

TUG HILL LITERARY REVIEW



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*“A collection of original poetry, prose and book reviews by writers past and present from the Tug Hill,
Eastern Lake Ontario Region”*

Compiled by

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Guest writers: Joyce Ogden, Joel Plumley, Sara Barclay, Bill Garvin and Gail Starr

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Cover: View of Main Street in Lorraine about 1910. Moore's Store in foreground

From the Editors

As we write, spring has sprung across the Tug Hill Region. Each day on social media we are gladdened by the nature images shared by our friends such as George Stevens and Peter Cheresnoski. Many others are also sharing photos of their gardens and spring flowers. For those driving about on old back roads you may note clusters of daffodils and jonquils near to old stone foundations where homes once stood. As we move into mid-May the lilacs will soon appear with their strong fragrance, a welcome reminder that summer will soon be upon us.

For the discriminating observer, early April brought old fashioned, interesting culinary delights in the woods. The cowslip, wild leek and fiddleheads (fern sprouts) all made their appearance on time this year. We included some of George Steven's photography of these "spring tonics" as he found them on his walks in nearby woods.

In this issue we are very pleased to welcome guest writers Joyce Ogden and Joel Plumley. Joyce penned an article on two aunts of hers who lived in Amboy. Joyce is a valued life member of ours and researches her Durgee and Gay roots in Amboy. We were recently introduced to Joel by life member John Allen, and were delighted that Joel had some firsthand knowledge and insight into the life of the well-known architect Lorimer Rich which he has shared with us in an article here.

In our poetry we received a winter poem from Bill Garvin we wanted to run this time. Bill has sent us many of his jottings over the years and we value his perspectives and observations of life and nature. Debbie Quick of South Jefferson Historical has found some older poetry from the northern towns of Tug Hill that we have shared on pages 6 and 7. Our dependable and much-loved Trustee from Osceola, Leona Cheresnoski sent in a timely poem on trout fishing by a kinsman of hers.

In our book reviews, life member Erin Klarner has offered insight on a recent publication that covers the eighteenth-century smallpox epidemic "Pox Americana". Mrs. Sara "Dee Dee" Barclay from Pulaski, a much-valued life member also took time to review Julie Litts Robst's new book on Civil War letters that were run in the *Mexico Independent* during that conflict. Mrs. Barclay is an avid reader and knowledgeable local historian, her advocacy of the value of this book speaks volumes.

We continue to receive positive comments about the return of the *Literary Review*. We are grateful for all these contributions from our readers, and hope you all enjoy this issue.

THE TWO SPINSTERS

By Joyce Ogden, Olympia Oregon

Spinsters are supposed to be older maiden aunts who sit in a rocking chair in the corner, sew quilts, or maybe rock a baby (or two). However, there were two spinster aunts in my mother's family who didn't exactly meet these particular expectations.

First was Safety Edmonds, my mother's paternal great-aunt, who was born in Litchfield County CT about 1793. She was the oldest of six children born to Stephen and Rebecca (Root) Edmonds. When she was about 15 and her youngest sister, Emily, was only two, both parents died¹ in "an epidemic fever" ... leaving the children to "the tender mercies of charity"². The orphans were split up to live in foster homes, and when the 1820 and 1830 census-takers came around they didn't bother to list them by name. By 1840 Safety was living with her youngest sister, who had married, borne a daughter, and moved to the Town of Amboy in Oswego County, NY³.

I suppose she did her share of baby-rocking with niece Rebecca, and maybe some of Rebecca's children who came along in the 1860's after Rebecca had married my mother's paternal grandfather. After sister Emily's husband Amos Doty died in 1865, both she and Safety moved in to the log cabin with Rebecca, her husband James Hamilton Durgee, James's mother Margaret, and of course, their first children.⁴ That must have been a full house (or cabin!).



But what set Safety apart, and made her a non-traditional spinster aunt, was that she was a rural school teacher. The salary for schoolteachers in Amboy at that time was \$1.00 per day for women and \$1.50 per day for men.⁵ Despite losing most of her savings in a Camden bank during the panic of 1873, there was nonetheless enough money left to will sister Emily

the remaining \$100.00 or so, which the family used toward building the new square house (above) on the farm where Emily's daughter and family were living⁶. The lumber mostly came from the farm property itself, while the \$100 covered the hardware (nails, hinges, door-knobs, etc.).

Safety died on November 17, 1873 at age 80. Her obituary was brief, almost to the point of non-existence:

Camden Advance, 20 Nov 1873: DIED EDMONDS-- In Amboy, Nov. 17, 1873, Mrs. [!] S. Edmonds, aged 80 years.

¹ First Congregational Church in New Preston, Washington County CT: Edmonds, Stephen / d. Apr. 27, 1812

² Genealogical Record of the James Edmonds Family, p. 44

³ US Census 1840 and 1850, Town of Amboy, Oswego County, NY, family #157

⁴ NY State Census 1865, Town of Amboy, Oswego County NY, family #194

⁵ NY State Census 1875, Agriculture, Town of Amboy, Oswego County NY

⁶ "Durgee Family" book, p. 8

The second spinster was Sophronia Jacobs, aunt of my maternal grandmother Flora Froebel. John and Katherine (Kochendoerfer) Jacobs, Sophronia's parents, had emigrated from Wurttemberg, Germany about six years before she was born in 1854 in Oneida County, New York⁷. Her father purchased a farm in the Town of Amboy, Oswego County, ten years later⁸, and Sophronia lived there for the next 48 years. There were three sisters and the one brother who eventually took over the farm. But of those five children there was only one grandchild, my grandmother Flora. How many parents in the 1850's had five children and only one grandchild?

The only baby she would have had to rock would have been my grandmother Flora, who was born when Sophronia was 26 years old⁹. Since her brother John was single until age 61¹⁰, Sophronia and her widowed sister Catherine ("Katie") would have done the cooking and housekeeping.

In October 1912 Flora was married and living nearby when her husband Irving Durgee was killed when he was run over by a train¹¹. My grandmother had six children and was nine months' pregnant with her seventh. It wasn't long before Sophronia ("Frona") and her sister joined widow Flora in Parish NY¹² to help with child-raising, housekeeping and cooking while Flora went out and cleaned peoples' houses. No time for that rocking-chair! My mother remembers "Aunt Frona" as an excellent German cook, but, alas, those German cooking recipes were not passed on to her nieces.

Sophronia died in that Parish home in February 1934, aged 79.

Her obituary in the *Oswego Palladium-Times* from 19 Feb 1934 reads:

MISS SOPHRONIA JACOBS Parish, Feb. 19 (Special)-- The death of Miss Sophronia Jacobs, 79, occurred early Monday morning at the home of her niece, Mrs. Flora Durgee. Miss Jacobs was born in Oriskany, daughter of the late John and Catherine Jacobs. About 20 years ago she came to Parish to make her home with Mrs. Durgee, who is her only near surviving relative...

This is the only photo I have of her.

Here ends the tale of the two spinsters. One saved enough money from teaching school to enable her family to build a house. One helped raise her niece's seven children. Yet their obituaries are silent about their real contributions to society!

(Editor's Note: Joyce Ogden is a long-time, valued member of Half-Shire Historical Society who is an expert on the Durgee, Gay and related families of east-central Oswego County. She is a valued resource for these pioneers and a frequent correspondent of ours.)

⁷ Death certificate. Sophronia F. Jacobs...date of birth, May 2, 1854...birthplace, Oriskany [Oneida County NY]

⁸ Oswego County Deed, May 5, 1864, James Flanagan to John Jacob, 64 acres in Town of Amboy

⁹ Death certificate. Flora S. Durgee... date of birth, July 15, 1880... birthplace, Amboy NY

¹⁰ NY State Dept. of Health, Certificate and record of marriage... John H. Jacobs of Amboy and Lovena Stacy of Amboy... 14 day of Oct. 1909

¹¹ Camden Advance-Journal, 10 Oct 1912: TRAIN KILLS A MAN AND TEAM Sad Fate of Irving Durgee

¹² Rome Daily Sentinel, 30 Oct 1913: Mrs. Katie Froebel and sister, Miss Jacobs... have secured work in Parish, to which place they have moved their household goods.

A Stout Brook Trout

By Gail Rowell Starr

At four am the cry is, "Daylight in the Swamp". Actually, the sun has no more intention of coming up at that hour, than a night-watchman. As soon as the eyes are pried open, tension begins to mount. Flies, rods, fishing boots, worms, bait cans, spinners, and all of the equipment have been readied previously.

Then the typical fisherman whom we shall label "X" or Oswald, dons fishing shirt, pants, cap, boots, bait-box, fly-box, fishing basket, and also makes sure that he brings a lunch.

Then Oswald proceeds to his trusty vehicle and begins his trip. With every mile anticipation mounts, and when finally, he is on the last road, or actually, (which is second cousin to a railroad or corduroy road, or actually an old railroad) Oswald is hitting the bumps at 60!

When the subject has reached his destination, our refugee for a masquerade party proceeds to fumble with hooks, spinners and such.

When it happens that a worm has wandered onto the hook, Oswald proceeds to the water's edge, trips over a rock and falls undignified, into the water. Oswald picks himself up, wrings himself out, and casts his line.

Disaster! The line goes across the creek and is caught in the alders on the other side! He wades across the creek and begins a struggle that ends when he cuts his line.

Utterly discouraged he proceeds again to his trusty car to eat lunch and build a warming fire, only to discover that his lunch is in the alders, and the matches are wet.

Faithful, to his purpose he proceeds to fish once again. Time swims by, there are apparently no fish ere. Maybe around that bend is a spring with ten or twelve inchers. Oswald plods down the middle of the stream, scaring fish ahead of him. The bends hold nothing in the prospect of fishing but there is another bend in sight. AH! This bend proves worthwhile. This is the fresh water spring.

Oswald calmly drops the hook into the water. Meanwhile he is fixing his bait box to try to get some bait for his bare hook. SPLASH! The rod is pulled free from his grip. Oswald pounces on the big-mouth minnow. But wait! It is a Stout Brook Trout! Apparently, we are now learning of Oswald's capacities which only he knew of. Our speckled friend is almost in the basket, a beautiful rose color, dark back, and fat!! OH!

Darkness falls with a dull thud, and Oswald proceeds homeward. There are more bends than he thought. There is the car at last, so he slides behind the wheel. The homeward stretch is at a slower rate and Oswald is tired, hungry and wet.

Home again, Oswald is now able to bring happiness unto his friends' sad hearts by spinning a new fish tale with more vanity.

Thank you to Leona Cheresnoski for the above article, and to George Stevens for the photo of one of his April 2021 catches!



Orwell Winter View
By William A. Garvin, January 2021

*I look out the window
To the lawn and beyond
All the blue jays at the feeder
Have their overcoats on*

*It's cold and frosty
Everything is white
The mourning doves have
Their scarfs pulled up tight*

*The chickadees are hopping
Around to and fro
Leaving little foot prints
In the snow*

*The grossbeaks come
In a big bunch
They're looking for a handout
For their lunch*

*The goldfinches are here
In their dark winter dress
Waiting to get on the feeder
With a lot of stress*

*The big birds hog
The seed all down*

*The finches get
What falls on the ground*

*The woodpeckers are working
On the suet cakes
They each wait in line
For their take*

*The juncos come
And put on a show
They hop around
Picking seeds off the snow*

*The nuthatches come
And set on a lawn chair
They grab a seed
And hide it here and there*

*A cardinal with his mate arrives
Oh, what a show
Their red coats look nice
Against the white snow*

*That's all I see
This winter day
I hope that spring
Is not far away*

Never Bait a Trap Once It's Sprung

From the Jefferson County Journal March 1, 1939

*When John was courting Mary Jane, the house was lit up bright,
for regardless of the weather, he would call each Sunday night,
Then she would play the organ and together they would sing
and sit and eat the candy that he would always bring.
But after they were married and their hair was turning white
they spent their evenings reading but no candy was in sight.
Then she said "Oh John, my darling, I wish you would tell me true
why you never bring me candy as once you used to do."
He put his arms around her as he did long years ago,
when the evening sun had vanished and the lights were dim and low.
Then said to his old sweetheart, it's years since you were young,
and no one ever baits a trap, once the thing is sprung."*

Memories

By Grace D. Clark, Woodville,
Jefferson County Journal March 30, 1940

*Memories sweet and memories true,
Memories drear and memories blue,
They come rushing to our minds -
Some we wish had stayed behind.*

*A word of love and a message of cheer,
A hearty hand-shake from a friend that is dear,
Toys scattered all over the floor,
The old arm chair that stands by the door.*

*The clock that ticked of the hours full of fun,
And ticked those of sadness which always comes.
The mud pies and cakes we children all made,
The movies we held, where admission by a pin was paid;*

*Catching fish in the stream that rippled nearby,
Ann wading in one, in hot July.
School-day memories were happy ones until the exams that had to come
To tell us the truth that we were dumb.*

*When the final test arrives,
May we strive for perfect marks on all our lives.
Sliding down hill with a skater behind,
Putting bumps on our heads, we never did mind:*

*Memories of the first beau we ever had,
We were so thrilled and Dad was so mad.
The Sunday school class, where we scholars all learned,
"Let the little ones come unto me",*

*Forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,
The void in our hearts when the children left home,
Wondering where their footsteps would roam.
The dearest memory of all is when Mother said,*

*"You have been a good child, so now go to bed,
And angels a watch o'er my dear one may keep,
When Mother is gone and in her last sleep."
The older we grow our memories hold sway,*

*They will be with us always 'til the end of the day.
Memories that seem like yesterday,
Altho the years have flown away;
Be life's journey long or short,
They will always form a part.*

Spring 2021 images from across the

We are indebted to member George Stevens for these great nature shots taken in recent weeks. Cowslips (right) have long been valued as a “spring tonic: to the human digestive system and can be eaten in salads or cooked like spinach. They are best before the yellow blossoms appear.

“Fiddleheads” (below) are the buds of tall ferns that are only edible in their initial appearance in the early spring They are best served fried with a little butter.



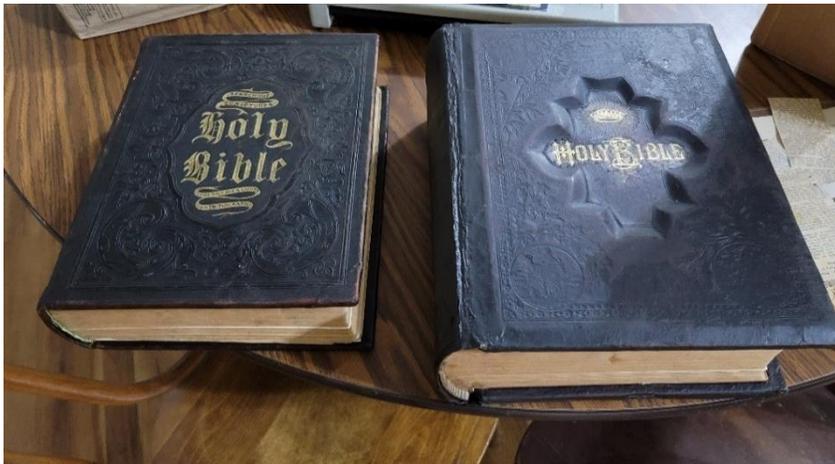
Wild leeks are enjoyed by a few onion lovers each spring, they have a short run before they become too bitter. (right)



George also captured a nice view of Salmon River Falls at its best this April during the spring run offs.

Tug Hill/Eastern Lake Ontario Region

Daffodils and jonquils are often found by old foundations and in cemeteries. These clumps in Dugway Cemetery in South Albion grace the graves of Alexander Tilton (1800-69) and his wife Betsey Elizabeth Blair Tilton. Alexander came to Albion with his family from Washington County NY. (The couple are 4th great grandparents of Editor Shawn Doyle)



(Left) we have been assisting families in getting their family bibles rebound. Robert Lomascolo of Aurora, NY has been doing a fantastic job with book repair and binding for us. There two large bibles belong to Nancy Smith Dingman of Sandy Creek and were very well done. One belonged to Nancy's ancestor Asman Smith, the other to her Burtch and Barber ancestors all of northern Tug Hill.

(Right) sisters Paula Kenway Steele and Sherry Kenway Steele recently stopped by with several artifacts they recently inherited from their ancestor James Prouty who served in the NY 24th Regiment during the Civil War. One interesting item was the sewing kit carried by soldiers with different patch materials, thread and needles all intact.

Prouty was the 1st husband of Rhoda Stowell of Orwell.



LORIMER RICH, AIA
By **JOEL D. PLUMLEY, P.E.**

He came into the hardware store, as he often did, while I was a teen employed therein. He was an old gentleman, not too tall, with bushy, snow-white hair. He was very kind and always had a smile on his face. He bought the typical hardware fare; plumbing, electrical, nails and screws, but most of all, I think he simply enjoyed the atmosphere of the old store.

To me, he was Mr. Rich, and only many years later was I to learn that he was the world-renowned architect, Lorimer Rich, designer of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

CAMDEN, NEW YORK

Camden, New York rests at the south end of a rugged, wooded and sparsely populated geographic area east of Lake Ontario in Upstate New York, known as Tug Hill. Camden was the birthplace of Lorimer Rich on the day before Christmas in 1891.

The hardware store Mr. Rich favored was known, then and today, as Carpenter's Hardware. It is one of the oldest continuously operated hardware stores in the country, having opened prior to the Civil War. During World War II, the store was owned by Joseph McFern and known as McFern Hardware.

In 1942, Mr. McFern hired my father, John D. (Jack) Plumley at age 13, due to most of the grown men having been called off to war. Jack maintained a presence at the store until his death on March 9, 2017, and my brother James currently operates the establishment.

MR. RICH

Lorimer Rich was born in Camden on December (or possibly October) 24, 1891. Little is known of his youth. He served in the Army during World War I and upon his return studied at Syracuse University to become an architect.



Mr. Rich studied in Italy after graduating from Syracuse. Upon his return to this country, he joined the architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White in New York City. He established his own business in 1928 in New York. Within a year, he had won the competition for the design of the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. He helped to complete the Tomb with the assistance of sculptor Thomas Hudson Jones.

He was later a critic in the design at the School of Architecture of Columbia University, and in 1940 was awarded an honorary doctorate in fine arts from Syracuse University. He was also a critic in architectural and city planning at Pratt Institute in New York City.

Above left: Lorimer Rich from the Syracuse University archives.

TOMB HISTORY

The original grounds of Arlington, including the project area, were once the home of George Washington Parke Custis, having been purchased by his father in 1778. Custis moved to the property in 1802 and immediately started improvements on the land, including the construction of the Greek Revival Arlington House. The house was completed in 1818. Upon Custis' death in 1857, the Arlington estate was inherited by his daughter Mary Custis Lee, wife of Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee. The

Lees departed Arlington in 1861 at the onset of the Civil War. The estate was confiscated by the United State Government and occupied by Union Troops.

To accommodate the burial of increasing numbers of Civil War dead in the Washington area, Arlington National Cemetery was established in May of 1864 by order of President Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton. Arlington House and its surrounding 200 areas were designated for use as a military cemetery and became a National Cemetery at that time. By year's end, over 7,000 Union soldiers were buried at the cemetery. Arlington National Cemetery has continued to honor the men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces from that date to today.

SELECTION AND INTERNMENT OF THE FIRST UNKNOWN SOLDIER

On December 21, 1920, Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. of New York introduced a resolution calling for the return to the United States of an unknown American soldier killed in France and his burial with appropriate ceremonies in a tomb to be constructed at the Memorial Amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery. It included a provision for the construction of the tomb of the unknown soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. As then established, the tomb was to be a simple structure that eventually would serve as the base for an appropriate monument. (It was not until July 3, 1926 that Congress appropriated \$50,000 to complete the tomb.)

The unknown soldier was to be randomly selected from four unknown Americans who were disinterred from the four American cemeteries in France. Early on the morning of October 24, 1921, Major Harbold, aided by French and American soldiers, rearranged the four caskets so each rested on a shipping case other than the one in which it had arrived. There was now little chance that someone would know even the cemetery from which an unidentified body came. Major Harbold then chose Sergeant Edward F. Younger of Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion, 50th Infantry, American Forces in Germany, to select the unknown soldier. Originally, a commissioned officer was to do the choosing, but General Rogers changed the plans after learning that the French had designated an enlisted man to choose their unknown soldier.

After General Duport and General Rogers made brief speeches, Sergeant Younger led the way from the main hall, carrying a spray of white roses presented by a Frenchman who had lost two sons in the war. As the French band in the courtyard played a hymn, Younger walked around the caskets three times before placing the roses on one to indicate his selection. He then saluted the chosen unknown American. (The roses that had been placed on the casket remained there and were buried with the unknown American in Arlington.) Following this ceremony, the pallbearers transferred the body to a special casket brought from the United States. This casket was then sealed. The empty casket was returned to the reception room where one of the three remaining bodies was placed in it so that the casket could not be identified.

The departure ceremony opened late in the afternoon of October 24th with speeches. The American body bearers then carried the casket of the Unknown Soldier out of the city hall and placed it on a caisson. The procession then moved to the railroad station at the slow cadence of funeral marches played by the band.

At the pier, after speeches by American and French officials and the presentation of the Croix de chevalier de la Legion d'honneur to the Unknown Soldier by M. Maginot, the Minister of Pensions who later inspired the Maginot Line, the body bearers carried the casket to the Olympia. A group of American Marines on the dock presented arms and the cruiser's band played the French and American national anthems and Chopin's "Funeral March" as six sailors and two marines relieved the Army body bearers and carried the casket aboard ship. Rear Admiral Lloyd H. Chandler, commanding the

Olympia, members of his staff, and French and American officials marched behind the casket as it was taken to the stern, which had been decorated. Tributes of flowers, some brought aboard by French school children, were placed around the casket.

The Olympia, escorted by the American destroyer Rueben James (DD-245, later the first American warship to be sunk in World War II) and eight French naval vessels, put out to sea at 1520. She received a 17-gun salute as she cleared harbor and another as the French ships dropped astern just outside French territory.

On a rainy November 9th, the Olympia sailed up the Potomac River, receiving and returning salutes from military posts along the way, and docked at the Washington Navy Yard about 1600. When the Olympia docked, the two squadrons of the 3d Cavalry were already in line facing the cruiser from the far side of the dock area. After Navy buglers aboard the Olympia sounded attention, a body bearer detail of marines and sailors from the ship's company carried the casket to the gangplank. As the casket was carried through the railings, the boatswain piped the Unknown Soldier ashore in the fashion accorded a full admiral, then placed it on a caisson.

The horse-drawn caisson stopped before the Capitol steps and the Army body bearers removed the casket, carried it past the honor cordon and into the rotunda, and placed it on the Lincoln catafalque, with the foot of the casket to the west. The casket was later moved to Arlington National Cemetery by horse-drawn caisson.

In preparation for the burial service, the Marine Band moved out of the amphitheater to a position near the tomb. The band played "Our Honored Dead" as the casket, preceded by the clergy, was moved in procession from the apse and placed in the tomb. The saluting battery then fired three salvos as the casket was lowered into the crypt, the bottom of which had been covered with a layer of soil from France. The bugler sounded taps, and after the last note, the battery fired twenty-one guns in final salute to the Unknown Soldier of World War I.

THE COMPETITION AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE TOMB

It was originally intended that the simple white marble Tomb placed over the grave of the Unknown Soldier immediately after the internment should serve as a base for an appropriate superstructure. It was not until July 3, 1926, however, that the Congress finally authorized the completion of the Tomb and the expenditure of \$50,000.



In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the Secretary of War prepared a program for the completion of the Tomb and invited architects of standing reputation who were citizens of the United States to submit designs without identifying themselves. Seventy-four designs were submitted and from among them, five were selected for further study.

The selected competitors were required to restudy their designs and prepare models of plaster of paris. When these models were received, the Jury of Award studied each one. After going into the matter most carefully and thoroughly, the Jury finally recommended an anonymous design to be the winning one. When the decision had been reached, a sealed envelope accompanying the design was opened and it was found that the winning design was the work of Lorimer Rich, architect, of New York City, in collaboration with sculptor Thomas Hudson Jones.

The design selected is in the form of a sarcophagus, simple but impressive, and most appropriate for the purpose desired. The total height is 11 feet, the width 8 feet at the base and 6 feet 8 inches at the top, and the length is 13 feet, 11 inches at the base and 12 feet, 7 inches at the top. The severity of the design is relieved by the Doric Pilasters in low relief at the corners and along the sides. The panel of the front, facing the City of Washington and the Potomac, has carved upon the marble a composition of the three figures commemorative of the spirit of the Allies in the War. In the center of the panel stands "Victory"; on one side a male figure symbolizes "Valor" and on the other stands "Peace" with her palm branch to reward the devotion and sacrifice that went with Courage to make the cause of righteousness triumphant. Each of the sides is divided into three panels by Doric Pilasters, in each panel of which is carved an inverted wreath. On the back appears the inscription "Here Rests in Honored Glory an American Soldier Known but To God". This is the only inscription appearing on the Tomb.

The marble is the finest and whitest of American marble – Yule, Colorado marble – and same as used in the Lincoln Memorial. The Tomb is made of only four pieces of marble – the die, which is all in one piece and one of the largest ever quarried weighing over 50 tons, the base, the subbase and the capstone.

With the selection of the design of the monument to compete the Tomb, the next step was to secure an appropriation from Congress for the work. This was done December 21, 1929 and a contract for completion of the Tomb itself was entered into.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, now completed, in its simple and impressive beauty, is a fitting and lasting memorial to all those brave heroes who gave their all on the field of battle for the principles for which the American Nation has always stood.



LORIMER RICH RETIREMENT, DEATH AND INTERNMENT

Mr. Rich retired in 1971 at the age of 80 and returned to his hometown of Camden and his beloved "camp" in Osceola. He died in 1978. His last commission was the Main Street (Camden) façade for the office of Mad River Realty, one of Jack Plumley's businesses. My father faithfully completed the façade construction in accordance with Mr. Rich's design.

President Jimmy Carter personally approved his ashes to be interred in Arlington so he could be near the tomb he designed. At Mrs. (Mary) Rich's request, and as a last kind act for a dear friend, my father, along with a local funeral director, drove Mr. Rich's ashes to be interred at his last resting place, Arlington National Cemetery.

Above Left: Lorimer Rich portrait from the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian

THE AUTHOR

Joel D. Plumley, like Lorimer Rich, was born in Camden, New York (1954). Also, like Mr. Rich, he attended Syracuse University where he received a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (1980). After the required 4-year apprenticeship, Mr. Plumley obtained a Professional Engineering license and opened his own firm, Plumley Engineering, P.C., with offices in Baldwinsville, New York and Rome, New York. He continues to operate the firm to this day.

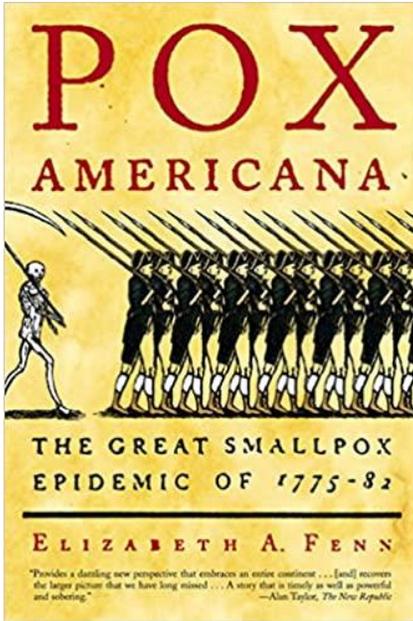
Mr. Plumley has a wife of 43 years, Patricia, and two sons: Jesse, also a Civil Engineer and Jay, an attorney, along with four grandchildren.

Book and Subject reviews

We will select books to review each quarter from our sales cabinet and offer insight into their value and content. Interesting subjects pertaining to the region will also be considered, with various books cited for further reading. Local authors who contribute to the history and culture of the greater Tug Hill region will also be considered for review. Pox Americana, Elizabeth Fenn

Pox Americana, The Great Smallpox epidemic of 1775-82, by Elizabeth A. Fenn; Reviewed by Erin Bacon Klarner

Half-Shire readers over a certain age will remember having been inoculated for smallpox as children. Although the World Health Organization officially declared smallpox to be eradicated in 1980, the last known case having occurred three years before that, in colonial times smallpox was a common and deadly threat. The most conservative statistics estimate a 25% mortality rate, which was increased, sometimes drastically, during a major outbreak and among high-risk populations. Many if not most famous Revolutionary War figures had direct experience with the danger of smallpox: Elizabeth Fenn's book *Pox Americana* opens with the death of George Washington's brother, Lawrence, and the story of Ethan Allen's loss of his son is another example. They were casualties of the "great" smallpox epidemic of the colonial era, which lasted from 1775 to 1782. From our perspective in 2021, we can easily imagine how the threat of widespread disease can change people's lives; Fenn explains how this particular outbreak affected the course of the American Revolution.



A contagious disease like smallpox will naturally spread most easily in crowded conditions with poor sanitation. During the revolutionary years, one of the best examples of exactly that was the Continental army camp. Because of this, the reader spends a lot of the book following the minutemen around the eastern

seaboard. Smallpox among the troops was, according to Fenn, partially responsible for the British victory at Bunker Hill. Closer to home, disease casualties contributed to delays in army movements that turned the tide at Ticonderoga and later, decisively, at Saratoga, as well as multiplying the miserable conditions at Valley Forge. The siege of Quebec and the southern campaigns are also discussed, as is the well-known negative impact on Native populations, particularly the Iroquois nations.

The author does depend on the reader to remember the famous battles and places of the Revolutionary War, but overall, this is an engaging read for anyone interested in connecting current events to important historical episodes, and there are many parallels one can draw. Although the existence of germs had not yet been discovered in the 1700s, people knew that it was essential to quarantine anyone who was sick to keep others from breathing their "diseased air," or what they called "miasmas." In New England and elsewhere, debates raged over whether it was safe to inoculate with the newly-developed smallpox vaccine (Cotton Mather, of Salem witch trial fame, was in favor of the practice). Fenn supplies some very interesting primary source letters between George Washington and Major General William Heath on the best protocols for inoculating new recruits. She fills the pages with interesting stories, including numerous vignettes about notable and everyday people in each chapter.

Letters Home, The Civil War Years by Julie Litts Robst

Reviewed by Mrs. Sara "Dee Dee" Barclay, Pulaski, NY

The Mexico Independent was first published on March 21, 1861 in the little town of Mexico, Oswego County, New York. In that first paper, the editors and owners, Humphries and Scarritt, asked the community to write for the newspaper, asking for as much "original matter" as possible. One month later, April 18, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln's proclamation was printed. The Civil War had begun and would take up most of the newspaper's pages for the next four years.

This book takes you on an emotional journey through the Civil War in articles and personal letters that were published in the Mexico Independent. Letters from soldiers who were in the heat of the war in the South, written to their family and friends back home in Oswego County. You will learn things about the Civil War, and what the soldiers had to go through, that you did not learn in school. This book will at times make you smile, and at other times, make you cry.

Review by Mrs. Barclay: A fascinating book – a remarkable collection of letters and articles from and about the local Civil War soldiers from our region. Most were volunteers who were patriots and joining the service to save the Union (although I felt that some were poor, out of work, and need the Army pay to support their families). However, during the first half of the book, the slavery issues were seldom mentioned, it was more about saving the Union.

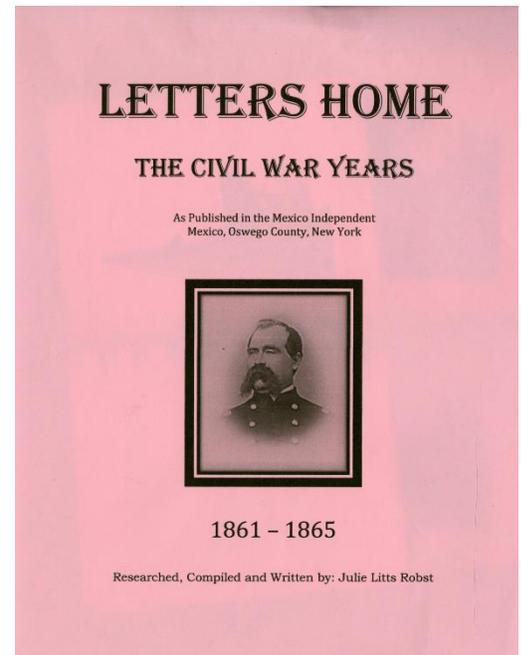
These men were either from Oswego County or wrote to grandparents and friends in the County. I was amazed how well written the letters were, the descriptions of the places they were fighting in, and about the daily life. Some were in the Army, others in the Navy, while there were also the band and Calvary units.

After enlisting, the first stop was for training, either in Elmira or the Albany area. Here they were to be outfitted with military clothing, useful cooking equipment, eating utensils and such. This was the beginning of the hardship. The clothing was late in coming, if at all, food was available but rough, and accommodations basic if at all. Not really complaining just stating facts.

When one gets into reading about the battles, it makes one realize how lucky we are today. After leaving Washington, D.C. post and as they walked from location to location, each had to carry 50+ lbs. in a sack on their back, clothes, blankets, utensils, etc., whatever would be needed.

Many nights there were no tents so they slept in the open. They cooked their own meals, and if it rained, they were wet and cold. Living conditions were harsh and dangerous. Many died of typhoid fever and also dehydration due to lack of good water. Many soldiers died from infection after being injured as we did not have a cure for infection then. It was also interesting that in the battles after using guns and cannons, many times it was hand to hand fighting. The letters tell of bravery and sacrifices well as corruption and thievery.

A remarkable collection – I recommend reading, but as it is nearly 400 pages, at least glance through and read a few pages. It is very sad but addictive. \$45 (\$3 shipping)



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