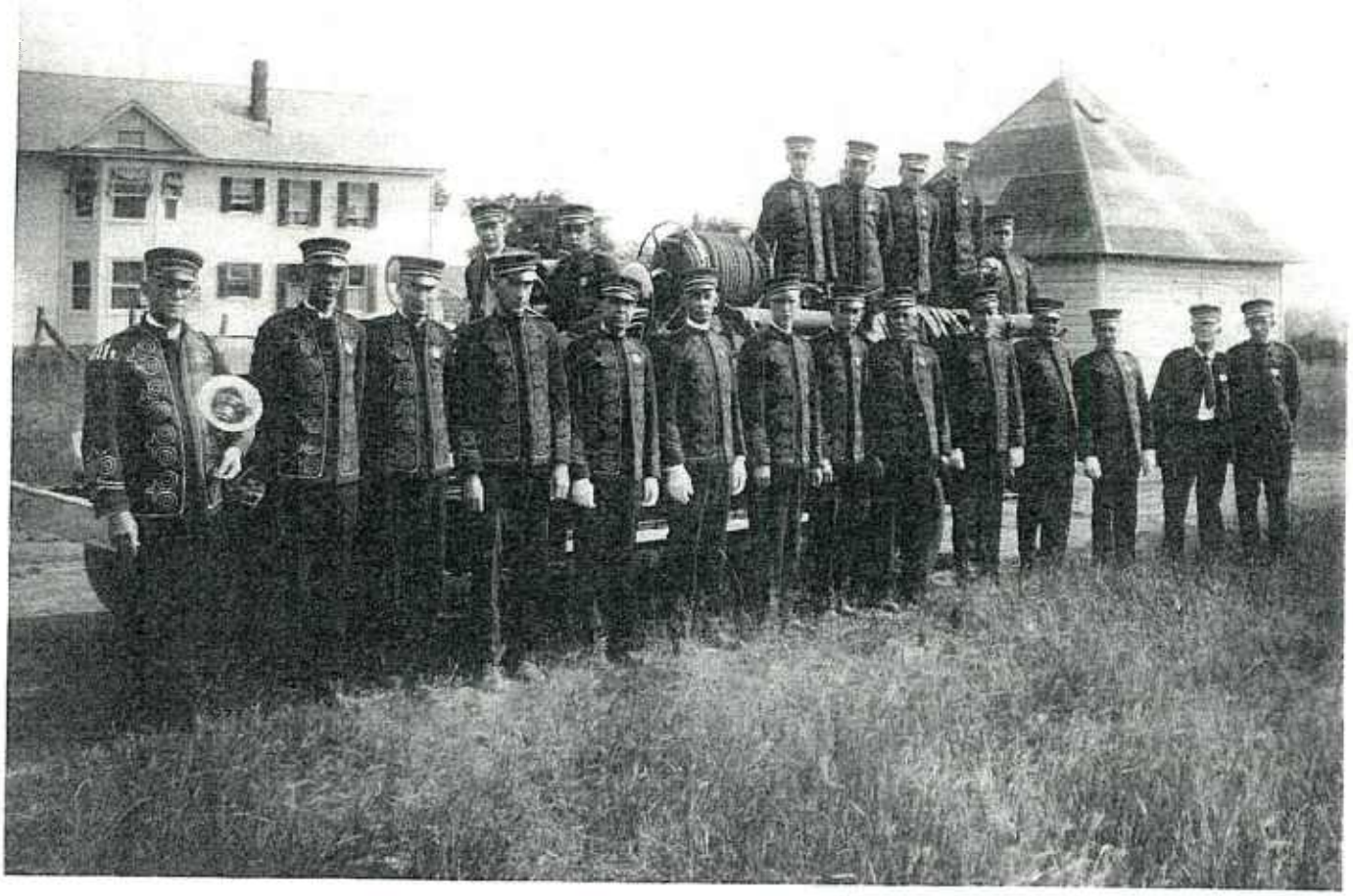
But before the department was able to show off its drill routines or even its uniforms for the first time, it had already been called upon for assistance. That was on Sunday January 22, 1905. At 1:15 p.m. the fire alarm sounded throughout the village in response to a fire in a hay barn on the Fryer estate belonging to Frank Bloomingdale. To complicate matters, the firemen were told that the west end of the building was being used as a tenement by the section gangs employed on the D&H and W.S. railroads.

Within a few minutes of the alarm, 28 men from every part of the village had made it to the scene of the fire. Those in charge of the cart brought it from the hose house running a half mile at breakneck speed to the fired barn; others carried the ladders. In no time the men had a stream playing and engaged in their first fire. All were anxious as a stiff January wind kept shooting sparks in the direction of the populated part of the village.

Although the men had responded quickly, by the time the water was turned on Bloomingdale's 70 tons of hay was a solid blaze. There was no possibility of saving any of it. The men, therefore, concentrated their efforts on the part of the building where the section gang was living, helping the railroad workers to move all their belongings, except for a couple of stoves, to safer ground. For four hours the crew continued to hose the burning straw, having set up two additional lines closer to the heart of the village in case flying sparks touched other buildings off.

At the end of the day, the secretary wrote in the company's log of its first effort: "Nothing could be done with fire on account of 70 tons of straw in building which burned fiercely." In the blaze, Bloomingdale lost not only 70 tons of rye straw but a hay press as well. His damages amounted to $4,000. He carried no insurance. The section gang tenants, with the help of the firefighters, were able to salvage most of their belongings. In

Original firehouse, today village hall.



Fire department about 1928. Front row (l to r): Robert T. Coughtry (chief), Harry Gainsley, Royal Coughtry, Lee Cheseboro, Elwood Aibright, William Vosburg, Carl Reckenburg, Robert E. Secor, Frank Osterhout, William Young, Elsbree Jones, Orlando Ward, John Kammerer; top row (l to r): Michael Pafunda, Wesley H. Jacobson, Clarence Van Wormer, Raymond C. Raynesford, Leroy Jacobson, Clifford Severson, Homer Corbin.

appreciation for the department's efforts, shortly after the fire Frank Bloomingdale made another $5 contribution to the department's treasury. The merchant-mayor would continue to make similar contributions from time to time.

Perhaps the company was not fully satisfied with its first performance that January night, because by September of that year the members made the decision to begin having practice sessions with the hose cart.

The second fire began at the cider mill and was put out quickly. The third was also no great fire, but is worth mentioning because it serves as another example of the kind of life some railroad laborers lived at the time. It also reveals a practical problem the department encountered early on. This time the alarm also sounded on a Sunday, on January 21, 1906. A fire had broken out in a railroad car set up as living quarters by some of the workers. The chief problem for the department was that the alarm was set off near church hour so that most of the department thought the bell was ringing for church. Therefore, only a few men showed up. However, they were able to make short shrift of the fire and save the belongings of the laborers. The department was bothered about the confusion of signals, and to avoid a similar fiasco in the future, within two months it had installed an electric fire alarm. By April the department, at its own expense ($150) had purchased 20 alarms and a sufficient number of bells which were placed about the village in strategic locations.

All this time the department had been using borrowed space in the Odd Fellows Hall for its meetings and, despite the amenities available there, the men were growing increasingly impatient with the situation. They wanted their own building both for meetings and the storage of equipment. They made the case that their cart was housed in one building, their ladders kept in a barn, their quarters situated in a third building and they had no place to dry their hoses after a fire.

The firemen persisted so that by September 1909 they were closer to their goal. They had purchased a building lot from Addie Griffin which they were prepared to donate to the village, if the village would agree to erect a building for their use and for all other village groups. Nothing happened. By the beginning of the next year (1910) they grew more adamant, boldly reminding village officials of the alarm system they had installed at

their own expense, that they had shown themselves capable of fighting fires and that their excellent firefighting record had resulted in a reduction of fire insurance for village residents. And what of their uniforms? To sum up their case, they stated that the mortgage on the new building would cost no more than the $150 already being allotted to them from tax monies each year. As they say, who could argue with that?

By the fall of that year a foundation trench was being dug for the new fire hall on Center Street. But there was a change in plans. The department decided to buy the lot where the hose house was situated (on Voorheesville Avenue) and build there. Therefore, at its December 20 meeting, the trustees made the motion to move the new fire house to the Bell lot where the hose house was situated.

In 1911 the new building was done. But the department was not done with the Odd Fellows who had erected their new lodge building several years earlier next door. In January the firemen had to ask their neighbors for use of their hall since the fire department building did not have sufficient heat. Within a few years, the department had proven itself to be even more successful in responding to and putting out fires so that by September 1914 a fire insurance commission agreed there was sufficient evidence to warrant another lowering of fire insurance rates in the village.

Despite the increased confidence village residents had in their department and its increasing ability to handle fires, there would be fires to come that would be beyond any department's competence to handle. In March 1907 the Nickel Works Building (former shirt factory) burned to the ground and on October 1916 the Phoenix Foundry was destroyed, huge fires in old dry wooden buildings.

By April 1928, the department had taken a major step to enter the 20th century by purchasing a 500-gallon pumper from American LaFrance Company at a cost of $5,250. And none too soon, for on October 12, 1934 Oscar Vunck's Feed Mill and Coal Yards broke out in flames in a fire beyond imagination. Seven other companies were called to help including equipment from Albany. The loss was estimated at $30,000.

On March 6, 1951, the Duffy-Mott Cider warehouse turned into an inferno, this time damages estimated between $400,000 and $500,000. In October 1954 once again, disaster visited the Vunck and Son feed mill. This fire was so great that 250 firemen had to be called upon. This time the damage was an astounding $300,000. Then less than three years later on St. Patrick's Day, 1957, 800 firemen from 14 companies had to be called to the mills once again to put an end to a blaze that brought over $350,000 in damages. The mill fires would prove too costly for owner George Vunck, so that shortly after these major fires, he shut down his business.

The department saw that during many of the fires it was called upon to extinguish, first aid was often needed. To aid those suffering injuries not only during fires but from accidents in the community at other times, the department organized a first aid unit in January 4, 1936.

4.Roads and Sidewalks

For 18th and early 19th century farming communities, the quality of the roads that led to market and to the saw and grist mill was of utmost importance and a continuing concern. Even after the railroad had made its way into the interior of New York toward the middle of the 19th century, roads still needed to be maintained well enough for farmers to get their produce to the centrally located depot and for community residents to travel about to shop, visit with each other and carry on with daily chores.

However, in some rural areas even by the end of the 19th century, the roads were little more than widened dirt paths that in early spring and late fall turned to mud. The mud could be so thick in places that good sized loads were unmovable without several teams of horses. Otherwise farmers found their wagons stuck in mud up to the hubs. When the roads began to dry in late spring, the tracks that were left by narrow wagon wheels grew into hardened ruts that made travel uncomfortable for the most cautious of drivers.

It is understandable why farmers rejoiced when the first good snow fell. A two-horse sleigh could pull a good-sized load of logs or hay or grain on the frozen surface where a short time before several teams of horses had difficulty in moving the same load. Indeed, once sleighing began, the hay and straw merchants and sawyers could expect a quick onrush of business. In early January Frank Bloomingdale might expect to see as many as 75 loads of hay and straw brought in each day for chopping and bailing. Farmers in need of cash or trading power would waste no time getting the hay stored in their barns to the hay merchants in the village. Within a short time Tygert or Bloomingdale would tell the farming community to hold off because all their storage barns were full.

Sawyers and lumbermen also did a brisk business when winter snows came, as farmers could drag logs along the road or loaded in their wagons to be cut into planks. During several seasons when William Swift owned the lumber business in the village, he might expect to see as many as 1,500 logs brought to his sawmill when the snows came.

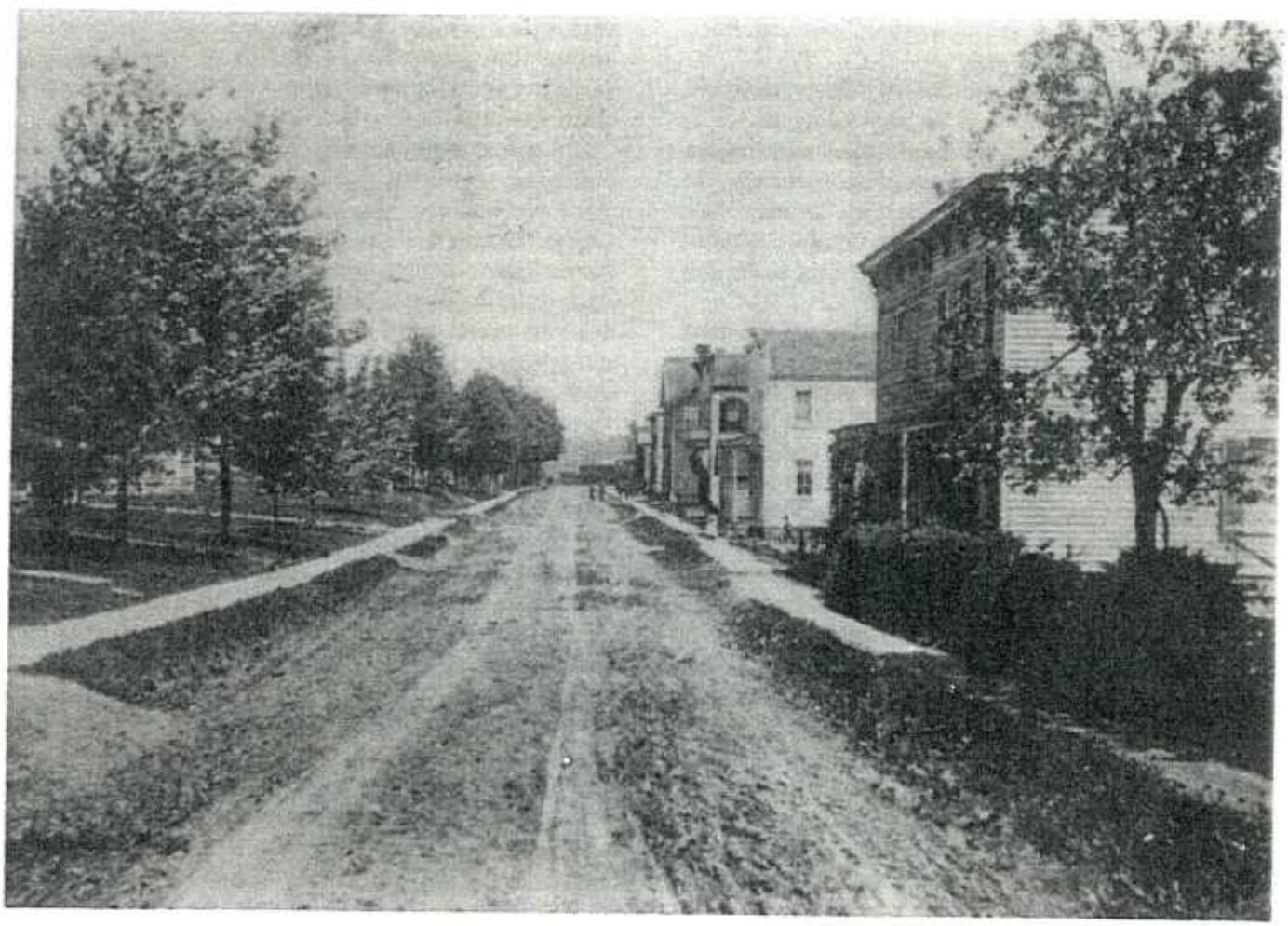
But when roads were muddy or dry, rutted and dusty, complaints about their condition abounded. To keep up with the roads in their jurisdictions, town and village officials arranged for road work to be done in two seasonal shifts, one in the spring and a second in the fall. Once the mud had dried sufficiently in spring, the

roads were plowed and scraped so as to level the ruts and make the surface as smooth as possible. In an effort to do so, as Hedrick says in his *History of Agriculture*, "sod was raked in and thrown on top of the dirt, and all stones in sight were thrown out on the road or in the depression to be covered by dirt."[1]

Understandably farmers and businessmen were always looking for new ways to improve road conditions. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, several large scale efforts were launched to provide a better system of roads to get goods to market. In the early part of the century, the toll road movement began. Here, through the creation of various turnpike systems, an effort was made to provide well-maintained roads throughout as much of the year as possible. A good part of the turnpike's maintenance was paid for by tolls collected at gates set about every six miles. The Buffalo turnpike (later to become the Great Western Turnpike and still later, Western Avenue), situated to the north of Voorheesville, as well as the Albany and Delaware Turnpike situated to its village's south, were part of this first wave of road building.

By the middle of the 19th century, a second good-roads movement had arisen, the plank road movement.[2] In New York, after the plank road between Syracuse and Oneida Lake had been so well received by patrons, the legislature passed a plank road act in 1848. Within the next two years 182 companies had received charters to construct a road. To some it might seem somewhat odd to see so many miles of plank road being laid on the eve of the railroad's enthronement as transportation king. However, at that time many harbored a healthy skepticism about the railroad's future, not only about its sponsors' ability to pay for such a system but whether it would even work .

But before long, attention was fully focused on the railroad and the plank road movement began to fade. Many of these roads, which had begun as private enterprise ventures, did not receive sufficient revenues from the tolls collected to maintain their surfaces and they deteriorated. Too often cavernous holes developed between the planks making travel for a horse more dangerous than on the formerly despised rutted dirt surfaces. Some of the plank roads that survived past the turn of the century, were complained about bitterly by the citizenry. This was the case, for example, with the New Scotland plank road for in the spring of 1906, county officials were being hounded about the quality



Voorheesville's streets were still dirt roads in the first quarter of the 20th century.

Before salt was used on roads, crossing Voorheesville Avenue could be a precarious adventure.

of that road. With planks broken and missing in many places, the road's condition had deteriorated to the point that many passengers refused to pay tolls to its keepers. They just went through or around the gate.[3]

To pay for public road maintenance in towns and villages, each property owner was assessed a certain number of days work according to the value of owned property. The assessed resident might work those days himself or hire someone to do work in his stead. To oversee the road crew that did show up, the commissioner of roads selected an overseer of highways or pathmaster whose job it was to make sure the work was done in the allotted time.[4] Before Voorheesville was incorporated, a pathmaster was selected from each tax district in the town. By law the pathmaster's job was to pick the days for working the roads, to round up the work crew and get each resident to put in the number of days assessed. When a member of the crew failed to show, the pathmaster was also expected to collect fines from the deviant.

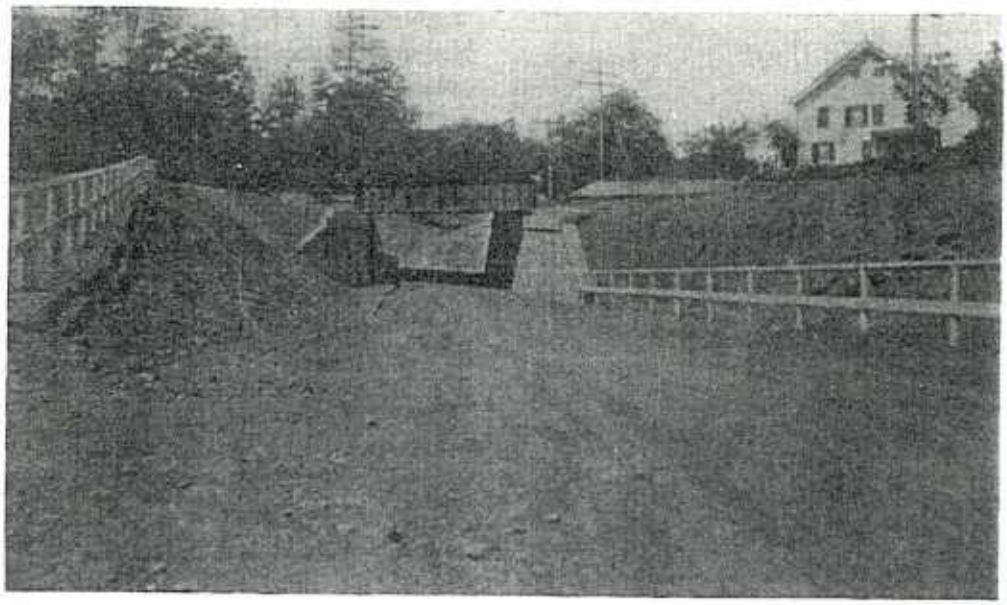
When the nature of some of the work is examined, it is clear why some might not fulfill their work requirement. The work was not always enjoyable. Oftentimes, when the basic road work was done, the crew might be asked by the pathmaster to cut noxious weeds along the road. This was generally done once before July and a second time before September. Residents could also be called out by the pathmaster to help put out fires in nearby woods. When someone refused the call, the pathmaster had the power to order citizens to comply under penalty of a fine.

Who was selected as pathmaster each year was of concern to all village and town residents because the pathmaster determined to a large extent how well the roads would be scraped and maintained. When May rolled around each year, villagers would begin to query: "Who's going to be the pathmaster this year?" And when the roads were not done well, the pathmaster might hear about it in many different ways and places. Perhaps his wife might hear about it by overhearing a snide comment at the grocer's or meat market.

One of the principal reasons a locality might decide to incorporate was often the desire of a community to provide better services for itself, to be in control of the services paid for by taxes, such as road maintenance. In the case of Voorheesville, it is questionable whether better roads served as one of the reasons for its incorporation. Before and after incorporation the quality of Voorheesville's roads was called into question and sometimes severely.

In pre-incorporation days, for example, from the end of 1885 until early 1890, there was a standing joke in the village about a sedge-ridden ditch on Main Street that was so large it was referred to as the "lake." The lake stood at the end of the Thomas Bewsher's (and later the Joslin Brothers') hardware store. It was said on a number of occasions that there were not only bullfrogs in the

The dock at the foot of Main Street.



The underpass on Maple Avenue was built in 1914.

lake but that mosquitos bred there to the point that they presented a serious health problem to residents. The frogs were said to croak so loud on nights when the band played in the square, that they competed with the band for the attention of the audience that had gathered. Frank Bloomingdale used to joke that he was planning to send to Egypt for a crocodile to clear the lake of its inhabitants once and for all.

Because, on one level, the lake had become such a laughable matter among villagers, it is difficult to figure where fact ends and fiction begins about its proportions and the size of its amphibious inhabitants. However, the presence of the lake was judged to be a serious enough problem that railroad officials were called in to come and remove it. In late June 1888, the superintendent and general road manager of the West Shore Railroad paid a visit to the village to look at the lake and discuss drainage.

But even by the following August, nothing had been done to better the situation. On August 12, 1889, the Voorheesville correspondent for the newspaper wrote: "The vicinity of Voorheesville is becoming more and more a summer resort. And why not? There is not another place in this section where there is a lake on the railroad grounds. All we want is a steamer and some boarding houses and we will rival Saratoga."

But the joke became too serious for further gauffaws. By early December, the board of health was called out to look at the infamous lake. A week later it handed down a judgement stating that the lake was a health hazard to the community. By the middle of February 1890, a WSRR gang appeared on the scene and dug a five foot trench south of the pool and drained the lake once and for all. By May the large wooden structure called the "dock," a large row of wooden piles, was finally removed from the area where the lake was situated.

Sensitive to people's concerns about good roads, the village board had as one of its priorities to appoint a road commissioner. Shortly after the new administration's first organizational meeting, on June 5, 1899, James Goodfellow was appointed the first street commissioner. One of his first acts was to inform the town to no longer levy any assessment for highway labor within the corporate limits of the village and not to conduct or order as such overseers to do work upon any village street or road. But Goodfellow lasted in the job only until November when he was replaced by Henry Frederick. Frederick himself, however, lasted only until July of the following year at which time Lyman Bell was named to replace him.

Bell was appointed at a time when the pace of life was beginning to move into another dimension. In a few short years the automobile would make its appearance onto the village's streets. At the same time the collective work ethic that was reflected in community activities such as the road crew was beginning to dissolve. Americans were beginning to discover anew that it was possible to purchase services through taxes paid to public service departments.

While it had no direct application to Voorheesville, it is worth noting that in May 1902 the town of New Scotland held a special meeting to determine whether people wanted to pay others (a public highway department) to do road work instead of putting in the required number of days themselves. In a July 1 election a vote was taken on the proposition. The vote for a money assessment passed, 181-100.

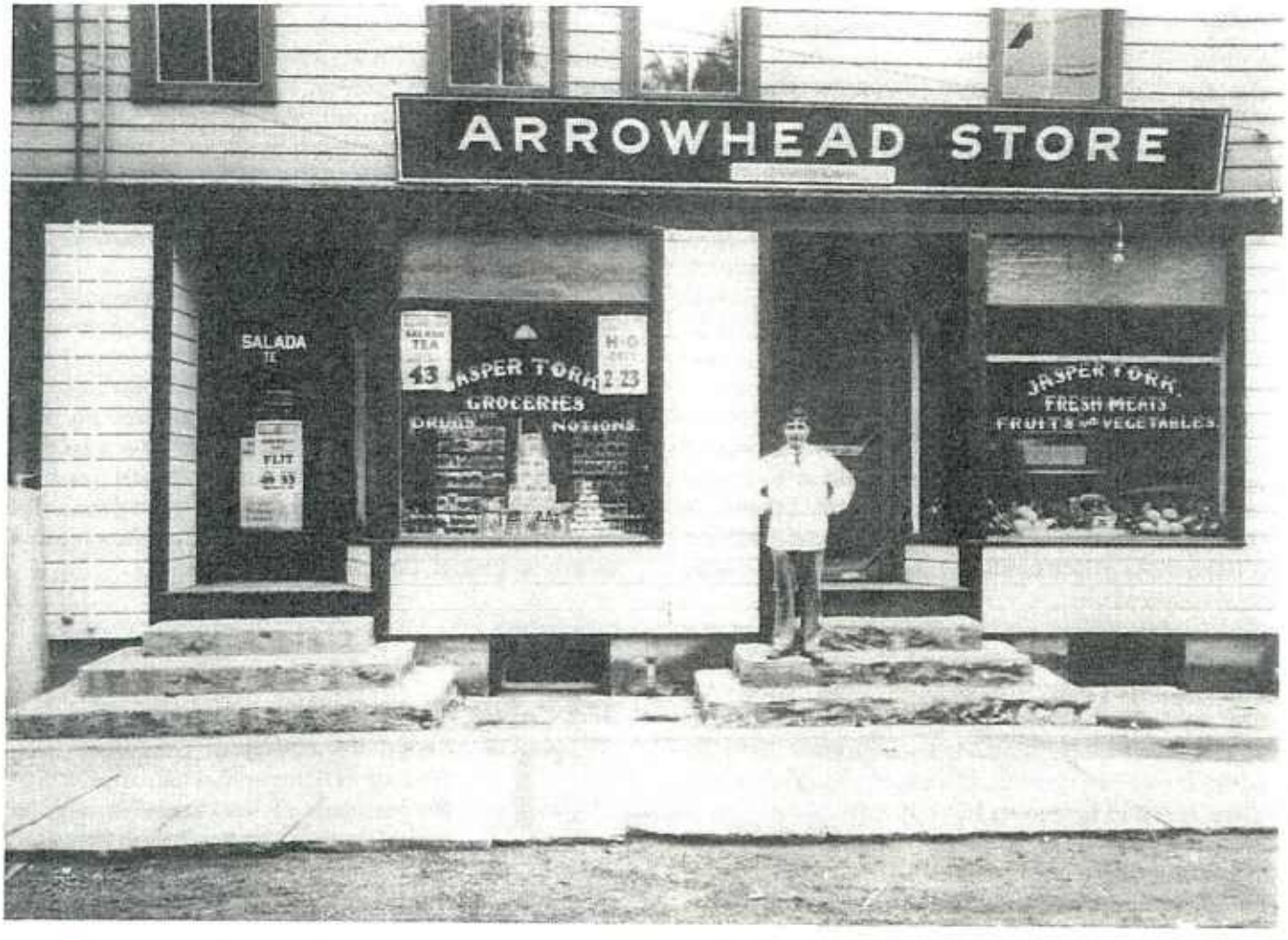
It may not be more than a coincidence but, while preparations were being made for this vote in the town, Voorheesville was being called on the carpet for the level of attention it was paying to its roads. In April

1902, when the Voorheesville correspondent reported that a surveyor came to the village to plan for sidewalks, it was also noted: "There can be considerable work done on the streets to good advantage."

Two months later, in the June 13 edition of the paper, someone who described himself as "An Observer" published a letter to the editor decrying the deplorable state of road conditions in the village of Voorheesville. It is difficult to estimate how much the observer's statement was influenced by a political axe to be ground; nevertheless the writer appears to have been a resident of a neighboring town. The letter began: "Have you visited your neighboring village of Voorheesville lately? Well, if you have occasion to and should happen to be driving, my advice to you is that before you attempt to drive over their streets you take a large amount of insurance, both accident and life, then provide yourself with straps, buckles and all other devices for keeping yourself firmly bound to the seat of your carriage, and be sure you do not allow your horse to go faster than a walk." Tough words.

Later, in the fairly lengthy letter, the writer continued: "I have yet to find a country road on any of these surrounding hills that can compare for roughness, pitch-holes and general badness with one of the main streets of the village of Voorheesville." And still later the salt continued being poured into the wound: "I was informed that the village is incorporated, that they actually have a board of trustees and a street commissioner. Great Scott! Where are these officials? From all appearances they have become disgusted with themselves and moved out."

As might be expected, these observations did not pass without a rejoinder. In the following week's edition of the paper a so-called "Defender" responded. But what was said can hardly be construed as a defense. First of all, the defender confessed that he was commenting on the situation with "mingled feelings." Later in the letter he continued: "Did you know we have a fire board, and a fire apparatus (all complete) laying in cases unopened in our freight house for over two weeks?" and still later: "Did you know that our Caesar [a reference to Frank Bloomingdale?] is so busy he cannot attend to public business?" Further down the defender expresses a wish that "Caesar" be replaced in office come next election. The reasons offered are that the streets are unworked, park ungraded and uncared for, water mains never washed out, our main street full of flagstone unshipped,



Jasper Tork's store on Main Street. A good view of flagstone sidewalks and steps laid by the Cummings Brothers.

our sidewalks only half laid, a principal vacant lot on Main Street a dump heap for rubbish. Not a flattering portrait of the village, particularly by one of its own.

At least in terms of the road situation, there seems to have been more than a grain of truth in the comments of both writers to the paper because three years later (early April 1905), still another observer commented in the paper that the worst roads between Voorheesville and Rensselaerville were to be found in Voorheesville. Perhaps the remark cut the street commissioner to the quick for by the end of the month, he had his crew out grading the road and raking out the loose stones. That was April and still quite early for the annual spring grading and scraping.

Once automobiles became a regular feature of village life, an additional concern arose about street maintenance, namely, the amount of dust raised as the vehicles moved up and down Main Street. At the July 12, 1913 village trustees' meeting, T. Wilsey, W.F. Shaw and W.H. Relyea, representatives of the newly formed Board of Trade, sought permission from village president Albert Vanderpoel to oil the road from the depot to Joslin's house on Maple Avenue. Something had to be done, they said, with the huge clouds of dust. The group suggested that the work and materials could be paid for by popular subscription but no immediate response was made to the businessmen.

Perhaps the most visible change made in the village road system came in the spring of 1914 when the WSRR built an underpass on Maple Avenue. State work crews showed up in May and began to turn the surface railroad crossing to an underground one. During this modification, a disagreement arose between the village and the railroad over the work. Village officials wanted a sidewalk laid under the trestle but the railroad refused. When the village made its wish known before the Public Service Commission, it was turned down. But village officials persisted. President Albert VanDerpoel, Supervisor Alexander Flansburgh and Attorney Clarence Hotelling went to the State Commission of Highways on April 20, 1914 to request him to intercede on behalf of the village. They were successful because at a hearing on June 22, 1914, the commissioner modified the work order and the village had its sidewalks put in at railroad expense.

Clearly the village wanted the railroad to lay the sidewalks beneath the underpass for reasons of cost. But the laying of sidewalks had been a big concern for many residents for some time. For some the sidewalk was a symbol of civilization, an indication that the country bumpkins were finally taking the hayseed out of their ears and becoming like city folk.

Sidewalks began to appear in front of stores and residences nearly a decade and a half before the village was incorporated, when the village experienced its first wave of growth. At one time the sidewalk system in the village consisted of a kind of raised boardwalk as protection from the muddened streets. Later more permanent flagstone walks were put in. Among the first stone walks to be laid in the village was that put in by Thomas Bewsher in front of his hardware store in mid September 1886. Bewsher had Helderberg flagstone laid down by the Cummings Brothers who had recently moved their business to the village.

Despite the permanence flagstone walks offered, some villagers still continued to use crushed stone as a walkway even after the Cummings brothers came. In 1889, when Rufus Flansburgh opened his grocery store on Main Street he spread crushed stone in front of the store. But within five years he, too, had had it with the crushed stone and hired the Cummings Brothers to lay down a flagstone walk.

By the spring of 1894, a number of residents besides Flansburgh decided to have flagstone sidewalks put in. Doctor Oliver and Nelson Comstock and James Relyea all had new sidewalks put down in front of their homes. With each passing year, several additional residents or storeowners would add a new walkway of flagstone so that it was becoming increasingly possible to escape the mud while walking down Main Street.

But not everyone did so, particularly residents on Maple Avenue, which was away from the business district downtown. Consequently, walking down Maple Avenue could still be a perilous jaunt during certain times of the year.[5] Seeking to reduce this peril, the village board passed a resolution on November 21, 1901 that residents begin to construct sidewalks on the south side of Maple Avenue. The village informed the residents that the street commissioner would put walks in where homeowners failed to do so. The resident would then be assessed by the village for the work done.

On issues such as the laying down of a sidewalk, the village government had a constant uphill battle with some residents, particularly those who had recently moved into the village from their farms in the outlying areas. On the farm, sidewalks were unheard of, why were they needed in town? We already saw a similar attitude in the case of the library. Many farmers considered such items as books and sidewalks inessential by-products of civilization, whose progress they wanted to pay no part of, directly or indirectly.

5. A Public Water Supply

Toward the middle of December 1899, William H. Slingerland had approached the residents of Voorheesville with an invitation to contract with him for water. He indicated that the supply could come from either Sloan's (Guilderland) or New Salem because his water company had built reservoirs in both places. From either place, residents of Voorheesville could be assured

Water building on Voorheesville Avenue marking sight of early public well in village.

of a steady supply. But, village residents did not take Slingerland up on his offer.

No further discussion of a public water supply is found in the press until January 1901. At that time, taxpayers of the village were invited to a public meeting at the Odd Fellows Hall to discuss the possibilities of the village developing its own water supply. Within a week a committee of 14 residents had been selected to look at the possibility of a villagewide water system, owned and operated by the village.

By the end of February, the committee had gotten 28 citizens to sign a petition requesting the village board to develop a public water system. In response to the petition, the trustees at their March 5 meeting put three propositions on the ballot for the upcoming election: that a board of water commissioners be created, that the village own and operate a public water system and that the village bond itself for that purpose at a rate not to exceed ten percent of the assessed value of the property for 1900.

All three propositions passed and by a margin of nearly two to one. At its last meeting in March, the village board appointed Franklin Vosburgh, Abram Oliver and James Cummings to serve on the board of water commissioners for one, two and three years respectively. The next week Frank Vosburgh was selected as the village's first water commissioner.

Vosburgh and his fellow board members began to investigate immediately the kind of system that would be most appropriate for the village and the best place to start looking for water. They decided on a pumping system which would be located on a piece of property Frank Bloomingdale owned in the village north of the D&H line. A contract was offered to the Germantown Artesian Well Co. to drill an eight inch hole to a depth of between 40 and 300 feet. Leslie Allen of Altamont was hired as the engineer to oversee the project.

In the meantime, Lot 53 was purchased from Alice Bloomingdale for $175 with the proviso that an acceptable water supply be found on the lot. Drilling was begun but no water came. At the May 31 meeting Allen reported to the trustees that the driller had gone to a depth of 90 feet and had struck rock. It was also noted that the driller had concluded from experience that an adequate water supply would not be found in this vicinity by boring.

The board backed off its original decision for a pumping system and decided in favor of a gravity system. The supply for the system was to be procured from Kenny Parish's farm in New Scotland. The board said that if Parish refused to enter into a contract with the village, it would take the land by condemnation. However, an agreement was reached with Parish, the village paying him $950 for the land and all water rights. By June bids were being taken for pipe to run water from the soon-to-be reservoir to the village. The fall from the dam to the village was estimated at 375 feet, offering plenty of pressure for the high quality spring water found there.

The bid for pipe went to Charles Miller and Sons of Utica, the contract for digging and laying the pipe to Hildrich, O'Day and Co. and the contract for drawing and distributing the 335 tons of pipe went to J.L. Whitbeck. Later, Joslin Brothers were given the contract to tap water mains for one year beginning September 1, 1901.

James Cummings with daughter Jane several years after he was appointed to the first board of water commissioners.

By the middle of August, pipe was being distributed along the streets, cement was ordered, a derrick procured and by early September Abram Relyea was overseeing "a gang of Italians at the water works." At the same time the sale of bonds for the water system was begun. By November, the laying of pipe throughout the village was near done. On December 9, 1901, the water was turned on at 12 noon. At 8 p.m. that night, the pressure indicator at R.C. Bagley's store had reached 85 pounds. The following Tuesday water was turned on in different houses in the village and immediately the reservoir lowered by five inches. Leslie Allen received congratulations for successfully completing the task he had been asked to undertake.

But the single water supply would soon prove to be insufficient for the growing village. By the middle of the summer each year, the faucets in the homes on High Street began to just dribble water. Secretary of the Savings and Loan Association John Guffin, who had moved to a house on High Street about 1908, related what an irony this situation was. Guffin said that one of the reasons he was given for moving to the village by Frank Vosburgh, also a resident of High Street, was the village's excellent water supply.

Part of the problem, of course, was that the population of the village was growing rapidly. Moreover, an increasing number of people were installing indoor plumbing in their homes and using greater amounts of water as a consequence. Nevertheless, some villagers began to point a finger at Vunck's mill and Griesman's foundry as the culprits, claiming that the two businesses had installed secret pipelines to their plants and were using water illegally. Both establishments did have pipelines to their plants but the lines were for fire protection only. Both businessmen denied using the village water supply illegally.

In early 1909, the village was still concerned about its dwindling water supply. By March the board moved to purchase four acres from Ethan Allen and wife just above New Salem so as to build a second reservoir. It was to be 150 feet square at a depth of 10 feet. It was said to be well protected from surface drainage. But even this added supply proved insufficient, for in December 1909 Mr. Signor, who lived on High Street, had to move down to Bewsher's home on Main Street suffering from a lack of water. The paper reported that for nearly three months residents of High Street did not have village water except for three or four times in the morning.

By 1911 the situation still hadn't improved and residents continued to complain about the foundry. At their September 22, 1911 meeting the trustees, in response to numerous complaints about the foundry, moved to install a four-inch water meter on the system between the village and the foundry to determine if any water was escaping on foundry premises. But no evidence was found to support that hypothesis.

The following April, 32 residents signed a petition requesting village officials to erect a pumping station no later than September 1, 1912 so as to supply the lower reservoir as an auxiliary. The cost was not to exceed $1,500 and this at taxpayers expense. On May 16 a vote was held on the proposition. It was defeated soundly by a margin of 54-24.

Until this time, water had been available to all at a flat rate. By December 1912, the Board of Water Commissioners began to assess the Phoenix Foundry and Vunck's mill a higher rate and indicated that after February 1914, their plants would be metered. By April meters had been installed in both plants and L.E. Ensign was hired as a meter reader. At the same time Frank Brunk's livery was also charged a higher rate because of its extensive use of water.

By May 1915, when the water commissioners met, they passed a resolution that all foundries, cider mills, grist mills, livery stables, hotels, saloons and factories where steam boilers were used would be metered. Until that time, a flat rate was still being charged.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge for the water commissioners and the trustees during their earliest days came in January 1920 when they informed Oscar Vunck that water to his plant would be shut off as of January 8. Stephen Daring hand delivered the notice to the miller stating that he was cut off for using water for his boilers illegally. It's uncertain how long this had been going on. The situation was not resolved immediately because Vunck and the village found themselves in court over the matter. This court contest is noteworthy for another reason, because it is the first instance when the village administration was involved in a serious legal dispute with one of its own.

6. Electric Lights and Telephone

Whenever changes in technology became available to the public, city dwellers usually saw them implemented first. There was usually a considerable lapse of time before such advances found their way to rural areas. In terms of lighting, for example, gas lamps had been lighting city streets long before they ever made their appearance in Voorheesville. The same was true for electric lighting.

During the early part of the 20th century, a number of village residents began using acetylene gas lamps in front of their stores or place of business. In the winter of 1903, the Cummings Brothers were among the first to install acetylene gas lamps in their stores, dwellings and mill. A steady enough business had developed for gas lamps for, in the summer of 1904, Frank McNally has rented space in the Joslin block, adjoining the hardware store, to sell acetylene gas lamps.

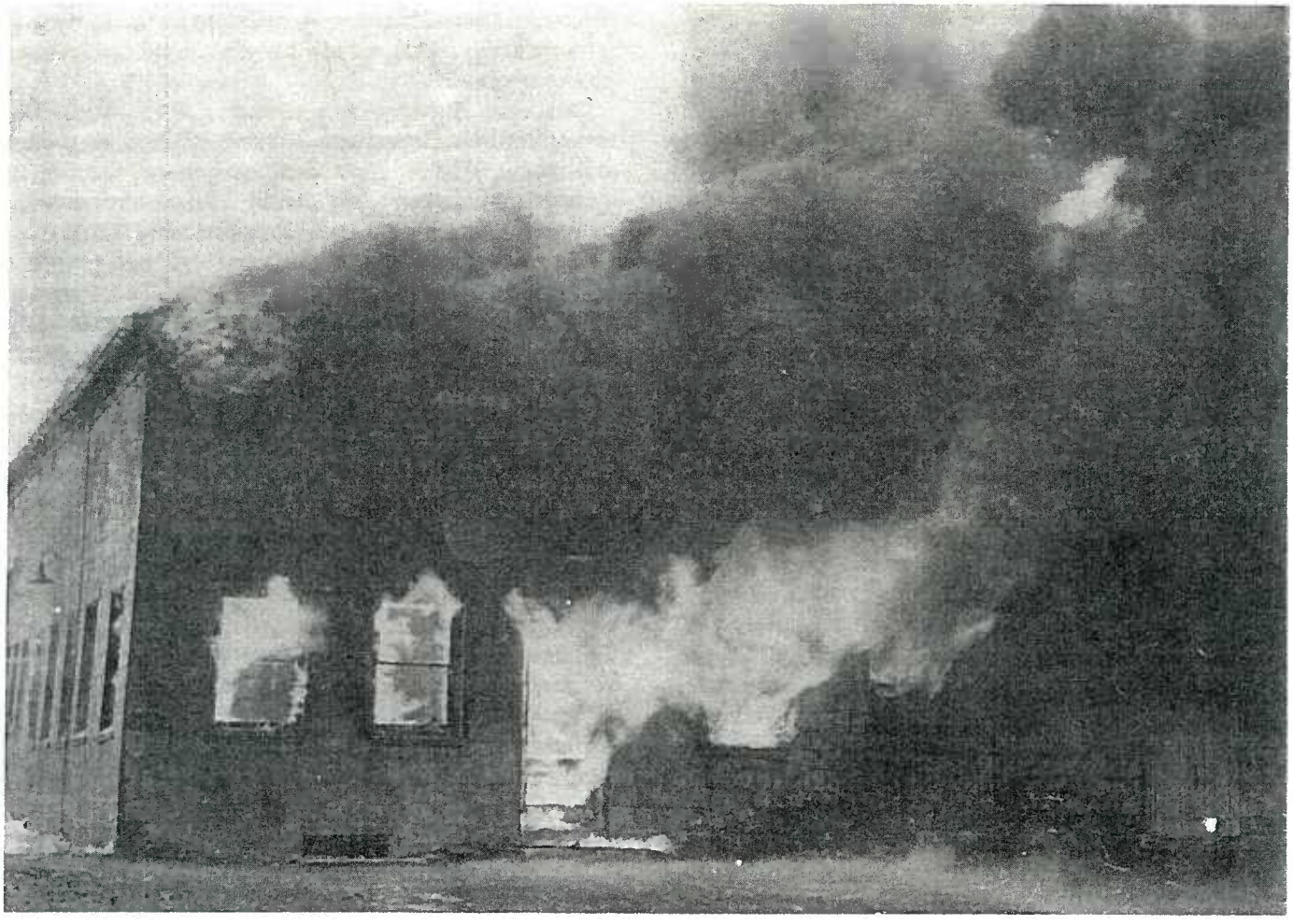
Gas, however, was increasingly being replaced by

Main Street after the car but before electric.

electric, but it seemed in villages other than Voorheesville The electric lines had followed the old turnpike and plank road routes and residents along these routes received service first. By mid-winter 1915 a number of villagers began to complain that Voorheesville was lagging behind other villages when it came to public utilities, that it was still without electric lights and that a direct telephone line to the city was still unavailable. Residents questioned why such services were already part of daily life in surrounding communities. Of course, a number of businesses in the village such as the cider mill and Bloomingdale's hay barns had had their own private source of electric for decades.

But the complaints mentioned above were late in coming because during their January 30, 1915 meeting, the village trustees were already discussing the possibility of giving the Municipal Gas Company the franchise to erect poles in the village for electric. The following week, that permission had been granted and village residents were on their way to being able to see where they were going at night.

Toward the end of February, the trustees heard from village attorney Stephen Daring who reported that he had spoken to representatives of the Municipal Gas Company about supplying power to the village. He said the light company offered to furnish 24 40 candlepower lights to burn all night at the cost of $480 a year. The board authorized Daring to ask the company



One of the several fires at the cider mill.

Frank Bloomingdale (1852-1933)

what they would charge for these lights until 1 a.m. in the morning(another indication of the still rural character of the village). By May a deal had been struck between the village and the utility company. The village had purchased 40 lights of 25 candlepower at $13. per light per year.

On November 6, 1915 Voorheesville had electric lights for the first time as the electric company made its first test in the village system of 39 lights at 25 candlepower each. From then on, when needed, the village would add more street lights. And once electric power was available in the streets, residents began installing electric lights in their homes.

By December 1917 the Presbyterian Church had already had electric installed having paid $1.29 for electric from December 1917 to January 1918. Within the next two years more and more residents added electric power to their homes. In March 1919, Leonard Fife could be found going about the village installing electric lights in the houses of Mrs. Harrison Fryer, William Vosburgh and Frank Van Auken.

A long time before electric lights had arrived in the village, residents were already gabbing on the telephone. Talk of plans for a phone line in the village had begun as early as January 1895 when it was rumored that a telephone line might finally be hooked up from Sloan's to the village. By September the rumor had become fact, at least for a number of residents. Telephone boxes were installed in the offices of Frank Bloomingdale, Leroy Schell and the Cummings Brothers. In addition, a public box had been set up in the Grove Hotel.

The new service made it possible for villagers to talk by phone to those in New Scotland, Feura Bush and Clarksville, all of which had had service a good time before Voorheesville. What must be recalled is that only a few residents had phones installed right away, mainly businesses. A goodly number of residents moved along quite nicely without phones for decades, in large part because, as long-time resident Bernie Pafunda noted: "Who were you going to talk to?" Even in 1937 Pafunda says, when his family was living on Maple Avenue, if they had to be notified of an emergency, people called Munyan's garage across the street. Bill Munyan would walk across the street and let the Pafundas know they had a call. Then a member of the Pafunda family would go across the street and use the service station to make the return call.

But, before the turn of the century, the very first week new phones had been installed in the village, they were still magic. That week several residents of the village gathered at Bloomingdale's office to hear a conversation between Bloomingdale and Cornelius Slingerland from his home in Onesquethau. Slingerland then played a waltz on his piano which everyone heard. Those present were astonished that, when Slingerland laughed, it sounded as though he was right in Bloomingdale's office.

On the 27th of September (1895) Bloomingdale played the role of a musical master of ceremonies once again. He had invited the Voorheesville band to his office to play a few tunes which were broadcast over the phone lines and heard at various connection points.

By early May 1897 two carloads of telephone poles were being unloaded at the station for a new line from the village to Sloan's, Guilderland Center and Altamont. By late April 1917, the telephone central, formerly located at Clarksville, was moved to the village on Voorheesville Avenue. Mrs. Emily Ward was in charge of the switchboard, connecting village residents with the rest of the world.

"In the summer we'd go into the fields and get colored stones and crush the stones and get different colored powders from them. We didn't do anything in particular with the powders;we just made them. At other times we'd walk through the orchard where Pheasant Run is today on the way to the creek; we'd pick some apples and Esther and I would eat them as we walked. In the fall we used to walk around the swamp and pick wintergreen berries and leaves. Fall was the time for getting the winterberries."

— Marian (Young) Crabill

CHAPTER EIGHT

Religious and Moral Influences

1. The Society of Methodists

In agricultural societies, the salvation that the community church offered to its faithful meant far more than a safe haven after death. The church served as a source of social comfort in this life, offering salvation from loneliness and alienation in a sparsely settled world. The church also served as a reminder to the faithful that the golden rule spelled cooperation and mutual aid in daily life.

During the 18th and for much of the 19th century, Sunday church-going was one of the highlights of the week in large part because of its social nature. After the congregation met for religious services, the community gathered for food and conversation and occasionally to work on small projects collectively. Sunday was a time to catch up on the news, particularly for women, who were far more isolated than the men in the community.

In the early 1800s, a small settlement of farmers, situated along the Indian Ladder Road in Bethlehem(later New Scotland and still later Voorheesville), established a church for mutual support. The denomination was Methodist and the church, named after the nearby creek, was known as the Black Creek Methodist Society. The members referred to themselves as the North Methodist Episcopal Society of the Town of Bethlehem.

The church is said to have begun about 1815 under the direction of the Rev. Elias Vanderlip a circuit rider preacher. At this time, the church consisted of only a handful of believers who gathered together in someone's barn or home for quarterly meetings. The circuit riding preacher made an appearance every few months giving the group of believers a spiritual lift. After his sermon, for a time the faithful felt rejuvenated, supported in their convictions.

The Steward's Book of the Watervliet Circuit, dated September 2, 1824, of which the Black Creek Church was a part, notes that the first quarterly conference of the newly formed circuit was held in Bethlehem. While there were a number of Bethlehem churches at the time, this meeting was probably held at Jacob Martin's house on the Indian Ladder (later Altamont) Road. It is certain that the third quarterly meeting conference was held at Martin's house, for his name is mentioned specifically. The Watervliet Circuit was comprised of the classes from the Berne and Albany Circuits which, about this time, had 343 members. The Black Creek Church of Bethlehem (Voorheesville) had 52 members.

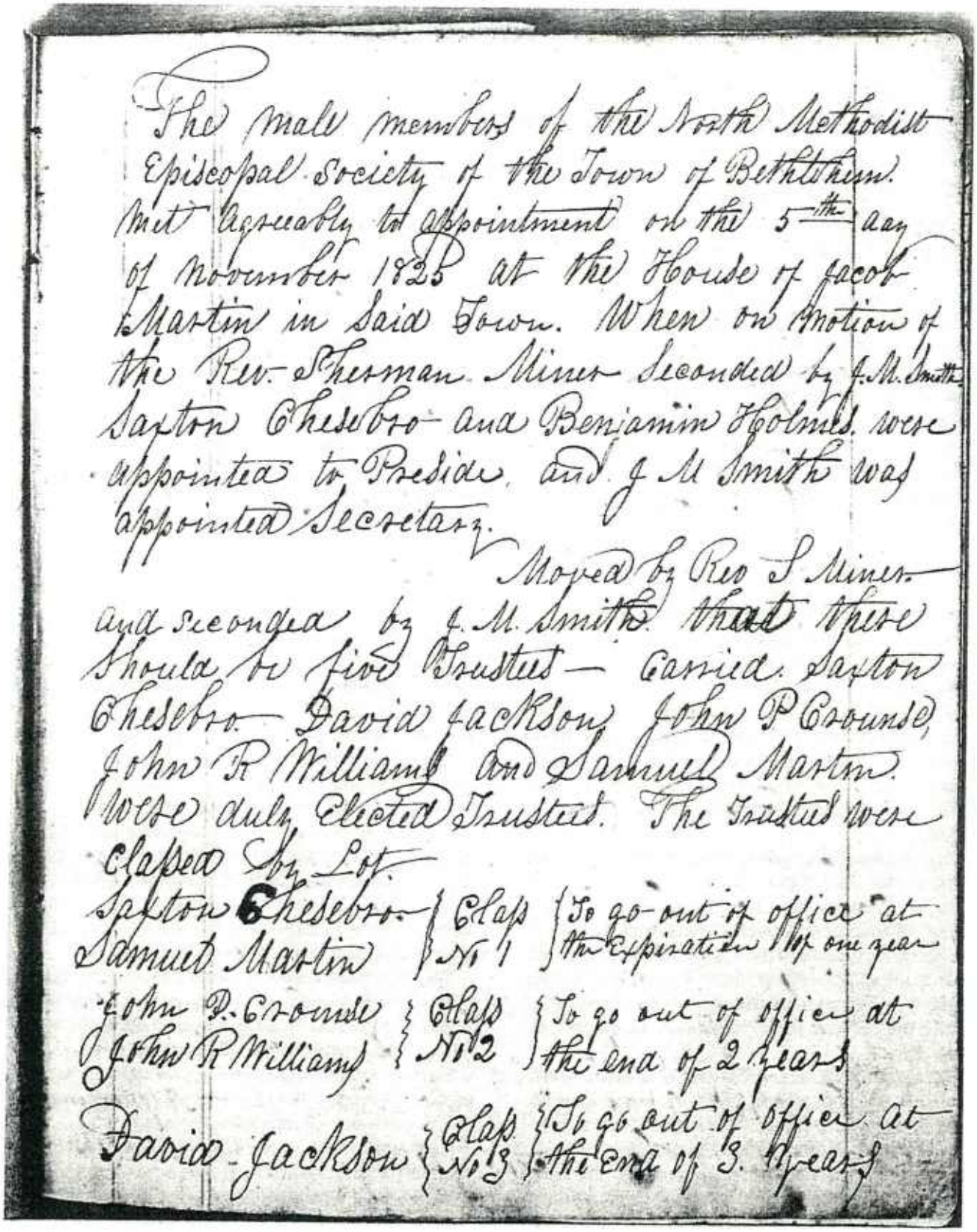
In late 1825 the Black Creek congregation organized itself along more formal lines when the Rev. Sherman Miner had taken over responsibility for the circuit. The very first extant record of the church reads:"The male members of the North Methodist Episcopal Society of the Town of Bethlehem met agreeably to appointment on the 5th day of November, 1825, at the house of Jacob Martin in said town. When on motion of Rev. Sherman Miner, seconded by J. M. Smith, Saxton Chesebro and Benjamin Holmes were appointed to preside and J. M. Smith was appointed secretary."

At the same meeting the church's first trustees were selected in the persons of Saxton Chesebro, Samuel Martin, John D. Crounse, John R. Williams and David Jackson, all farmers living in the vicinity of the church. These proceedings were filed in the County Clerks Office on November 15, 1825 and the new church was official under the laws of incorporation.

But at some point in the next several years, the church failed to maintain its legal status. In 1832, when Rev. Salmon Stebbins, the preacher then in charge of the Watervliet Circuit, visited the outpost, he discovered that the Black Creek Church had lost its charter for failing to have an annual election of trustees. The little group then reincorporated itself. Two years later, during the Rev. Joshua Poor's second year in charge of the circuit, New Scotland(Voorheesville) was listed as having only 36 members. Though the numbers are smaller than those in 1825, they do not indicate a loss of interest in the church. The smaller numbers were due rather to Delmar beginning its own branch and taking members living in the vicinity into its fold.

The first church building seems to have been erected about the time of the first incorporation, about 1826. When Martin Bell became pastor in 1868, the year the village was granted a post office, he found this building to be in quite poor repair. Bell began making the needed repairs that year, the same year that a fence was added to the perimeter of the church grounds.

As the railroad brought in new residents to the village, the church's enrollment began to increase as well. When Hiram Chase became pastor in 1870, the church had shown a dramatic increase in its numbers. At the same time, the kinds of preachers that came to live in the village were also changing. First of all, the old circuit rider way of life was slowly disappearing. While a preacher assigned to a church might still remain for only a year or two, he was more likely to be married with a family and needing a home to stay in. Before that time, the unmarried preachers lived with one of the



The male members of the North Methodist Episcopal Society of the Town of Bethlehem. met agreeably to appointment on the 5th day of November 1825 at the House of Jacob Martin in said Town. When on Motion of the Rev. Sherman Miner seconded by J. M. Smith Sapton Chesebro and Benjamin Holmes were appointed to Preside, and J. M. Smith was appointed Secretary.

Moved by Rev S Miner and seconded by J. M. Smith that there should be five Trustees — Carried. Sapton Chesebro — David Jackson John P Crounse, John R Williams and Samuel Martin were duly Elected Trustees. The Trustees were Classed by Lot.

Sapton Chesebro } Class No 1 } To go out of office at the Expiration of one year
Samuel Martin }

John P. Crounse } Class No 2 } To go out of office at the end of 2 years
John R Williams }

David Jackson } Class No 3 } To go out of office at the End of 3 years

Copy of earliest minutes of trustees of the North Methodist Episcopal Society, November 25, 1825.

faithful, as was the case with Hiram Chase who lived with Alanson Van Auken and his family during his stay in Voorheesville.

Something else was going on at this time as well. As more people moved into the village, they tended to settle in the village proper, close to the railroad and stores on Main Street. This pattern of settlement was to influence the decisions of the Methodists for the next several years. Another influence came when the Presbyterians built a church in the village. In June 1887

Pen and ink rendition of a pastel of the Bla : Creek Methodist Church done by Paul T. Higgs in January 1924. Higgs was told how the church property was landscaped / those who were alive before the church was moved.

David Bradt (seated with hat) with wife, Lucretia, to his immediate right and daughter Catherine Goodfellow. Catherine's husband, James, (standing) was the village's first street commisioner. Bradt was one of the Methodist Church's most generous benefactors. House is located at 14 Voorheesville Avenue.

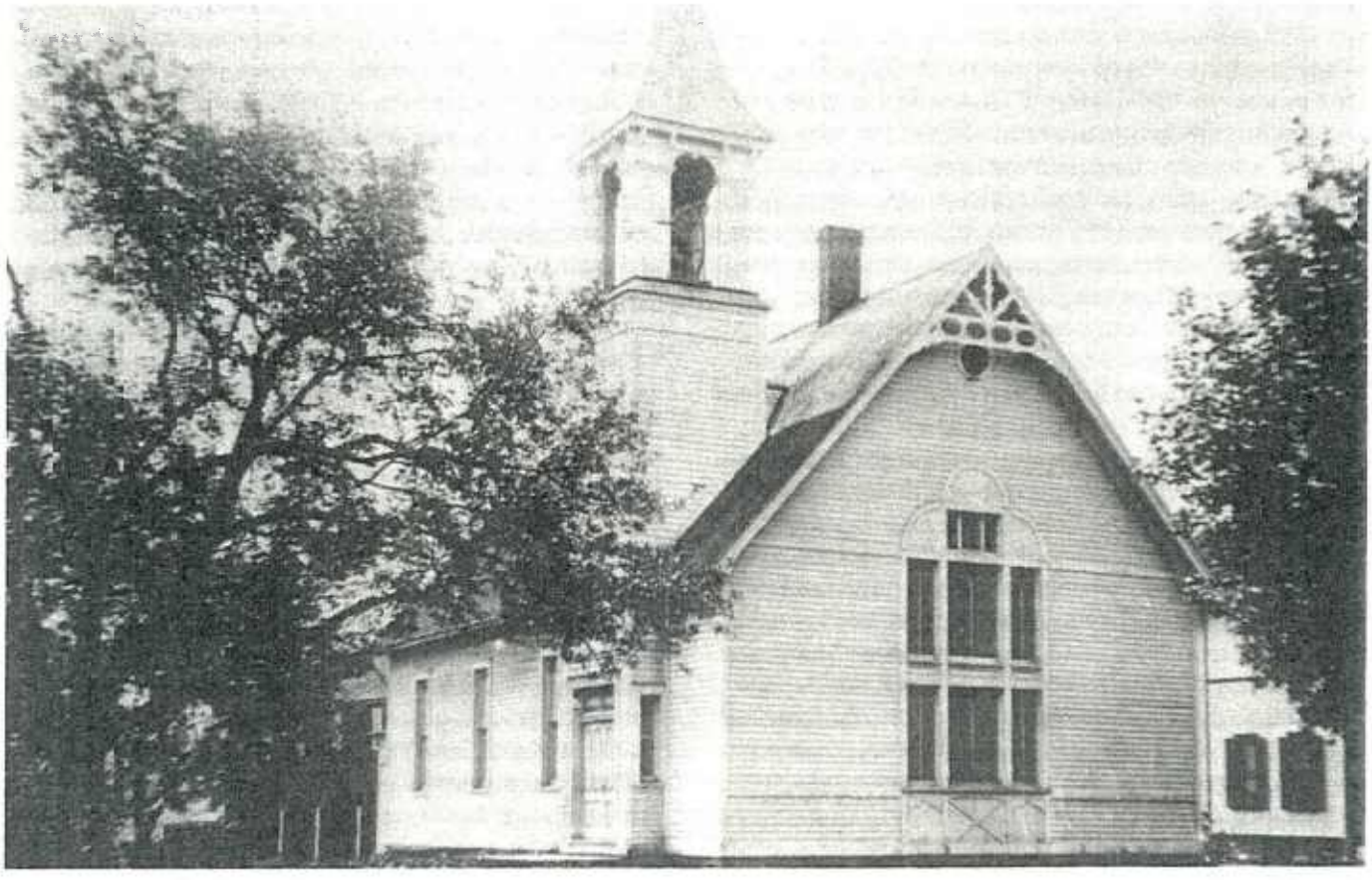
villagers could see the 55-foot steeple of the new church being erected on Main Street closer to the hub of activity

To deal with the issues of married preachers and the new church on the block, the board of trustees of the Methodist church took some radical steps. First of all, they called a special meeting on October 6, 1887, to look at the possibility of building a parsonage for their preachers. And the suggestion offered was that the new building be erected not near the church, but in the village, on the parcel of land on Voorheesville Avenue that David Bradt had donated to the church.

While there was agreement that a new parsonage would fit the bill for housing the church's future ministers, there was disagreement over where the new building should go. After all, the church had a history of over 70 years where it stood. Nevertheless, the decision was made to erect the new parsonage at 8 Voorheesville Avenue and David Bradt, Frank Kaiser and Frank Van Auken were appointed to serve on the building committee. By late October, the cellar of the new parsonage was being dug and by winter the whole house was done. The trustees had rented the building for the first two to three years because those called to preach had no need for it. John C. Fisher, who served the church from 1891-1895, was the first minster to live in the house and to use the barn in the rear that was erected in 1889. For Fisher, the house would not bring totally joyful memories. He and his family were not only quarantined for a month with scarlet fever but lost a child to the disease in 1893.

Most likely the argument that prevailed in the decision to build the parsonage in the village was that the church needed to be closer to the center of action. Probably it was also argued at the time that, if the Methodists did not move closer to the center of things, they might risk losing souls to the new Presbyterian denomination, people going to that church simply out of convenience.

These things were on the minds of the trustees before Fisher moved into the new parsonage in 1891 for the church had already reached and carried out a second major decision. This decision some of the faithful found even more difficult to swallow, namely that the church building itself be moved to the village. On February 10, 1890, members of the congregation met to present this quasi-heretical plan. It is hard to say whether this proposal met with the same resistance as that to build the parsonage in the village several years earlier. Each year the village population was increasing and the



Voorheesville Methodist Church prior to new social hall. The social hall was formerly located over the sheds in the rear of the church.

writing had to be on the wall that the little settlement along the Altamont Road was situated out of the mainstream..

At the meeting of the First Quarterly Conference on May 28, 1890, therefore, the proposal to move the church was brought forth and the the Board of Trustees of the Voorheesville church was ordered to erect a new church within the village. In June, Henry Crounse, Isaac Van Auken and Frank Kaiser were appointed to serve on the building committee, with Rev, G.W. Sisum and David Bradt available as advisors. Rather than build a new church, the decision was made to move the old church to the new site.

The building committee lost no time dismantling the old church. With work begun in early June, the last meeting in the old church was held June 15. After that date, services were held in the hall adjoining the Church until the new building was finally done. By the end of the month the old Black Creek Church had been taken down and the timber drawn to the Maple Avenue site.

The foundation and frame of the new church were completed by the end of July and in early September the newly shingled structure was being painted by Flockton and Radley. In early October church members began moving part of the sheds and hall. While these materials were being moved, which seemed routine by this time, disaster struck. A timber fell and came crashing down on Isaac Van Auken paralyzing him in both limbs and body. He was, however, conscious for a time. Only weeks before Van Auken had been talking about how he thought he would be able to harvest 300 bushels of potatoes on the farmland he had rented on the Tygert farm. That was his final harvest for the injuries proved too much for his system. A funeral was held for the farmer and boardinghouse host on Wednesday, November 13,1890. It was the first service held in the new church. The moving of the sheds and hall was finally resumed in the first week of December.

Before that final move, however, the new church had already been dedicated. On November 19, two dedication ceremonies were held, one in the morning preached by Rev. Farrar of Albany and one in the evening preached by Rev, Thompson of Troy. Those present remarked that both sermons were intensely preached. The cost of the new church was $2,450, $1,800 of which had already been subscribed by dedication day. An additional $312 was raised during the two stirringly preached sessions. The church, therefore, had only a remaining debt of $338.

The Methodists had been a strong influence in both the prohibition and temperance movements generally. Both in the old and new churches, they sponsored

numerous speakers to address matters of prohibition on many occasions. Indeed several members of the congregation were highly active in the Prohibition party. For example in 1887, Frank Van Auken ran for town clerk on the Prohibition ticket and was to run for public office on several other occasions in the same party.

The Methodists were also drawn to the evangelical end of the spectrum of Christianity. From time to time they sponsored tent meetings and revival meetings that lasted for five or six weeks, with meetings every night. Guest preachers would come to preach conversion, to encourage the faithful to accept Christ. Occasionally these meetings would include a visit from well known groups such as the Troy Praying Band.

What distinguished the new Methodist Church on Maple Avenue from many churches at that time was its wonderful social hall in the rear of the church above the sheds. Here church members were able to sponsor a fairly complete schedule of social, political and religious events. Oftentimes the social events sponsored were the same vaudeville-type acts that appeared at the Grove Hotel or Harris House a short time before. In this way, the faithful would get an opportunity to see the cherished entertainers while keeping their distance from the alcohol and rowdy behavior so often associated with hotel life. Therefore, it's no surprise to see that magician Professor Wood and ventriloquist-humorist Fred Peck performed basically the same acts they did at the hotels on other occasions. And Arthur Gregg, later in life, recalled how exciting an event it was when a man from Troy brought his phonograph to the church and played concert music to a large crowd.

At times the church hall was also used as a convention center. For example in October 1897, over 170 members from the Albany County Teachers Institute(two-thirds women)came for several days. The teachers were put up at the various boarding houses and farms in the village. Farmers Institutes were held at the hall as well as conventions of the Patrons of Industry. And as mentioned earlier, various athletic events were also sponsored in the social hall. For members of the church, Sunday services and the various gatherings at the church social hall were all an extension of their homes.

2. *A Church On Main Street*

As the population of the village increased in the decades following the railroads' arrival, so did the number of potential believers for all religious denominations. For Presbyterians, who traveled to New Scotland for church services or who attended the Methodist Church out of convenience, there was now a large enough group in the village to request a church of their own.

A Presbyterian Church had existed in the town since 1787, a time when the hamlets toward the center and southern parts of the town were the more populous areas. But times changed, so that when the Albany Presbytery met on June 9, 1885 in the New Scotland church, a group of Voorheesville residents presented church officials with a petition for a church in the village. The petition was signed by 23 of the faithful seeking permission to go ahead with their plans to build a church. There were no problems; their request was granted.

Toward the end of June, Drs. Holmes of Albany, Darling of Schenectady and Crocker of Saratoga came to the village to assist the small group in organizing their new church. There were 17 charter members: Mary Bloomingdale, Mary Casting, Mary Hotaling, Richard R. Hotaling, Jacob R. Jacobson, Laurintha Jacobson, Margaret Joslin, Belvia Joslin, Emma L. Swift, Christina B. Joslin, Anthony LaGrange, Mrs. Anthony LaGrange, Mrs. Alden McMillen, Peter Smith, William Slater Swift, John F. Tygert and Minerva Tygert.

From among the new members William Swift, Richard Hotaling, Anthony LaGrange were selected as elders. John F. Terwilliger, Abram Relyea, F. B. LaGrange, William Swift, Hanford Joslin and Thomas Tygert were selected as trustees. George H. Frazier served as minister in charge while the young church was getting under way. Frazier was followed by DeWitt G. Rockerfeller who for a time served both the New Scotland and Voorheesville churches. Later he also served just the Voorheesville church but, before long, he had to resign due to poor health. Both Frazier and Rockerfeller were instrumental in organizing the church school which had its start on May 11, 1885.

After the Secretary of State's office had granted a certificate of incorporation to the congregation on August 8, 1885 a harvest supper was held on the 20th to raise funds for the church building. Within six weeks $1,000 had been raised, enough for lumber to be ordered and a foundation begun. In the meantime services were held in two temporary chapels. The first service was held in Edward Wormer's house on Main Street. But shortly afterward, the site for services was changed to William Hotaling's wagon house, later Dr. Fisher Joslin's garage. The wagon house had been fitted up to hold about 100 and was referred to as the chapel. For a long period of time this building was used for a variety of community meetings.

While church meetings were taking place at the chapel, a site for the new church building was selected on High(Pleasant) Street across from the manse that was built later(11 Pleasant Street). By early November the foundation was done and the Albany Argus reported in its Wednesday November 10th(1886) edition that a ceremony was held to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone.

But something happened along the way, because shortly afterward William Swift had purchased a vacant

Voorheesville Presbyterian Church with ice house (?) in rear. The manse stands in the background on hill.

lot on Main Street between the premises of Henry Bell and Peter Martin to be used as the site of the new Presbyterian Church. It's uncertain what was going on but there was even talk then of the Presbyterians foregoing their building plans and uniting with the Methodists to form a federated church.

However, that merger never materialized and, for a second time, in mid January 1887, lumber was being drawn to the new site of the new Presbyterian church. That site stuck because, in late May, village mason Ed O'Brien and four men were busy at work laying the foundation and by mid June Abram Relyea was completing the carpentry work on the new 55 foot steeple. By the middle of July Walter Flockton was putting a fresh coat of paint on the new edifice and plans were being made for a dedication ceremony.

In late September seats arrived in time for the dedication, which had been scheduled for Thursday, October 13, 1887. At the dedication, which was conducted by DeWitt Rockefeller, the Rev. Dr. J. McC. Holmes spoke on "Our Church." He was followed by the Rev. Dr. J.N. Crocker who spoke on "Its External Relations" and the Rev. Dr. A.V.V. spoke on "Its External Relations."

The building of the church, including the lot, had cost the congregation $3,475, about $1,000 more than the Methodists would pay to put up their new church several years later. And understandably so, for much of the material for the Methodist church came from the old church structure at the Black Creek location. After collecting $500 at the dedication ceremony, the Presbyterians had only $775 in indebtedness which was finally canceled in 1894.

Later that same year, the trustees made the decision to erect a parsonage. A member of the church and one of its elders, builder William Swift, was selected to erect the new building at a cost of $1,200. The new home was ready for occupancy in 1896 and the new pastor, the Rev. William E. Marden, was the first to move in. Shortly after Marden, the Rev. Curry was called in May 1897. At the time, Curry received $425 per annum for a salary and was given the use of the manse free. He was also allowed three Sundays off a year for vacation time.

Before the parsonage was built, a company ice house had been built on the church premises in the rear of the church. It's not exactly clear who erected the ice house or who owned it, but at the January 9, 1896 meeting of the board of trustees, the motion carried that "Flansburgh and Tygert have the lease of the ground where the ice house now stands for 1 year from January 1st 1896 for one dollar."

During its early years, the new church never seemed

Members of Jubilee Pageant performed at Voorheesville Presbyterian Church June 9, 1936, (l to r, top to bottom): Clyde Loss, Mildred Fay, Erwin Buckman, Floyd Smith, Frank Bloomingdale; (second row): Carl Warner, Fred Dunfee, Phil Pettinger, Arthur Boynton, Delos Gainsley, Charles Olenhouse, Ernest Johnson, Earl Olenhouse, Grover Kling, Gareld Kling, Art Wright, George Woods, John Kammerer, Rev. William J. Clark; (third row): Marguerite Joslin, Margaret Buckman, Ruth Fuglein, Mrs. Arthur Boynton, Clarence Van Wormer, Kenneth Fuglein, Elmer Boynton, Doris Lockwood, Bert Halsted, Walton Van Wormer, Mrs. John Hodges, Ruth Weis Garver, Mrs. Frank Fuglein, Mrs. John Smith; (fourth row): Donald Fuglein, Mary Bloomfield, Marie Halsted, Jeannette Kling, Evelyn Van Wormer, Esther Crounse, Ida May Hacker, Otto Schultz, Doris Hodges, Virginia Pitcher, Olive Heisler, Jack Smith, Betty Lockwood, Jennie Van Wormer, Olive Windelspecht, ____ Coughtry, Elsie Johnson, Jesse Joslin, Charles Huey.

to get above things financially. Occasionally, it had to borrow money from some of its members. For example, in 1894 William Swift lent $208.50 to the church. And at other times, members of the Joslin family and Thomas Tygert had made loans to the church. The church lasted for 64 years. In the mid 1940s once again a dwindling church membership struggled to make ends meet financially. The church also had difficulty getting a permanent pastor. Moreover, since the automobile made it easier for people to travel about, the New Scotland Church was no longer as far away as it once was. On February 2, 1949 the Voorheesville Presbyterian church disbanded and rejoined its parent church. About half of the membership transferred to the New Scotland church, the rest joining the Methodist church in Voorheesville.

As with the Methodists, the Presbyterians during the late 19th century were also heavily involved in prohibition efforts. They, too, sponsored temperance meetings. Indeed one of the active groups in the church toward the end of the century was the Loyal Temperance Legion.

3. A Catholic Mission

Rural America was hardly the breeding ground for Catholicism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Voorheesville for example, the number of Catholics who lived in the village at the beginning of the 20th century was quite small. The few Catholics who did exist and wanted to be part of a religious community went to either the Presbyterian or Methodist church, perhaps more out of a need for social intercourse than religious conviction.

In the first quarter of the 20th century, as the village continued to grow, more Catholics came. However, the

Saint Matthew's Church on Pleasant Street before the new church was built in 1962.

number still remained small. Regardless, this core group requested of the diocese that church services be provided for them in the village each Sunday. Their request was granted for, toward the end of July 1916, Fr. Michael McCaffrey of St. Lucy's in Altamont came to say mass for the first time. The first services were held at the Voorheesville Athletic Association on Main Street.

But the small group of believers wanted a church building of their own. They began to talk about what it would take to erect a church in the village. Clearly, the answer was money because by late September 1916, a Catholic Building Fund Association was established. The association's first act was to sponsor a fund-raising supper. In a strong show of support 300 people came out to the supper. Part of this support probably came from members of St. Lucy's parish but a good deal also came from members of both the Presbyterian and Methodist churches in the village.

Evidently the building fund association was determined to go ahead with their plans because, even before the fund-raising supper was held, the association had already purchased a piece of the Comstock property at the top of Center Street. In fact, a ground blessing ceremony had already been set for the first Sunday of August.

Within two months, ground had been broken and Jacob Weaver, an Altamont contractor, was at work on the structure of the new church atop Center Street. No time was lost in the building process. On December 3 the cornerstone was laid and by the middle of the month the superstructure was completed. By Christmas 1916, Fr. McCaffrey was able to say the first mass in the new structure followed by a benediction.

By winter's end, the interior of the new church was completed and Bishop Cusack of Albany came out to the village to bless the new chapel. On Sunday June 17, 1917 the new church of Saint Matthew's was dedicated at 10 a.m. Although equipped with a new building, the new congregation was to remain a mission church of St. Lucy's and under the direction of Fr. McCaffrey. Indeed

it was to remain a mission church for nearly half a century.

In its earliest days, St. Matthew's was comprised mostly of Italian and Polish families and a few Irish. While financial support for the new building and its accessories came from the entire congregation, Joseph Willman and his wife Odellia, seem to have been the cornerstone of support. The Willmans not only helped with construction costs but donated the new tower, the bell and the church's first organ. For a time Joseph Willman also served as the church's sexton. In the beginning, the St. Matthew's mission parish consisted of no more than 30 families.

4. *Temperance and Prohibition*

Throughout most of the 19th century, a temperance movement flourished in the U. S. that took shape in many kinds of groups and organizations. But, regardless of the size of the organization and its specific focus, all had the same overriding goal, to rid the villages and towns in the country of intoxicating liqueurs. Members of this movement did not cease in their efforts until Prohibition had finally become law in the early part of the 20th century.

From the earliest days in the colony's history, alcohol consumption was high and kept rising so that, by 1820, the consumption of distilled spirits (rum, whiskey, gin, brandy and the like) was said to have reached its peak. Indeed, many Europeans who came to America after the turn of the 18th century were astounded at the amount of spirituous drink that Americans consumed.

A response from citizens concerned about the problem was not long in coming. By 1825 the forces of evangelical Protestantism had begun to rally against the manufacturing, selling and consumption of alcoholic beverages in many parts of the country. New York had been one of the few states to take a strong stand in favor of temperance at an early date. By 1845 a law had been enacted prohibiting the sale of intoxicants throughout the state. However, the law was short-lived and would be repealed two years later.

But the standard bearers dedicated to snuffing out the temptations of demon rum were only spurred on by such defeats as the repeal in New York. New organizations sprouted up everywhere. By 1874 one of the most prominent temperance organizations was born in Cleveland, the National Women's Christian Temperance Union(WCTU). Before long, organizers from this group were traveling around the country trying to urge town and village residents to form local chapters. In 1878 one of WCTU's organizers who lectured in many area churches, a Mrs. Courtney, came to New Scotland to talk to residents about starting a local chapter.

New Scotland Prohibition Nominations.

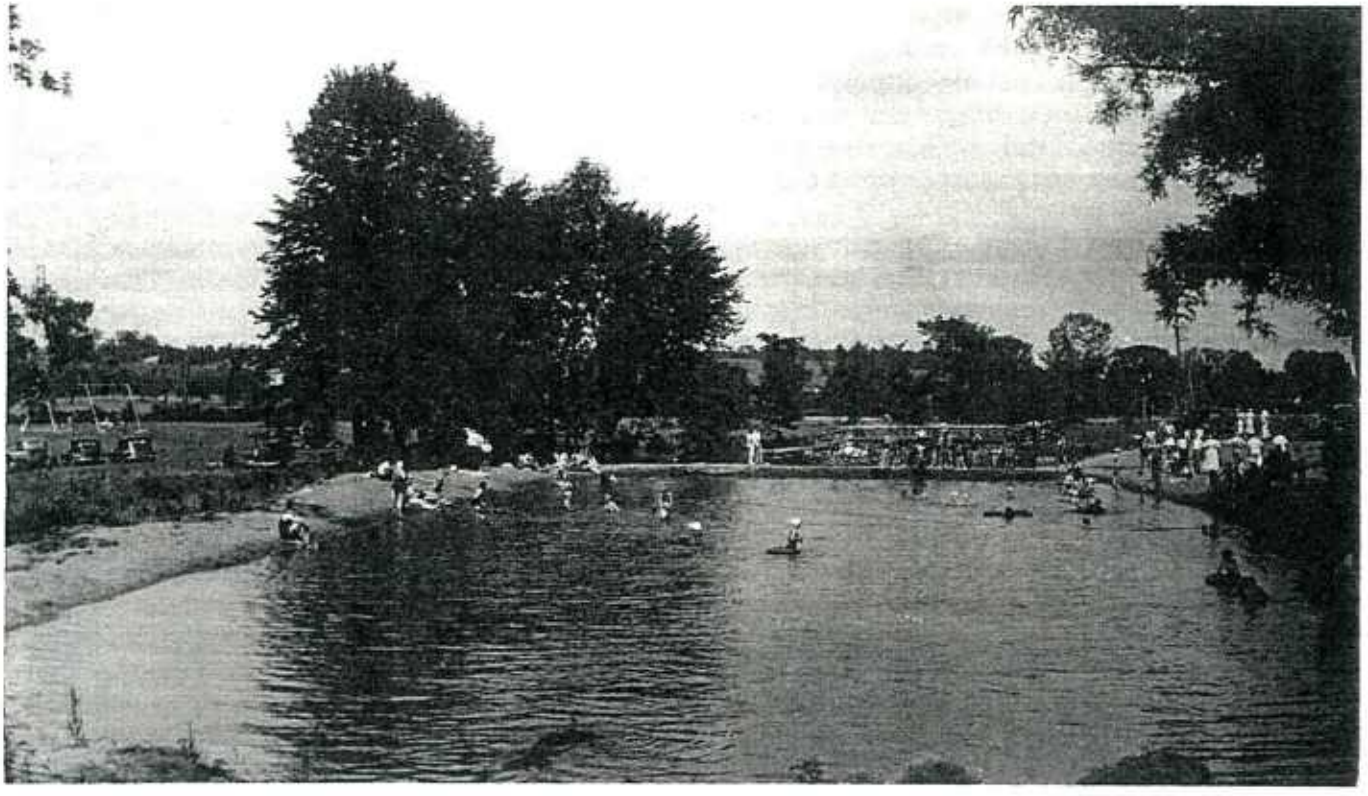
For Supervisor,
FRANK VANAUKEN.
For Town Clerk,
LEONARD J. APPLEBEE.
For Justice of the Peace,
J. WESLEY ALBRIGHT.
For Collector,
JOHN M. BOGARDUS.
For Commissioner of Highways,
JOHN L. VAN OLINDA.
For Assessor,
WM. M. MARTIN.
For Overseers of the Poor,
JOHN B. YOUNG,
JAMES H. BELL.
For Town Auditor,
FREDERICK R. GARDINER.
For Inspectors of Election,
WILLIAM CASS,
JOHN F. TERWILLIGER,
CHARLES A. LONG.
For Constables,
ANDREW F. APPLEBEE,
SILAS W. CHESEBRO.
For Town House,
JAMES MARKLE.
For Excise Commissioners,
CHARLES LIVINGSTON,
WILLIAM A. WINNE,
RICHARD R. HOTALING.

Prohibition Party ticket for April 1894 election.

Her efforts were said to have been followed with good results.

But WCTU was not the first organization of its kind in the town. There had been earlier successful efforts at forming temperance groups. For example, the Sons of Temperance had established a division (No.192) in New Scotland as early as 1870. The formation of this group was particularly relevant for Voorheesville residents because the meetings associated with the group were held in rooms connected to the Black Creek Methodist Church. This group overlapped for a while with the WCTU, the Sons of Temperance having disbanded in 1881.

Because the cause of temperance was taken up essentially by churches with more evangelical postures, it was the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in the village that brandished the sword of sobriety most feverishly. Indeed, as mentioned already, members of these churches even became involved in politics, in hopes of putting a successful Prohibitionist ticket on the town ballot. In April 1887, for example, a Prohibition



Windlespecht's Beech Grove on Route 85A, just west of the grade school, was a favorite resort spot beginning several years after prohibition ended. The Vly was damned, the water flowed from the west end and flowed out the east end over a concrete dam. The pool was closed during WWII when gas was rationed; Sunday school buses from the city had no way to get to Voorheesville.

caucus was held at Peter Bogardus' house in New Salem at which such a ticket was put together. Christopher Terwilliger was nominated for supervisor, Frank Van Auken for town clerk, R.R Hotaling for full-time justice and John Radley to fill the justice vacancy. Eugene Bogardus was nominated for tax collector and Peter S. Albright for excise commissioner. What seems a contradiction is that the Prohibition party would have nominated someone for the position of excise commissioner at all!

Prohibitionists continued to make their presence felt in small towns and villages whenever an opportunity arose. In September 1887, a representative of WCTU, a Mrs. Jump, came to the town, this time to Voorheesville, to urge citizens to unite! In the next year or two, there was increasing evidence that her urging had some effect. There was a flurry of activities geared toward doing away with the drink. The enthusiasm even carried over to stamping out other vices such as smoking. Toward the middle of January 1888, Madam Elcred came to the village to get tobacco abstinence pledges from residents.

In April of 1888 another full prohibitionist ticket was set up and by September a prohibition tent had been raised in the village from the 20th until the 23rd. During the December following the revival meeting, the county WCTU held its annual convention at the Presbyterian Church on Main Street. The village was alive with a spirit of temperance.

By the following year the movement seemed to become even bolder in its manifestations in the village. As was the case in many localities, direct action increasingly became the order of the day for Voorheesville prohibitionists. On May 25, 1889, a delegation of prohibitionists organized a march against the village saloon keepers. They planned to demand of the excise commissioners that they refuse to grant licenses to the saloon keepers in the village.

The members of the delegation consisted of the Rev. M. Brown of Clarksville and his wife; Rev. Mr. Conant, pastor of the Presbyterian Church; Christopher Terwilliger; Silas Cheesbro and his wife; Miss Hattie Hudson; Adam Bloomingdale; Mrs. John Joslin and her daughters and Miss Cory Casting. The group gathered most likely at the Presbyterian Church where Conant was pastor and marched down Main Street to the Harris House. There the group confronted the board of excise commissioners. The group made an impassioned plea to the board not to grant any more licenses in the village. The Rev. and Mrs. Brown both made impassioned speeches followed by a speech from Hattie Hudson. The board listened but did not relent, stating that it

would issue licenses to whoever wanted one.

The following August, prohibitionists from around the county came once again to Voorheesville to hold their annual convention in the Presbyterian chapel on the premises of William Hotaling. Regular temperance meetings were held here and in the Methodist church hall as well.

The movement continued into the 20th century gaining strength so that in 1903 and later in 1907 a "No License" petition was passed around the village for residents to sign. In the spring of 1905, the Rev. D. D. Eaton had come to the Presbyterian Church and spoke about the lobbying effort of the New York State Anti-Saloon League in the legislature. Local members of the League kept putting pressure on the village tavern owners. In January 1905 Morris Harris, Elmer Peters and Christopher Fick were all summoned to the Albany City Court accused of selling liquors illegally. At this time as well, there seems to have been some taunting of those who drank to excess as they made their way home up Main Street from the saloons. In late December 1905, the paper reported that some villagers had applied "a coating of oil and lampblack" to several of those stumbling home at night.

All this time the Law and Order League also kept putting pressure on both saloonkeepers and residents of the village to discontinue their involvement with John Barleycorn. In February 1904, they were organizing meetings in various parts of the town where they gave fiery speeches on temperance, trying at the same time to build up their membership. By early June, one of those meetings was held at the Methodist Church in Voorheesville and was presided over by Frank Van Auken. The Rev. S.G. Tyndall of New Salem, Revs. Parent and Higgins and Dr. Fitch were all heard giving speeches at the meeting. The speeches were somewhat effective because three new members enrolled in the chapter that night.

In the spring of the following year, there were more reports of the seemingly unbridled zeal of certain members of the movement. A newspaper account for May 26, 1905 stated that the League had moved its headquarters to a small building east of the depot. The account continued that the members "hold councils and send out spies who sneak under sheds." The account did not go unnoticed. The following week an anonymous letter to the editor called into question the wisdom of the village correspondent for the previous week's observations. Given the tactics of the League's members at other times, spying would not be beyond the pale of acceptable behavior for them.

By the fall of 1916, a group of women in Voorheesville had organized to put a no-license proposition up for a vote in the town. The group, headed by Mrs. George Easton, Miss Adelaide Bewsher and Miss Anna Fisher, indicated that their main interest was in closing four places in the village. In the meantime they went from door to door to canvas each resident personally. The singular efforts of such small dedicated groups were having a collective impact across the state and the country. For example, the following fall, No-License petitions were passed in Schoharie County so that only three of the 16 towns in the county sold alcohol legally: Richmondville, Schoharie and Sharon.

And as history tells us, by 1919 the Anti-Saloon League and its subsidiary groups throughout the country had finally triumphed. The 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed. This lasted until 1933 when it was finally repealed by the 21st Amendment. Some historians have remarked that the Prohibition era was one of the nation's worst for crime and violence and generated more harm than its enemy ever did.

"Well, I think it has changed for the better, I think the new homes and the buildings that have been put up, and the new school and the streets and all have been improved and they've put in parks that weren't here when I came here. I think right now is the best I've ever seen it. All the improvements they've made and the things they do for children–like the Kiwanis and the American Legion has done a lot and all the churches have taken an interest in children and they have social gatherings–now they provide everything for the children."

— Anna Van Olinda

CHAPTER NINE

The Beginning of The End

1. The Automobile Arrives

When the railroad first made its way into the interior regions of New York State, thousands of small villages sprouted up alongside its tracks of promise. Farmers and merchants, who formerly had been without connections to key markets, now found themselves with an extraordinary new tool for getting their produce and manufactured goods to waiting buyers. For many, the coming of the railroad was a lifeline to economic continuity.

When H. T. Dana wrote his poem "Lines in Favor of Building the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad" in 1856, he said: "New York and Boston at our feet,/And Albany we'll hourly greet./Thus joined into the business world,/Progression's flag will be unfurled." Dana, a Cobleskill resident, expressed the sentiments of every farmer who lived without benefit of the rails. Farmers above all, wanted progression's flag unfurled now.[1]

Ray Van Auken on his 1900 Knox which was handed down through the Van Auken family. The machine ran on a 1 cylinder, air-cooled engine. On its tubeless front pneumatic tire and two 2.50 x 24 solid tires the three-wheeler could reach 8 mph when the throttle was opened wide.

From his study of farming in the Hudson-Mohawk Region during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, historian David Ellis was able to echo Dana's sentiments nearly a century later: "The farmers of New York were fully aware of the importance of transportation. They hailed the construction of new facilities as the open door to prosperity."[2]

On one level, the farming community viewed the arrival of the railroad as a kind of radical reform in favor of democracy. They saw it as providing equal access to faraway markets for all and through this, access to prosperity. While sociologists and political economists might debate whether the railroad ever delivered this prosperity or even afforded access to it, what is clear, at least in the case of Voorheesville, is that the railroad wrought a radical transformation in the village's economic, political and cultural life. The little out-of-the-way village in the northeastern part of the town of New Scotland became a powerhouse of energy and so inner-directed that it chose to govern itself.

But anyone who takes a walk down Main Street today or crosses the tracks at the upper crossing along Voorheesville Avenue does not see evidence of this 19th century powerhouse. It's readily apparent that the Voorheesville that was given life by the railroad, did not last forever. The automobiles that roll bumpingly across the tracks bear witness that the old railroad transportation network is dead and so are the life forms that grew up around it.

With the depot gone, the Grove Hotel gone, Fryer's brick house and the huge coal sheds that once stood behind Joslins' hardware and Bloomingdale's hay and straw gone, a sinister person could cast doubt on whether a railroad town ever did exist in Voorheesville. The trains that pass by hardly offer evidence to the contrary as they thunder through the village in a high and mighty way, never casting a glance up or down the village streets.

There is no great mystery to the transformation that took place. If a scapegoat be needed, a finger can be pointed in the direction of the car, the automobile. This machine was the 19th century railroad town's wrecking ball. When Henry Ford first introduced the Model T, he offered it to those he described as "the great multitude." He told his executives he wanted a car "so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to buy one—and enjoy with his family the blessings of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces."

Indeed the great multitude bought their motor cars and travelled far and wide into these open spaces, while the trains remained chained to the uni-directional track. When the truck became a serious carrier of freight it, too, could move in any direction. Freight could be warehoused anywhere a surface was paved. The truck, as the car, was not limited to the tracks. The rail road was just one of many thousands of roads.

Similarly, summer vacationers, who once sought the

Burbick's Log Cabin Rest on Maple Road was situated near present-day savings bank.

quietude of the boarding houses of William Relyea and Frank Van Auken, could now, as part of the great multitude's experiment, find boarding space everywhere. To accommodate their touring cars and pleasure cars, the 1920s gave birth to tourist homes, cabin courts and motor courts along every highway. By the early '30s, forever trendy California had invented the motel and their neon vacancy signs greeted tired travellers at the end of the long day's road.

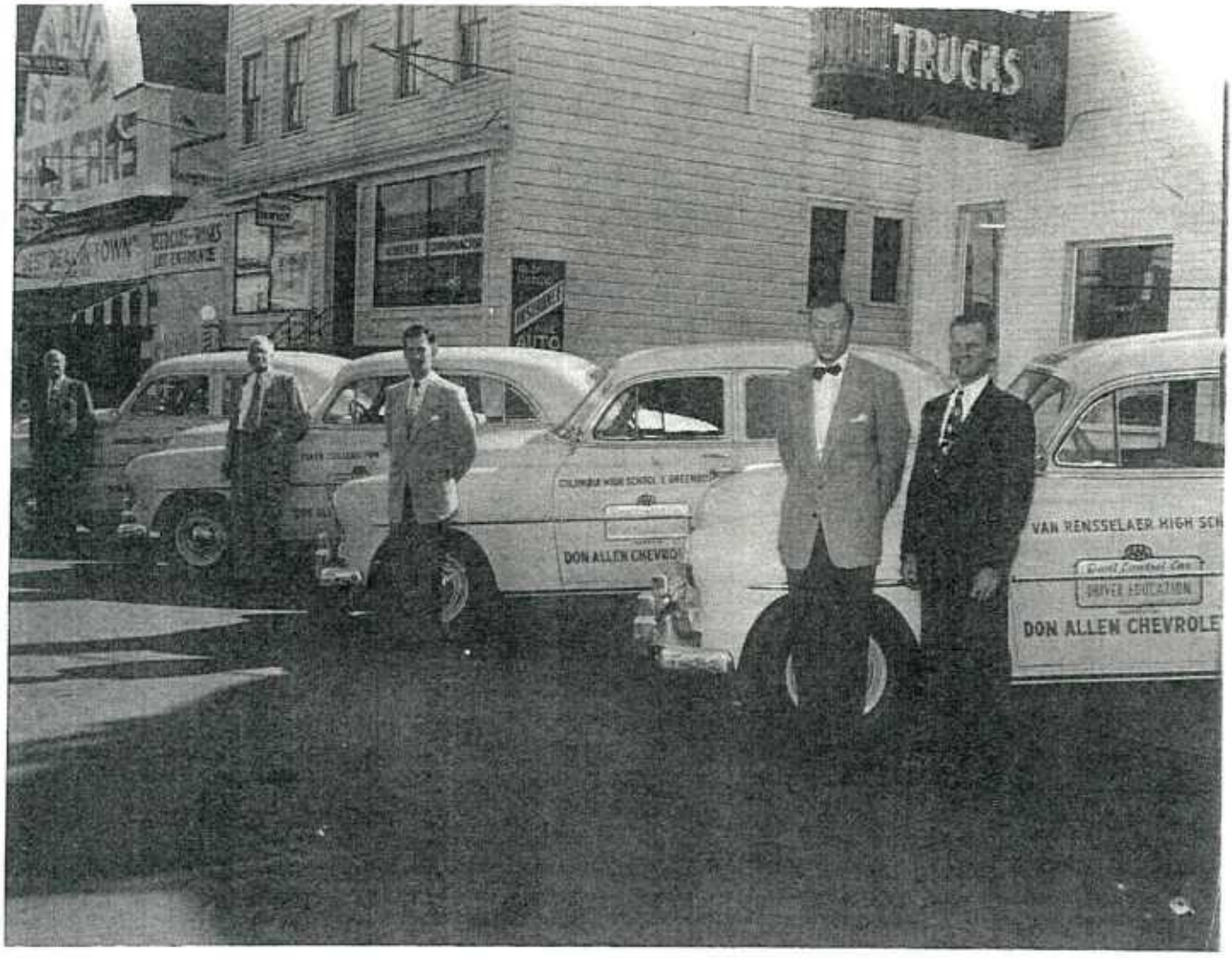
It does not require much intelligence to see that these housing units offered little, if any, of the communal hospitality so characteristic of the old familiar boarding house. But the motorized traveler whizzing along the highway, concerned about questions of miles-to-the-gallon and making it on time, had little room for such hospitality, if it were offered, anyway.

The once beautiful village hotels that stood beside the railroad depots had also begun to lose their souls. Their rooms patronized by salesmen, their bars the hangout of village characters, these public mansions were losing the life so long cherished by adventurous travelers and diffident newlyweds. Without enough patrons to support their upkeep, these inns began to look shabby and run down, a nuisance to town officials, a nightmare for the local bank holding the mortgage.

In the meantime the number of cars kept coming. In 1895 the nation had only 300 cars to contend with, the count was 78,000 in 1905 and 3,513,000 in 1916. In October 1916 New Yorkers owned 300,000 of those machines, 78,000 of which had been purchased in the preceding eight months. There was now one car for every 32 residents. A year later there was one for every 22 people and so on. William H. Reid saw the writing on the wall when he went to the village limits in July 1911 and posted signs telling motorists not to go faster than 15 miles an hour while they rode through Voorheesville.

But residents of the village were just as touched by the car craze as anyone else. At the beginning of the century, whenever someone bought a car, the newspaper correspondent wrote about it in the weekly column as if a child had been born into the family. When H.C. Lee, foreman of the Empire Cider and Vinegar Works and Dr. Shaw bought new cars in the summer of 1907, it was news! Three years later, the person next door, the personification of Henry Ford's great multitude, had a car. The news was now: where had you been?

People of Voorheesville were beginning to say "everywhere." They tooled around the American



By the early 1950s the car became a part of the daily life of Voorheesville High School Students through driver training. Clayton A Boutor, (far left), supervising principal of Voorheesville High School stands next to a Don Allen Chevrolet. Others (l to r): Tom Gibson. State Teachers College, Herbert Smith, Columbia High School, East Greenbush; William Urban and Don Allen.

landscape as fast and furious as the most seasoned of tourists. In the summer and fall months of 1911, the correspondent's column was filled with the names of who had traveled where and who went with them. Whereas once city folk saw Voorheesville as God's little acre, Voorheesvillians now sight-saw the country wondering if they too could now find their own God's little acre–elsewhere.

To be sure, life changed between the two world wars. But its patterns continued to rest on essentially the same axis they had after the car came. But after World War II, when centralization arrived in full dress uniform, it waged an all-out-war on the local. The supermarket replaced the village grocery store, the old mills built before the turn of the century became too costly for the new corps of cost-effectiveness experts and were closed. Iron foundries grew old and obsolete, barrel factories were passed by as glass and plastic grew in favor.

The French have a familiar proverb, "Le plus ca change, le meme chose," which translates: "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Those who have personally felt the Voorheesville described in these pages, a place where life was lived from within, when community was enough in and of itself, can hardly be blamed if they give little credence to the French expression. For them, for their Voorheesville, the bustling little 19th century railroad town, the truth is closer to: "The more things changed, the more they passed away." But there was a railroad town here once and it's name was Voorheesville

APPENDIX A

Voorheesville's First Dwellers and the Van Bael Patent

The section of land that now comprises the village of Voorheesville had an extraordinary history for more than a century after it was first purchased in 1672 by a Dutch merchant, Jan Hendrickse Van Bael. This parcel, which later came to be known as the Van Bael patent, became famous because it served as the source of great controversy between the Van Rensselaer family and those who held title to the land since the late 17th century, namely the LaGrange and Veeder families.

The controversy arose because the patent in question, a square parcel 5 1/4 miles on the side, was located within Rensselaerswyck, the domain of the patroon. Beginning in the early part of the 18th century, the Van Rensselaers insisted that confirmation for the land had been wrongly granted to Van Bael when he purchased it from the Indians and, therefore, that its subsequent owners had no legal claim to it. Representatives of the patroon pointed to the patent of land that had been granted to the Van Rensselaer family in 1629, what was provisionally confirmed in 1664 and later fully confirmed in 1685.

The principal owners of the land at the time this controversy was raised and reached its peak were the LaGrange and Veeder families. These earliest of Albany County settlers had intermarried over the years and kept legal title to this sizeable piece of property along the Normanskill within their families. To substantiate their right to the land, these families pointed to the confirmation given Van Bael by the Governor of New York, Henry Lovelace, in 1672. Nevertheless, a legal dispute arose in the early 1700s that the Van Rensselaers pursued with the utmost seriousness, as is evident from the list of documents gathered as court materials for a grand and final hearing over the land more than a half century later.[1]

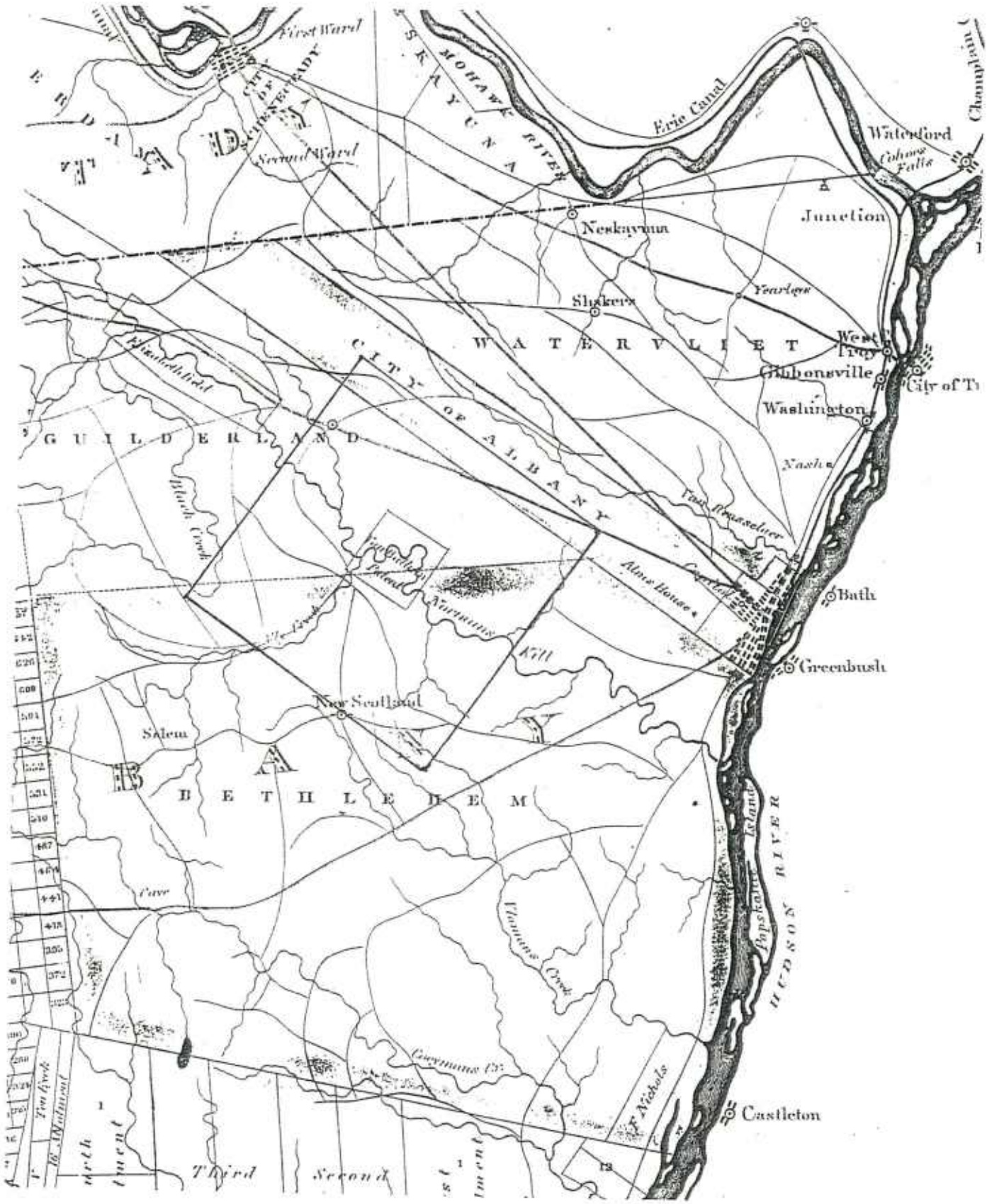
One of the most significant facets of the controversy over this piece of land has to do with the tenant status of its first white settlers. These settlers of the land that would later comprise a good part of the town of New Scotland, including Voorheesville, were from the earliest days exempt from the patroon system as we know it. Those who owned the patent were their own patroon so to speak, and those who settled on farms inside the patent bounds took out leases, not from the Van Rensselaers, but from the LaGrange-Veeder families. It is not as yet known what conditions these two families set for their tenants but, at the least, we know that these tenants lived free of the conditions the patroon set for his tenant farmers. And because these early New Scotland families leased farmland from within the boundaries of the Van Bael patent, and not from the patroon, they could have farmed and lived with a greater sense of independence.

In modern-day geography the patent in question originated at a point in the neighborhood of Russell Road and Western Avenue in Albany and extended northwest to Route 155 between Western and Washington Avenues in Guilderland. The boundaries then broke southwest at a right angle toward the hamlet of New Salem(the then Samuel Taylor farm), then at another right angle southeast in the direction of the New Scotland Presbyterian church toward Feura Bush and finally at a right angle northeast to the starting point. The patent was a sizeable piece of land containing 17,638 acres. It is not known where the often-quoted earlier figure of 69,000 acres comes from. A patent of that size would have been astronomical, close to 7 percent of all of Rensselaerswyck, and permission to purchase such a large parcel would not have been granted to anyone.

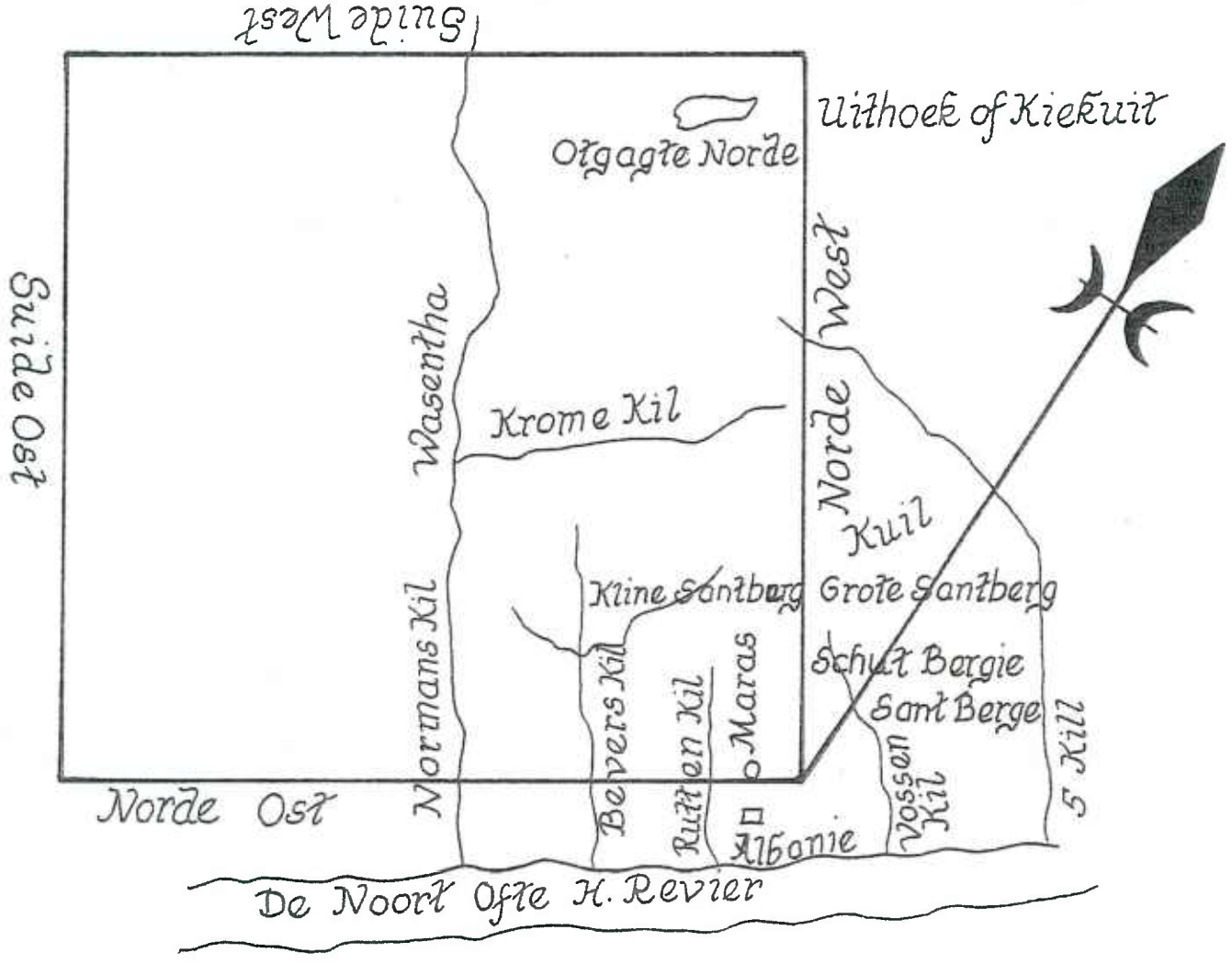
The purchasor, Jan Hendrickse Van Bael, had been a tailor by trade when he first arrived in the New World about 1657, later becoming a merchant. In 1670 he was appointed a magistrate to the court of Albany, Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady, a position he held until October 1672. It seems ironic that Van Bael, his wife and brother were acquaintances of the Van Rensselaer family, the Van Bael men involved in a number of business transactions with the patroon.[2] On July 18, 1672, while still serving in his capacity as a magistrate, Van Bael purchased the land in question from four Mohawk Indian chiefs. A certified copy of the original deed reads as follows:[3]

Deed from the Indians to Jan Hendrickse van Baal of land on the Normans Kill

Be it known to every one that we, the undersigned Mohawk Indians, Canaghko, Schaenweis, Conhowadadin, Sagoderiechta, lawful proprietors and owners, acknowledge in the presence of the honorable commissaries of this court that we have sold to and for the behoof of Jan Henderick van Baal, merchant, residing here, a certain parcel of low land, situated on both sides of a certain kill called by us, the vendors, the Wasentha, otherwise, the Normans Kill, with the woods, woodland, timber, mountains, mines, hills, kills, lakes, marshes and everything appertaining thereto, as the same lies in its square, beginning at the Sant Berg, where the burghers



The larger square is an approximation of the location and size of the original Van Bael patent. The smaller square is what remained of the patent after a legal battle was fought over ownership of the land. The larger square was added to the map of the counties of Albany and Schenectady done by David Burr in 1829 for illustration purposes.



A rendition of the original map of the Van Bael patent depicting its boundaries at the time of Van Bael's purchase from the Indians in 1672.

of Schagnegtadie, alias Albanie, daily haul their sand from, one hundred and thirty paces northeast of a round swamp, to the west of the city; thence running north-westerly to and including the Otgagtenonde, alias the Uithoek or Uitkiek (Out-hook or Look-out); thence, south-westerly the same distance;thence south-easterly equally far, and thence to the aforesaid Santberg, or place of beginning, without our having any further claim thereto in the least, we, the grantors, acknowledging that to our satisfaction we have been paid and satisfied therefor in full, from the first penny to the last;giving therefore *plenam actionem cessam* and full power to the above named Jan Henderik van Baal, his heirs or successors, or those who hereafter may obtain his right and title, to do with and dispose of the aforesaid land and its appurtenances as he might do with his own patrimonial property and effects;promising further that we shall nevermore do or allow anything to be done contrary hereto in any manner, under binding obligation as provided by law. Done in Albany, the 18th of July 1672, old style.

Signed and sealed in the presence of us:

Albert Ryckman

Jan Jacobsee Gardenir

Canaghko his mark (IHB)

Schaenwies his mark (IHB)

Conhowadadin (XX) (IHB)

Sagoderiechta (IHB)

The second page of the deed continues:

After the signing of the above deed, we, together with the vendors and the purchaser, went to the above

mentioned Santberg, just behind the city, one hundred and thirty paces northeast of the above mentioned swamp, and saw the vendors make delivery to the purchaser, Van Baal, by giving him a sod and a live currant twig;this being done because there are several *santbergen* (sand hills), large and small;thence we went along the *Makwas Pat* (Mohawk trail), in order definitely to locate the place of beginning, as may be seen on the map on the other side, which was explained to the grantors in our presence by the interpreter;whereupon, in addition to the payment, a gun,one fathom of black and one fathom of white wampum were presented to each of them by the said purchaser and which were received by them with many thanks, the 18th of July 1672.

Albert Ryckman
Jan Jacobsee Gardenir

To provide a better grasp of where this parcel ends, the creek that runs through the Hiawatha golf course on Route 155 in Guilderland is called the Kaikout (lookout) Kill. Clearly it was given its name because from the sand hills on the golf course near the apartment complex, a panoramic view of the Helderbergs is available to the interested viewer.

When James McClure, pastor of New Scotland Presbyterian Church, wrote his *History of the Presbyterian Church* in honor of the church's centennial in 1876 he addressed the question of Van Bael's original purchase. Clearly the ability of Van Bael to buy the land was a great puzzle to McClure for he asks: "How Van Bael could purchase and hold land which was covered by the Patroon's grant, no one explains."

But there is an explanation. Toward the end of the first Dutch period in New Netherland and in the early years of the English administration of the colony, a number of purchases of small pieces of land within the boundaries of Rensselaerswyck had been allowed. During Peter Stuyvesant's administration in the early 1660s the governor granted several such requests for the purchase of small pieces of land. Later, during the administration of Governors Nichols and Lovelace, a number of other purchases within the bounds of Rensselaerswyck were allowed.[4]

What may not be surprising is that these encroachments on the patroon's domain were made by magistrates or former magistrates. As already stated, Van Bael himself was in office at the time of his purchase. However, Teunis Slingerland's purchase of land along the Onesquethau Flats is one of the exceptions to the rule. Slingerland, nor his son-in-law Johannes Appel, a co-purchaser of the tract, had ever served as magistrate. But whether bought by public officials or not, these limited land encroachments ceased only when the boundaries of Rensselaerswyck were confirmed for good by Governor Dongon on November 4, 1685.

Needless to say, these permitted purchases within the domain galled the Van Rensselaers.[5] Meanwhile, the Van Bael parcel had gone through a number of hands until it wound up with the Veeder-LaGrange families in the early 1680s. Because the land bounded both sides of the creek, those who lived within the patent were referred to at some point as the Normans Kill people.[6]It was with the so-called heirs of the patent and those who took out leases from them that the patroon was about to pick his legal bone.

Before describing the outcome of the patroon's challenge, let's trace the sale of the land from Van Bael down to the LaGrange-Veeder families and clarify a lineage that is often catalogued incorrectly.[7]

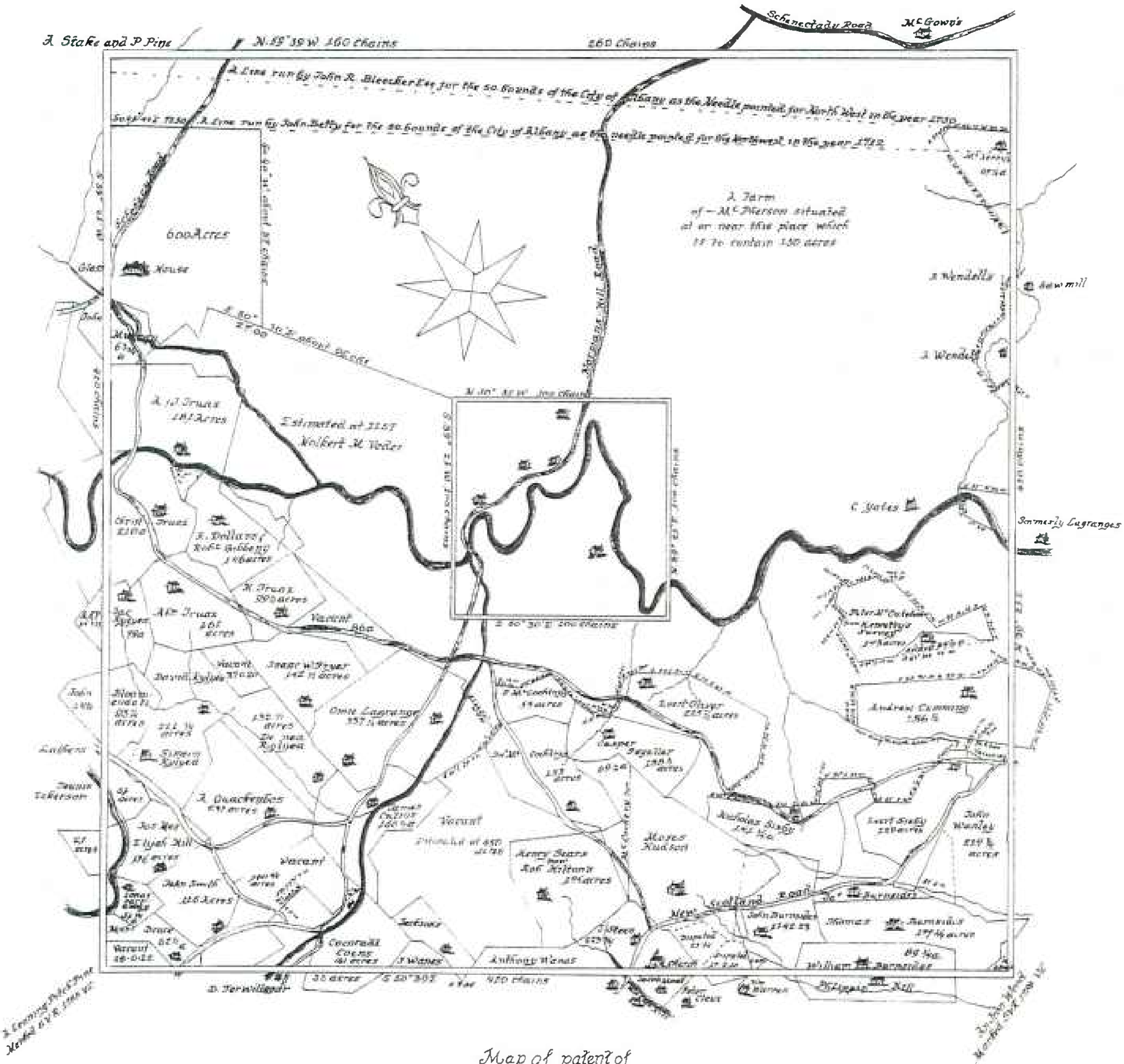
When Van Bael died, the administrators of his estate sold the patent (except for four morgens which were retained in the estate) to Hendrick Willemse and Jan Andriesse Bratt, the son of Albert Andriesse Bratt, the Norman after whom the Normanskill was given its name nearly a half century before. Willemse then sold his half of the patent to Jan Casperse (Hallenbeck) who later sold it to Jan Hendrickse Vrooman who then sold the property to Omy LaGrange, the first of the LaGranges to settle along the Normanskill.

The other half of the patent went from Jan Albertse Bratt to Jacob Casperse (Hallenbeck) the brother of Jan Casperse mentioned above. Jacob Casperse sold the land to Symon Volckertse (Veeder), the first Veeder in the New World, one of the early settlers of Schenectady and the first Veeder to settle along the Normanskill.

The four morgens that were separated out during the original purchase were bought later by Omie LaGrange and Johannes Simonse Veeder (son of Symon the baker) in 1716 to complete the purchase of the entire patent.

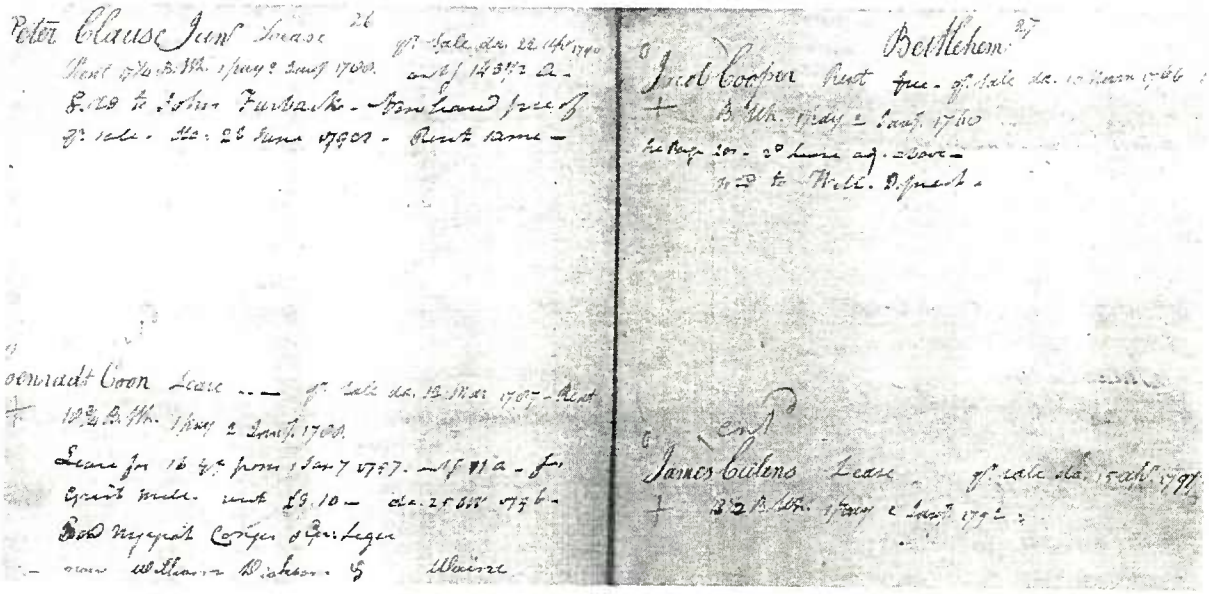
This series of transactions,extended from the mid 1670s to the early 1680s. Veeder had his deed in June 26, 1683 and LaGrange his in September 8, 1686, but LaGrange had already been living along the Normanskill for three years when the deed was legally transferred. When Omy LaGrange signed a contract for his half of the patent with Hendrickse Vrooman in February 9, 1683, included in the sale was a house and a barn along with the palisades. This house and barn were more than likely already on the property when Vrooman bought the parcel from Jacob Casperse Hallenbeck. From court records we know that the Hallenbecks had settled "on the kill" at an earlier time.

And when Symon Volckertse "the baker" moved onto his half of the land, there was also a house and barn on it. These buildings are not mentioned in the earlier contracts, which allows us to conclude that Jan Casperse Hallenbeck built them. From all available evidence then, it seems the Hallenbecks were the first non-Indian settlers on the land that would later comprise New Scotland. The LaGranges and Veeders are sometimes considered the first settlers, sometimes Slingerland because of his purchase further south. Most likely Slingerland never made it out to the Onesquethau Flats



Map of patent of
Jan Hendrick Van Bael
1788

Constance Burns



A copy of Conrad Coon's lease from the Van Rensselaer's for a piece of property on the Vly (off present-day Maple Avenue in Voorheesville) in 1787. Coon ran both a grist and saw mill along the creek. Copy of lease taken from record book of leases for land in Bethlehem, 1732-1818.

to live, his son-in-law Johannes Appel having located there sometime in 1701.

As far as the struggle to regain the Van Bael patent goes, it is not until the LaGrange-Veeder families were living on the land that the Van Rensselaers began to go after it. We can surmise that action began in the early part of the 18th century, for the two families sought a reconfirmation of the original purchase in 1711. It's worth noting that about the same time Johannes Appel hired Nicholas Schuyler to survey his land on the Onesquethau flats further south (1719), perhaps apprehensive that the parcel sold to him and his father-in-law, Teunis, was also in jeopardy of being taken by the Van Rensselaers.

Part of the reason for the patroon going after the Van Bael land at this time was economic. Members of the LaGrange family had built a saw mill on the palisades fall (near the junction of Normanskill and Krumkill Roads) about 1720. As settlers were certain to move in that direction later, the mill would be a grand source of income. But there was also the Van Rensselaers' sense of offended honor or pride, they believing that all the land within the boundaries of the manor belonged to them long before Van Bael's invasion. But the struggle for the patent began before the mill was built, probably when the reconfirmation was sought in June 1711. Anxiety did not abate for the LaGrange-Veeder families because confirmation was sought a second time in April 1739.

By 1743 the two contesting parties found themselves in court for the first time over the patent's ownership. Judgement must have gone in favor of the occupants of the land because the Van Rensselaers were to continue their battle for more than a quarter of a century. They engaged in surveys, took prepared testimony, prepared every conceivable document in preparation for regaining the land through a second suit.[8]

Again, for the Van Rensselaers, with the French-Indian menace out of the way by 1749, each day without their resumed ownership was viewed as lost income. At that time Albany County began to grow in leaps and bounds. From 1756 to 1771 the population in the county increased 245 percent. With the county as the new frontier, the Van Rensselaers wanted to be in possession of all the land that was rightfully theirs so as to be able to supply more leases to the generations of farmers to come.[9]

The controversy heated up to the point where no resolution seemed possible. Therefore the two parties agreed by law on April 1, 1775 to submit to a hearing regarding the ownership of at least a certain part of the land.[10] The innermost mile and a quarter square was no longer questioned by the Van Rensselaers. The hearing was held and a judgement made on May 27, 1775 in favor of the Van Rensselaer family, they being awarded all the land except the center square. That was the only part of the Van Bael lands that remained with the LaGrange-Veeder families.

McClure says that members of the two families asserted that the victorious patroon had bribed one of the hearing officers. There is no hard evidence as yet to support this claim. However, there was a change in one of the original five hearing officers assigned to the case. That change could have made the difference in its outcome and the course of the future development of the town of New Scotland.

According to McClure, in his church history account of the matter, there were 63 families who had taken out leases from the LaGrange-Veeder families on the

Normans Kill before the judgement of the hearing officers. McClure says that on July 6, 1776 these families found themselves with a new landlord (Van Rensselaer) from whom they began to take out leases immediately.[11]

One tenant was Conrad Coon (Koens) who lived along the Normanskill while the contest was going on. By 1787 Coon had moved from along the banks of the Normanskill to the banks of the Vly. There he leased property from the patroon (on what would later be Maple Avenue in Voorheesville)and built a saw and grist mill as early as 1787. Toward the early part of the next century this mill was leased to Uzziah Conger and during the second decade of the 18th century was transformed for a time into a carding mill.[12]

This mill must have been a central meeting place for many of the area's early settlers. By the end of the 18th century, a good part of the land within the 5 1/4 mile square of the original patent had been leased but there were still large portions without inhabitants. That would not be the case 50 years later when most of the former Van Bael patent lands were under cultivation by new farmers.

Notes

Chapter One: The Beginnings of a Railroad Town
The Railroad Arrives

1. See the early history of the Albany and Susquehanna in A Century of Progress 1823-1923, J.B. Lyons Co. 1925 and H. T. Dana, Stray Poems and Early History of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad, York, PA, 1903.

2. See Albany Argus, second edition, September 16, 1863 for a fairly detailed account of the day's events.

3. The Hudson River Railroad, which later became part of the New York Central, had been in operation on the east side of the Hudson since the 1850s. The Erie had been available to farmers since its completion in 1851.

4. George Tickner Curtis, "An Inquiry Into the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad Litigation of 1869 and Mr. Dudley Field's Connection Therewith" in Hicks (ed.), *High Finance in the Sixties*, New Haven:Yale Univ. Press, 1929.

5. Most are familiar with Jay Gould for his wheeling and dealing in the railroad industry throughout his life and his alleged responsibility for the Black Friday gold scandal on September 24, 1869. Few are aware that this man whose personal estate was valued at $72,000,000 when he died in 1892, was a surveyor and census taker of the towns of Albany County when only 18. Gould walked the streets and roads of New Scotland gathering information for the map which he published in 1854. New Scotland resident and one-time state historian, the late Arthur Pound, wrote of Gould and his map in his book of poems Mountain Morning (Albany:The Argus Press, 1932). The historian, who had a copy of the large wall-sized Gould map in his office at home, noted that Gould, toward the end of his life, was quite embarrassed over his earlier work as surveyor and census taker. The robber baron, therefore, tried to buy up as many copies of the map as he could find in order to burn them.

6. J. Leonard Bachelder in his "Trip Brochure and Rate Description, February 23, 1985," Secretary Massachusets Bay Railroad Enthusiasts, 1985, states that in July 1866 the D&H had contracted to complete the A&S road to Nineveh where the D&H started to build from Pennsylvania to meet it. The D&H had good relations with the A&S but taking no chances took a perpetual lease of the road on February 24, 1870. Shortly after, it converted the A&S track to standard gauge. The A&S remained under lease to the D&H until 1945 when it was formally merged into the parent company.

The initial schedule for the A&S service on its completion to Binghamton (January 14, 1869) showed three trains a day each way plus an additional run between Albany and Oneonta.

Four trains on weekdays and two on Sundays served the entire line in 1908; two daily operated with a cafe parlor car. One even carried an Albany-Chicago sleeping car in connection with the Erie Railroad.

In addition, there was a weekday local to Oneonta, a daily train to Cobleskill, and six weekday and one Sunday locals between Albany and Altamont. Eight years later the Binghamton service was the same except that there was no longer any Chicago sleeping car. Four weekday Altamont locals provided the only shorter run service.

The 1936 schedule offered a daily Albany-Binghamton train with a cafe parlor car and a weekday coach-only round trip. The Altamont locals had long since been discontinued. The parlour car had been taken off by 1947, but the schedule remained the same.

By 1951, there was just a single round trip, leaving Binghamton in the morning and returning in the early evening. It ran in this fashion until 1963.

7. Diary of Vanderzee LaGrange 1865-1927; an edited copy of the original done by and in the possession of Martha Slingerland of Delmar, New York.

8. It has often been suggested that Voorheesville, when it became the junction of two railroads, was called Susquehanna Junction but there is no evidence to support such a claim. When the A&S was finally taken over by the D&H, however, it was known as the Susquehanna Division of the D&H.

9. Arthur C. Mack, "White Elephant Railroad: Ghosts of the White Elephant", August 11, 1955.

10. See Bachelder note 6 above who says that the New York, West Shore and Buffalo, which was incorporated in 1880, was completed as far as Syracuse in 1883 and all the way to Buffalo a year later. The West Shore finally succumbed in 1886 having been leased by the New York Central. It maintained a more or less independent identity for many years as did other components of the New York Central system.

In 1916 the West Shore operated six trains on weekdays and five on Sundays between Weehawken and Albany. All passenger service west of Albany had disappeared from the West Shore by 1936. In that year there were still six trains on weekdays to Albany and four on Sundays.

As late as 1954 two trains daily still ran to Albany over the West Shore. There was only one left in the summer of 1957 and there were still a few additional trains to Newburgh and Kingston, but by then the West Shore passenger service was almost entirely made up of commuter trains between Weehawken and West Havestraw in New York's Rockland County.

All passenger service beyond West Havestraw was abandoned in 1958; the commuter trains lasted only until 1960.

An Agricultural Hamlet Grows

1. See H.T. Dana, above.

2. Russell H. Anderson. New York "Agriculture Meets the West 1830-1850" Wisconsin Magazine of History Vol XVI (December 1932) pp. 163-198.

3. New York State Census, 1865.

4. Dennis Sullivan, "Charles Bender and the Bender Melon Farm: A Local History" Altamont Enterprise August 28 and September 4, 1986 editions.

5. Rolla Tryon, Household Manufacture in the United States 1640-1860; Rodney C. Loehr "Self Sufficiency on the Farm" Agricultural History Vol XVI (April 1952) pp. 37-41.

6. See Hudson-Mohawk Geneological and Family Memoirs (supervisory editor Cuyler Reynolds) Lewis Historical Publishing Co. New York 1911. Vol 4. 1181-1182. The genealogical sketch of the Hilton family states that when James Hilton (born January 5, 1780, died November 11,1845) took over the family farm, which was held in fee simple, he paid off the debt to the Van Rensselaers. When the deed was delivered to the Hilton Family, it was accompanied by a letter from the Van Rensselaers stating that among all their vast possessions in the domain, there was not a farm equaling the Hilton farm for fertility and capable handling. The letter or certificate was delivered with a gift set of six silver spoons as a token of the Van Rensselaers' appreciation of James and his family.

7. Arthur Schlesinger. *Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1865-1940,* New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941, p.220.

Chapter Two: The Golden Era Begins

What's In A Name?

1. See *Andrew Boyd's Business Directory and Gazetteer of the Towns on the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad 1868-1869.* Although Boyd lists New Scotland (Voorheesville), reading through the list of business names provides little indication that Voorheesville existed. There is more information offered about New Salem and Clarksville than the Voorheesville area.

2. James Reid served as supervisor of the town from 1833 to 1838. He was one of eight children of George Reid who came to America from Scotland before 1785 and settled in the town of New Scotland.

Alexander, James' brother, moved to the town of Berne while still young where Reidsville was named in his honor. Through his efforts a post office was established and he was named first postmaster. He also ran a store and hotel.

William J. Reid, Alexander's son (born March 6, 1835) was a justice of the peace for 20 years, a justice of sessions for four and was elected as supervisor of the town from 1886 to 1888.

James Reid bought a parcel of land in 1819 in the Voorheesville area (still Bethlehem then). It was situated to the east of the present day grade school where the firehouse stands. On the eastern side of School Road his property extended from Maple Avenue to Prospect Street.

Farlin Who?

1. See New York Sunday Times August 13, 1972 for a note on the change of names along various railroad lines. Such changes were a frequent enough occurence on the Long Island Railroad, for example, Baldwin to Milburne, Ridgewood to Wantagh, etc. that in 1892 residents complained to railroad officials of being confused. The New York Times article reported at the time that, "many Long Islanders do not at present know where they live."

Communities used to try to get their two cents in with the railroads as well, as to where the lines and depots should go. If the railroad was sufficiently annoyed, out of pique the road's president might punish the vociferous community. On the Long Island Railroad, for example, Cold Spring Harbor got no station and Huntington Station's depot was erected two miles south of Huntington village.

In correspondence dated April 8, 1987 railroad historian Paul Brustman says: "There was at one time on the Pennsylvania Railroad commuter line to Paoli a station between Ardsmore and Rosemont which was used by a number of complainers. The President, I believe it was Cassatt became annoyed and ordered that

no trains stop there thereafter. I know Cassatt was the one who had a big argument with Western Union. So he ordered all Western Union wires cut down overnight on PRR."

2. See David Addison Harsha. *Noted Living Albanians and State Officials*. Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co. 1891, pp.111-117.

3. Albany County Certificates of Incorporation, Book 3, 238-239.

4. Between 1860 and 1890 the number of U.S. post offices increased from 28,498 to 63,401. With this flood of new offices came all sorts of problems with their naming, not only frequent changes in name but the spelling of towns as well. For example, in February 1890, five prosperous farm families in Huntington County, Pennsylvania (Anderson, Isenberg, Taylor, Crum and Henderson) wanted the post office named after them. Since they could not reach any agreement about a name, they took the first letter of each and the post office was called AITCH.

In an attempt to bring some order to the situation, the Post Office Department began to issue directives in the 1890s. Perhaps the most important was Postmaster General Miscellaneous Order 114 issued April 9, 1894 which stated: " To remove a cause of annoyance to the Department and injury to the Postal Service in the selection of names for newly established post offices, it is hereby ordered that from this date only short names or names of one word will be accepted. (Names of post offices will only be changed for reasons satisfactory to the Department.)"

5. Both copies of The Farlin News-Letter are part of the historical archives of the village of Voorheesville.

Hay and Straw Market

1. Jacob S. Markle "History of New Scotland" in George Rogers Howell and Jonathan Tenney, *Bi-Centennial History of Albany. Albany:* W. W. Munsell and Co. 1886, pp. 889-908.

2. Amasa Parker. *Landmarks of Albany County*. Syracuse: D. Mason and Co. 1897, pp. 545-557.

A Mill and Apple Cider Town

1.Of the Cummings' quarry business Arthur Gregg wrote: "Daily horse-drawn wagons made their way to the depot. Brakemen had to strain to hold them as they wound their way down the New Salem hills with their loads of sidewalk squares, hearthstones, building blocks, and some slabs so huge they came one to a wagon. The brakeman's job was one of raw, straining muscle to keep the laden wagons from running right over their own teams on the steep inclines. Altamont and Voorheesville sidewalks were laid with the rock." Altamont Enterprise, April 6, 1979. Clearly, this was gruelling work for the horses, some of whom did not fare well in the hotter months of the year. In the heat of mid August 1896, for example, one of Cummings' horses dropped dead on the road on the way from their quarry in Reidsville to the village.

2. James and John Cummings were born in the town of Berne June 25, 1857 and May 20, 1859 respectively. Their father, John, was an Irish immigrant born in Clonmell, Ireland, in 1829. In their mid-20s the brothers became partnered in a farming and quarrying business. After seven years they dissolved their partnership. James remained at the quarry and John moved to Albany and engaged in a stone business there (1891-1895). The two brothers shipped over 150,000 square feet of flagging stone a year to distant parts of the country. According to some, they, not Frank Bloomingdale, were the wealthiest residents in the village .

3.The directors of the Empire Cider and Vinegar Company in addition to A. Elmer Cory were Charles Abrams, Albert Goodwin, James Tallmadge Jr. and Charles H. Baker, all with Albany addresses. See Albany County Certificates of Incorporation, Book 5, 128-130.

Chapter Three: An Enterprising Business Community

A Canning Factory

1. About 1896 a dollar could buy a screen door at Joslin's hardware store; coffee sold at 22, 25, 28, 32 and 35 cents per pound (the very best at 38 and 40 cents) at J. B. Wands' grocery store and a barrel of Urban's Best Flour cost $4 at Leroy Schell's retail store.

Cigar-Making

1. George Hallenbeck's father was named Jacob and came from Guilderland Center but the family does not seem to have been related to Bloomingdale's former partner. Hallenbeck began making cigars at the age of 17. After 12 years as a journeyman cigar maker, he moved to Guilderland Center in 1886 and opened up a cigar factory. There he had between 7 and 16 men working for him, with two men on the road covering 18 counties. Before moving to Voorheesville, Hallenbeck was said to have had the leading business in Guilderland Center with an annual output of three quarters of a million. To be sure, he, Leroy Schell and Morris Harris swapped stories about the making of cigars.

Malleable Iron Works

1. According to Marion Griesman Campbell, her father built 10 houses on the west side of North Main Street, later bought five or six on the east side and four in the fields near the West Shore RR. These were used by foundry workers.

Encouraging Thriftiness

1. John Guffin, *History of Voorheesville Savings and Loan Association.* 11 pp. nd.

2. Over the years the amount of loans made by the bank increased though not always year by year. In 1920 the loans amounted to $19,000; in 1927 that amount had risen to $27,850 and in 1938 the board approved $25,900. By 1944 that figure was at $114,000 and in 1952 at $160,937.

Chapter Four: Village Hospitality
Taking A Vacation

1. There was one other major reason people traveled to the country at this time: health. Since the Civil War era, there was a reawakening of consciousness about the environment's influence on health (and sickness). Country air was associated with health as city air was with sickness. At least in the quiet of a country boarding house or country inn, a city person could escape for a time the pollution of coal-burning factories and overcrowded living conditions. Indeed the railroads in their travel brochures would play upon these issues, reminding potential travelers they ought to catch a breath of fresh air and the railroad was the fastest and most economical means to get it. See Betsy Blackmar, "Going to the Mountains: A Social History" in John Margolies et al., *Resorts of the Catskills,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, pp. 75-78.

2. The railroad was to have such an effect whenever it made its way to scenic areas. In the Catskills, for example, not too long after the Ulster and Delaware began operation, hotels and boarding houses sprung up along its route. See Roland Van Zandt, *The Catskill Mountain House,* New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1966, pp. 225-241; see Betsy Blackmar above at pp. 71-98.

3. See, for example, *West Shore Railroad. Summer Homes and Excursions. Embracing Lake, River, Mountain and Seaside Resorts Accessible by the Picturesque Double Track West Shore Railroad* [n.p.] 1888.

4. Travel guides did not make their entry on the scene with the railroad. They existed during the heyday of the stagecoach. For example, there was the *Guide to Burr's Map of New York and Steamboat, Stage and Canal Register for the Year 1834* (J. H. Colton and Co., NY) and *The Traveller's Guide through the State of New York-for 1836* (J. Disturnell, pub. New York)

Morris Harris' Place

1. From time to time a band of Gypsies would travel through the village. They might set up camp on the outskirts of the village between Voorheesville and New Salem as they did from time to time on the Avery Fitch, McMillen and Severson farms. At other times they would camp in the woods along the road between the village and New Scotland. Occasionally they would sell herbal concoctions to residents. This was also true of a group of Kickapoo Indians when they came into town. Some would camp on the Coughtry (formerly Voorhees) property while others in the band stayed at the Harris House. Each night of the week they would entertain as well as advertise and dispense their medicines (for a price).

2. During the late 19th century a good percentage of railroad workers were of Italian descent. When the railroad sent a crew to work in the village, the paper did not report that a railroad crew arrived but a crew of Italians, as in May 1898 when 56 Italians arrived to gravel the tracks along the WSRR. The paper added that they were quartered in freight cars.

The prejudice that existed toward Italians at this time went beyond ostracism. In October 1893, for example, the paper reported that two area residents made a raid on what was known as "Italian Allie" on a Saturday night and that arrests were to follow. In July of the following year, two other men who were drunk went to the "Italian Quarters" and stripped and beat an 18-year-old boy who was said to be small for his age. Arrests were to be made in that case as well.

At other times the paper reported that much raucous behavior and fights took place in the Italian quarter, in living conditions that are today's equal to slums.

Fryer Himself

1. Most likely the barrels made at this cooperage were the large, steel-banded type that were used to cart produce such as melons, potatoes or apples. Those used at the cider mill were sturdier, of the ale barrel or hogshead type. They were probably purchased in Albany, one of the leading makers of ale barrels and hogsheads in the country.

Fryer had a cooper shop at various times, once about 1894 and again in 1898. In August 1901, John Giffin purchased machinery to start a barrel factory but there is no mention in the paper of one being constructed until 1907. In October 1907 three coopers were turning out between 1,200 and 1,400 barrels a week. The cooperage was dearly needed for prior to its arrival, farmers always

seemed to be short of barrels. In 1888 when Rufus Flansburgh was planning to sell apples he had to purchase 1,100 barrels out of town. In October 1902, during the apple harvest, farmers were fully frustrated because they were unable to pick their crop having no barrels to pack the apples in.

2. A December 1888 edition of the paper printed a "best of" list for the village. Evidently the list was made up by villagers themselves, most likely while they sat around in one of the grocery stores one evening. While the list might have been made partly in jest, it also contains a grain of truth and is valuable for the light it sheds on various people at the time. George Hackney was considered the oldest; Conrad Fryer the richest; John C. Wormer most patriotic; Dr. Oliver the best checkers player; Issac Pearl the best sporting man; William Swift the most eloquent; George Hess the sassiest; Frank Reid, best fighter; James Goodfellow, silliest; Frank Kaiser, best musician; "Billy" Ferguson, most harmless; Abram Relyea, best politician; F. B. LaGrange, most free-hearted; John H. Shaffer, happiest and "Garry" Hotaling, best-looking.

The Boarding House

1. S. V. R. Hoes was the attorney-guardian-administrator for Charlotte E. Stevens and Laura Akin Stevens, the children of Royal Stevens (died February 7, 1877) and Eleanor Stevens (died January 24,1880). The Stevens family had in 1876 bought the Voorhees property from William J, Traver. Royal left the property to his wife Eleanor when he died and she left it to the children upon her death, one third to Laura Akin and two-thirds to Charlotte. Hoes invested the monies of his two wards in tailoring and clothing but lost it all. Later, in a court fight over the property the court decreed (March 1, 1882) that it all belonged to Charlotte. The story goes that Charlotte later took in railroad workers, one of whom was Robert Coughtry whom she married. They had three children: Royal Stevens, Laura and Gertrude Coughtry.

2. See various addresses Arthur Gregg gave to local community groups in the 1950s and 1960s such as the New Scotland Town Historical Society (1974); and Voorheesville High School Men's Club (January 27,1954) and the Voorheesville Parent-Teachers Association (nd).

3. Larger boarding houses often had some basic recreation facilities even if only a croquet court. But limited facilities and limitations on getting around could and did get to some guests after a time. Blackmar notes: "Many of the farms and houses offered only the view and the well-beaten walk to the town drugstore to amuse their more active guests. One former guest remembers the excruciating tedium of the unbroken day's sequence from the dining room to the verandah to the drugstore to the dining room to the post office to the verandah to the dining room to the verandah to bed." See Blackmar above in the section on The Village Hotel on p. 80.

Chapter Five: A Note on Provisions
Groceries and Meats

1. John Wands' (formerly William Swift's) store was the longest continuously running grocery store in Voorheesville. The store ran for over a century, having finally been closed by Michael Ricci in December 1987. The Ricci family themselves ran the store for over a half century.

2. Levi Wood had W. T. Shaw as a partner for nearly 10 years. In April 1903, H. V. A. Spoore became his partner. Later Spoore took over the business from Wood. Wood was another of the village's inventors, having invented and manufactured the "Night Commander Acetylene Gas Lamp."

3. Marion Vosburgh indicated in a letter that: "Bewsher's store seemed dismal to me because it was dark and old fashioned and didn't seem to do a lively business. I didn't go to it often, and don't remember seeing other customers there when I did."

4. As there was a tradition of blacksmithing in the Relyea family, the Livingstons seemed to have had one in butchering because in the 1850 U.S. census 19-year-old John Livingston is listed as a butcher.

5. See *The American Heritage Cookbook* and *Illustrated History of American Eating and Drinking* (eds. of American Heritage). The editors relate that in cities there were numerous oyster bars, but if time did not allow, a tray of oysters might be purchased from one of the many street peddlers selling oysters; it's estimated that 50,000 oysters were consumed daily in New York's Fulton Fish Market. pp.352-353.

Bread and Lunch

1. This was the era of specialization as well. An April 1890 article in the paper noted that because of increasing specialization: "The 'family doctor' of the old time, who attended a family from birth to death and who was the repository of all its woes and weaknesses, is no longer a real existence. And the average well-doctored mortal who wishes to be reasonably careful of his health finds himself strangely divided among a half dozen specialists. To one he entrusts the care of his eyes, to another his throat, to a third his digestion, to a fourth his nerves, and, if it please heaven to afflict him with more disorders than these, he finds a 'specialist' waiting down the road

to welcome each one."

2. See *The American Heritage Cookbook* at pp. 348, 349, 354, 355. The editors say that as cities grew, working men and women found it not only more convenient but cheaper to eat their lunch at short-order restaurants. Restaurants specializing in low-priced meals and fast service became increasingly popular.

The Village Milk Route

1. See U. P. Hedrick. *A History of Agriculture in the State of New York.* p. 366. Hedrick says: "That milk should not be used from sick cows was very well known, but gargety milk and that from tubercular cows was everywhere sold. Few, if they knew, acted upon the knowledge that typhoid fever, small pox, and other contagious diseases could be spread by milk. Wood was the common container for milk 50 years ago[circa 1880]although writers were calling attention to the unsanitary qualities of wood and were recommending metal equipment."

Ice, Coal and Lumber

1. See Dewey Hill and Elliott Hughes. *Ice Harvesting In Early America* p. 11. "When ice was used in drinking water, every possible precaution was taken to keep ice sanitary. When a horse urinated on the ice or had a bowel movement, the driver called the boy pulling the 'shine sleigh'. This sleigh was a small wooden sleigh with a waterproof lining and was used to carry the horse droppings and urine off the ice. The 'shine boy' had to scrape the ice at the scene of activity, and then he poured formaldehyde on the spot, thus hoping to kill any germs or contamination that was left on the ice. The name 'shine sleigh' was given to this job, because if the droppings were not picked up immediately, they would leave a shiny spot on the ice that was noticeable."

Chapter Six: Everyday Social Life
Collective Work and Play

1. Drs. Oliver, Joslin and Shaw not only filled in for each other but at one point agreed to charge the same basic fees. In December 1906 they made it known that they were charging 75 cents and up for an office visit, one dollar for house calls in the village, and a proportionate mileage outside the village. The fee to New Salem was $1.50 and a double fee was charged for all night calls.

Weddings and Socials

1. Following are the gift lists for the two weddings described in the text. They are included here for the possible insight they might provide into the kind of life the new bride and groom lived at the start of their marriage.

At the Fuller-McMillen wedding the gifts were: a counterpane; cotton sheets; pillow and blue spread; oak rocker ; piano lamp; counterpane; hand stitched towel; a half dozen silver knives; butter knife; silver tea pot; silver fruit dish; a half dozen silver forks; a half dozen silver forks; 3 teaspoons; 2 napkin rings; fruit knives; pillow and blue spread; silver syrup cup; silver butter dish and butter knife; lace spread and shams; rug; a half dozen laundered shirts; rug; comfortable; painted jardiniere; table cloth and napkins; a half dozen pepper and salts; Swiss clock; mirror; lithograph picture; mirror; table cloth; carving knife and fork; silver butter and dish; vases; berry spoons; water set; china tea set; card receiver; a half dozen teaspoons; nut picks and cracker; a dozen napkins; $5.00; olive dish; damask table cloth and napkins; $1.00; solid marble clock; pair rugs; bed spread and check for $25.00; marble clock; $10.00; cake basket; butter knife; oak chair; pair of chairs; ebony clock.

At the Smith-Wormer wedding the gifts were: extension table; $15.00; 130 piece set of dishes[from Frank Bloomingdale]; French clock; dozen silver spoons; silver butter knife and sugar spoon; silver fruit dish and berry spoon; set of sad irons; rocking chair; $3.00; dozen napkins; picture; rocking chair and clothes wringer; quilt and pair of towels; $25.00; silver butter dish; pickle castor; silver sugar spoons; lamp; tumblers; $5.00; $3.00; pair of rose blankets; coffee pot; pair towels; tea pot; $3.00; silver butter knife; $5.00; $3.00; silver tea spoons; $5.00; $2.00; dozen silver forks; silver spoon; $5.00; $10.00; fruit basket; $1.00; album; pair towels; picture; picture; picture; six fruit plates and two platters; easel.

2. At the time of the children's deaths, there was no undertaker in the village. The first undertaker to open a business in the village was Charles Lloyd in January 1895. The Lloyd business was taken over by Joseph Bartlett in January 1898. Later the Brunk brothers became the village undertakers, maintaining a business in the village for over a half a century.

Then There Was Baseball

1. There was an earlier athletic club in the village, begun in the Methodist Church hall in November 1905. Organized by a number of young men in the congregation, the club was open on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Only those 15 years and older were allowed to join. Dumb bells, jumping, boxing, Indian clubs and a punching bag were available to those who joined.

Wanting a Place to Read

1. The Bay View Club was clearly the most intellectual

of social groups in the village. The study group was begun in Voorheesville on October 11, 1904, by May Daring, Lavinia Joslin and Mary Vosburgh. May Daring was the club's first president. The club was part of a national group with headquarters in Detroit, Michigan. Each month, club members would meet in different homes to discuss fairly heady topics such as Russian culture. Each member was required to prepare a short paper on some aspect of the month's scheduled topic.

Chapter Seven: Public Services and Government

Incorporation

1. We do have some sense of who voted against incorporation. On the one hand we have the list of the 34 who petitioned the town for incorporation and on the other the names of the 60 who voted in the election. By a process of subtraction (assuming those who signed the petition also voted the same way) and a few educated guesses, we can frame a pretty good picture of who voted against the proposition. Many who did vote against did come from families who had long histories in the town of New Scotland and Bethlehem before that.

2. Brother of John D. White, the Altamont attorney who came to the village to discuss the legal issues related to incorporation.

A Government Is Established

1. The names of both Rufus Flansburgh and Albram Relyea have been mentioned many times throughout. Both were vital forces in the community, among the dozen or so core people who made things happen in the village. Flansburgh was basically a farmer, dealing to a large extent in horses and cattle. He ran his grocery store on Main Street for only three years (1890-1893) which he sold to Levi Wood. Relyea was a blacksmith early on for a time, later ran a meat market in the village and still later engaged in carpentry. He built the Presbyterian Church in Voorheesville, several prominent residences and a number of stores. He was elected justice of the peace in the town in 1880, the first Democratic justice elected in 30 years.

Roads and Sidewalks

1. See U. P. Hedrick above at p. 182.

2. See William Mitchell Gillespie. *A Manual of the Principles and Practice of Road-Making; comprising the Location, Construction and Improvement of Roads (Common, Macadam, Paved, Plank, etc.) and Railroads,* 1847 first edition. p. 231; Gillespie describes the construction of a plank road in his manual of road making as follows: "In the most generally approved system, two parallel rows of small sticks of timber (called indifferently stupers, stringers or sills) are embedded in the road, 3 or 4 feet apart. Planks, 8 feet long and 3 or 4 inches thick, are laid upon these sticks, across them at right angle to their direction. A side track of earth, to turn out upon, is carefully graded. Deep ditches are dug at each side, to ensure perfect drainage; and thus is formed a plank road."

3. By the first decade of the 20th century, turnpike and plank roads were beginning to see their day. The Great Western Turnpike Company (Western Avenue) was purchased by Abel I. Culver in June 1906 for $12,000. Culver then abolished the toll gates. It was the end of an era when Culver bought the road. The Great Western Turnpike, which went between Albany and Buffalo, was built by five companies between 1799 and 1814. For many years this turnpike was a much-traveled road. Teamsters brought huge loads of tan bark, cheese, butter, hay, grain and vegetables to the east. They went back with guns, knives, scythes and implements of husbandry as well as sugar, spices, rum and products of New England looms. Great flocks of turkeys, droves of pigs and herds of cattle were also part of the long procession.

4. For an extensive discussion of the building and maintenance of roads and bridges see the *Highway Manual of the State of New York Published in Pursuance of Chapter 655 of the Laws of 1893.* Albany: James B. Lyon, 1893.

5. In winter, slush became mud's unfailing ally. In February 1900, residents became so frustrated with the mud and slush conditions near the depot that they complained to the railroad company. They said that passengers getting off the train often lost a rubber in the slush and had to fish it out of the wintery slop. And to boot, there were no lights. Moreover, the complaint continued, once passengers got off the train, they had great difficulty getting to main street because they were walled in by a line of freight cars on the switch.

Chapter Eight: Religious and Moral Influences

The Society of Methodists

1. See *Methodist Bicentennial 1784-1984. Historic Outline of the First United Methodist Church of Voorheesville 1815-1984* prepared by the Historical Committee 1956 by Carlton E. Harvey, Sr. and Marjorie A. Hayner; updated for Bicentennial of American Methodism, 1984 by Rachel Harvey and James Seay.

A Church on Main Street

1. From 1945 to 1946 church membership had dropped from 97 to 88. In his annual report of March 31, 1945 the Rev. Elmer T. Schick, the supply who had been called to

the church in January 1944, stated that the Men's Club had been reorganized and that a Junior Christian Society had been organized. There were signs that the congregation was trying to rejuvenate itself. But in the same report Schick suggested that "the laymen assume more of the leadership" of the church.

At a special meeting called the following November a vote was taken to accept Schick's resignation as supply. Rev, William J. Clark served as moderator of the meeting until a new minister could be assigned, but none was. At the same meeting the moderator suggested that an alliance be formed with the New Scotland Church. The last corporation meeting listed in the minutes is for January 15, 1948.

Chapter Nine: The Beginning of The End
The Automobile Arrives

1. H.T. Dana. *Stray Poems and Early History of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad.* York, PA., P. Anstadt and Sons, 1903.

2. David M. Ellis. *Landlords and Farmers in the Mohawk-Hudson Region 1790-1850.* New York: Octagon Press, 1967.

3. Page Smith. *America Enters The World Vol. VII People's History of the United States.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company,1985.

Appendix A
Voorheesville's First Dwellers and The Van Bael Patent

1. Paltsits, Victor Hugo. *Inventory of the Rensselaerswyck Manuscripts.* Bulletin of New York Public Library, 1924.

2. *Correspondence of Jeremias Van Rensselaer,* trans. and ed. by A. J. F. van Laer, Albany, 1934; pp. 208, 210, 234, 254, 258, 271, 282, 287, 313.

3. Manuscript Files #823 and #925. Albany Institute of History and Art.

4. S.G. Nisseson. *The Patroon's Domain,* New York: Octagon Books,1973, pp. 56, 247-249; 269, 270.

5. *Correspondence of Jeremias Van Rensselaer* pp. 225, 269, 353; and *Correspondence of Maria Van Rensselaer.* trans. and ed. by A. J. F. van Laer, Albany, 1934; p. 22; also pp. 90, 115, 124.

6. An early use of the term "Normans Kill People" to refer to those living at the juncture of the Normanskill and Vly Creeks can be found on the Bleecker map of 1767.

7. *Early Records of the City and County of Albany and Colony of Rensselaerswyck.* Vol. II (Deeds 3 and 4, 1678-1704) translated by Jonathan Pearson, revised and edited by A. J. F. Van Laer, Albany, 1916.

8. See Paltsits, Note 1.

9. Kim, Sung Bok, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York.* p. 240, note 20; see also Kim, "New Look at the Great Landlords" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series XXVII (1970) pp. 589-592.

10. Laws of New York Seventeen Hundred and Seventy Five. Chapter LXX (Chap 18 Laws of 1775) "An Act to confirm a Submission to Referees of a Controversy concerning the Bounds of the Patent of Jan Hendrickse Van Bael and for binding the Title of the respective Claimants agreeable to the Award of the said Referees." Passed the 1st of April 1775.

11. *History of Presbyterian Church, New Scotland New York, Discourse July 2nd, 1876* By Pastor Rev. James G. K. McClure, D. R. Niver, Pub., Albany, 1876.

12. *Record Book of Leases for Land in Bethlehem 1732-1818.* Albany Institute of History and Art; Jacob Markle, in his "History of New Scotland" in George Howell and Jonathan Tenney. *Bi-Centennial History of Albany,* 1886, says: "There are some vestiges of Uziah Conger's saw and grist-mill, which was upon the Vly Kill, near Mrs. James McElroy's, and a few are still living who remember the carding mill at the same place." p. 907.

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Reader Notes