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The Adirondack Guides of Brown's Tract – Historical Association's new summer 2002 Exhibit

Rugged as the Hills They Loved

By Joseph H. Adams

Sturdy they were, those grizzled guides of old
 Who trod the Adirondacks' endless trails;
 Sinewed with steel, they laughed at biting cold
 And faltered not, for hard were they as nails.
 Let others seek the urban luxuries
 And struggle for the things that man has
 wrought
 Content were they among the whispering trees
 With Nature's gifts too lavish to be bought.
 Long, vibrant years they lived, and when they died
 They went as goes the gently ebbing tide.

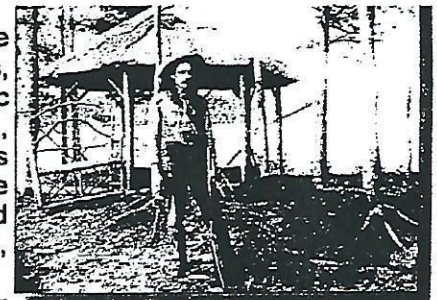
Pioneer Adirondack guides came into Brown's Tract from all the neighboring counties. Charles Grant built a small log hunting camp on the north side of Third Lake in the 1860's. Jim Higby made his first trip into the region in 1868. William Dart, a keen-eyed woodsman, began guiding in the Central Adirondacks in 1876. Henry Covey arrived on Big Moose Lake in 1880. Arch Delmarsh began guiding in 1891. Many of the first guides were of French-Canadian descent. The Rivett brothers, Peter and Fred, constructed bark-sided shanties on the Big Island in 4th Lake to shelter their clients. Phil Christy, who weighed 145 lbs. and was a crack shot with a rifle, could walk miles through the woods with a 60 lb. pack on his back. During his illustrious career, he guided Presidents Harrison, McKinley, Teddy

Roosevelt, Cleveland, Harding and a list of other notables from all over the world.

Off-season, these hardy forefathers built more permanent dwellings – humble homes in the hamlets, and other structures that later became world-famous rustic hotel retreats. They banded together to school their children, establish the region's first churches and share each other's hardships. Before the turn of the century, they formed the Brown's Tract Guides Association and fought collectively and nobly for better wages, conservation of natural resources, and the integrity of their profession.

Join us this summer at the Goodsell Museum to view our new exhibit that pays tribute to the Adirondack Guides of Brown's Tract.

Adirondack Guide Walter "Coon" Briggs



From the Director's Desk

By Town of Webb Historian Peg Masters

TOWN OF WEBB HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
 BOX 513, OLD FORGE, NY 13420
 PHONE: 315 369-3838

Open House Success



We wish to express our gratitude to the scores of visitors who joined us December 2, 2001 for our 3rd annual holiday open-house and premier viewing of the exhibit on the Historic Churches region. Our celebration was richly enhance by

the Christmas carols played on a vintage pump organ by Annette Eyre and Maureen VanSlyke and the voices of members of our wonderful Community Chorus. The Historic Churches exhibit will be on display until Labor Day for our summer visitors to enjoy.

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Congratulations

Inlet
 Celebrating their 100th
 Birthday!

✉ Correspondence from our Mailbag ✉

Alfred Brunner of Park Hills, KY, contacted me in November on a referral from the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mt. On a trip through the region last summer, he acquired a leather mail pouch with the words "Irwin Lodge - Fourth Lake" written on it and wanted some history. Checking early maps, the usual regional books, and our vertical files & indexes revealed nothing until I stumbled upon a tiny news clipping from 1903 that stated simply "Mr. & Mrs. A.B. Steele and friends of Herkimer are spending time at Irwin Lodge, Fourth Lake. Eureka! Re-checking an early map of Fourth Lake and tax records, I discovered that A. B. Steele owned a five-acre Lot 249 on the north shore of Fourth Lake, sandwiched between a Mr. B. F. Adams and Twin Maple Camp built by C.C. Pierce. Having researched Twin Maple for descendants of the Pierce family a year ago, I knew I had an historic photograph of that portion of the lake, and probably Irwin Lodge (thanks to Fred Foote), but who was A. B. Steele? I contacted our Peter Steele from Fourth Lake, but his family arrived here only fifty years ago and came from New England. A search on the Herkimer County GenWeb internet site put me in touch with Nancy Pexa of West Simsbury, CT, a descendent of a Herkimer County Steele Family. Within days, Nancy sent me definitive information about a Mr. **Abram Books Steele** who married Franc (Frances) Lockwood Irwin of Poland, NY in July of 1885. (Nancy's source: Daughters of the American Revolution Lineage Book, Vol 51). I then contacted Sue Perkins of the Herkimer County Historical Society who researched and sent a wonderful packet of information on A. B. Steele.

Abram Steele was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1845 to a humble farming family. Growing up in Illinois, he attended local schools, worked his way through Wheaton College, and eventually came to Herkimer County to clerk and study law with his cousin Josiah A. Steele. Passing the rigid bar exam in 1868 after only one year of intense self-study, he went on to a distinguished career as a Herkimer District Attorney and President of the Village of Herkimer in 1890-1891 (guiding the installation of a water system and electrical lighting for the village). In 1894, he was a member of the State Constitutional Convention, and served in the State Assembly for several terms beginning in 1903. His participation in civic organizations could fill a page. According to one document, the Honorable Mr. Steele "... had a summer home, "Irwin Lodge" at Fourth Lake, where, with his good wife, he spent many seasons, being especially fond of life in that beautiful region."

My research for Nancy, Sue and Alfred continues - with the big question, is Irwin Lodge still there on Fourth Lake? A. B. Steele died in 1913, his wife in 1917. They had no children. Anyone with further information can contact the Historical at 315 369-3838, write us, or send an email to historian@masterpieces.com.



Hon. Abram B. Steele

Changes at the Historical

We're growing by leaps and bounds. The research requests, as the article above illustrates, takes a great deal of time and have resulted in generous donations to the Association. After three years as Director, Peg Masters is stepping aside April 2, 2002 in hopes of expanding the Association's capabilities with research. Gail Murray, a trustee for the past year has accepted the position as Director and her experience will be welcomed in handling the Historical's administrative work, plan for new exhibits, fund raising, and numerous other tasks. Peg will continue as volunteer Town Historian to research inquires, help with the cataloging of the Weedmark Collection, assist in sharing our heritage by giving walking tours and talks on behalf of the Association, and maintaining our website.

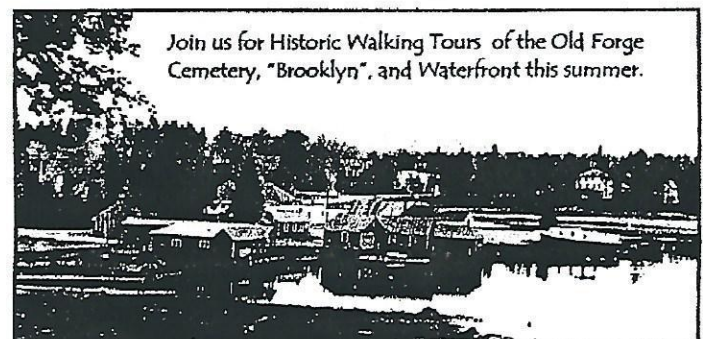
Two of our trustees, Kathy Woodward and Ida Winter will be stepping down on May 20th after serving two, three-years terms of volunteer service to the Association in accordance with our By-Laws. Kathy has served as an officer, as secretary or president, all of her tenure. Ida has worked on numerous committees, faithfully braving the weather to get to Board meetings, and has been an invaluable resource for Big Moose history. We thank both of them for their dedication and know they will continue to be active Association members.

Board of Trustees

COMING EVENTS

- Annual Meeting - May 20th - 6:30 pm. At the Goodsell Memorial Home
- Board Meetings - 3rd Tues. each month, 7 pm at the Goodsell Memorial Home
- All new Historic Waterfront Walking Tours. 9:30 am Saturday mornings in July & August. Call for details at 315 369-3838
- Bald Mt. Restoration Interest Meeting, Thursday, May 16th, 7 pm., Park Ave. Bld., Old Forge
- Third Annual Central Adirondack Postcard Show & Sale, September 21st from 10 am. To 4 pm. Park Ave. Bldg, Old Forge

The Association is open-year round Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays 9-2
FREE TO THE PUBLIC



Join us for Historic Walking Tours of the Old Forge Cemetery, "Brooklyn", and Waterfront this summer.

Traces of the Past – Pioneer Families – “The Marleau Family”

Thomas Marleau came to Big Moose Station with his father Joseph and mother Pomela ca. 1903. Pioneer Joseph Marleau was born in Quebec in 1854 and he worked as a bookkeeper and schoolteacher. Joseph and his wife, Pomela, born in 1856 in St. Clet, Ontario, had eleven children. The Marleau family moved to Big Moose Station to help with the Herkimer County Lumber Company's Page Tract logging project at Big Moose Lake. Joseph worked as their bookkeeper – then opened a general store at the Station and served as janitor of the school for 20 years. Devoted members of Holy Rosary Church, all their prayers were said in French. Joseph served as an altar boy until his death in 1930.

Young Thomas met and fell in love with Ruth Potter. Her parents, pioneers John B. and Victoria LaPrairie Potter, arrived in Big Moose in 1896 along with many other Brandon, NY logging families such as the Merritts, the Curriers, Dallieres, Forkeys, Prespers and Stracks. Barely a whistle-stop on the M&M railroad, Big Moose Station in 1896 had two hotels, one boarding house, the station house, a saloon, and about 10 log houses mostly occupied by the Brandon families. The Potters also had eleven children – but they had buried three young sons in the Brandon cemetery before their departure for Big Moose. John was a carpenter, sawyer, guide and woodsman. Victoria gathered wild medicinal herbs, plants, roots, and bark for remedies that she generously shared with others in the community. In her tiny cabin, she made all her family's clothes and served luscious dinners such as chicken fricassee with dumplings, gingerbread, Boston baked beans and rich strawberry shortcakes.

Thomas and Ruth married in 1917 and honeymooned at a cabin at Big Moose Station. Within a few months, he was on his way to the war in France with two other native sons, Joel Potter and Bill Covey. He fought in the battles of St. Mihiel and the Argonne Forest and was hit with mustard gas and suffered from shell-shock. Thomas returned home in July of 1919 to his young wife and newborn son physically and emotionally disabled and would spend the rest of his life in and out of veteran's hospitals. Six more children were born, each welcomed with love. A young daughter Kathleen did not survive and died of pneumonia at the age of two. Thomas worked when he could but Ruth held down the steady job as postmistress of Big Moose until her retirement in 1953. Thomas taught his children to love the woods and to fish and swim.



The Thomas & Ruth Marleau Family ca. 1926

Children lt. to rt.: Ellen, Thomas Jr., Ruthie Anne (Oopie), Ray, John, and Bill Marleau. Photo courtesy of grandson Mike Marleau, Inlet, NY.



Forest Ranger William R. Marleau

The Marleau family's story was researched and recorded by Thomas' son William (Bill) Marleau in his 1986 book entitled "Big Moose Station". Now out-of-print, the book is an invaluable resource to the early history of the Big Moose, Stillwater, Beaver River, and other remote parts of our

large township. Bill, a keen observer of nature, worked as a Forest Ranger in the Pigeon Lake Wilderness for more than 35 years. He conducted over 200 solo searches, maintained miles of foot trails, and helped extinguish dozens of fires that threatened our forests. His most enduring legacy to our township is, perhaps, his book which documents the early 20th century lives of hundreds of guides, loggers, railroad workers, camp owners, hermits, and families who moved here to tame the wilderness of Webb. An index to the book was created by Town Historian, Peg Masters, and the list of over 600 surnames in the text can be found on the genealogy section of the Historical's website at:

www.masterpieces.com/history/

Financial Report

Thanks to all those who renewed dues this year and helped us to balance our \$30,000 budget and continue our work at the Association.

Membership Donations	2001	2000
Number of Donors	324	339
Average Donation	\$30.21	\$33.66
Donations of \$100 or more	35	31
Total Dollars	\$9,788	\$11,482
Memorials	76	61
Individual Members	69	60
Avg. Individual Donation	\$12.00	\$14.00
\$5.00 only	37	40
Family Members	178	165
Avg. Family Donations	\$19.00	\$14.34
\$10.00 only	101	124
Number of New Donors	65	75

Please be sure to renew your dues to continue receiving our newsletter which is mailed to members twice a year.

Membership Dues for 2002

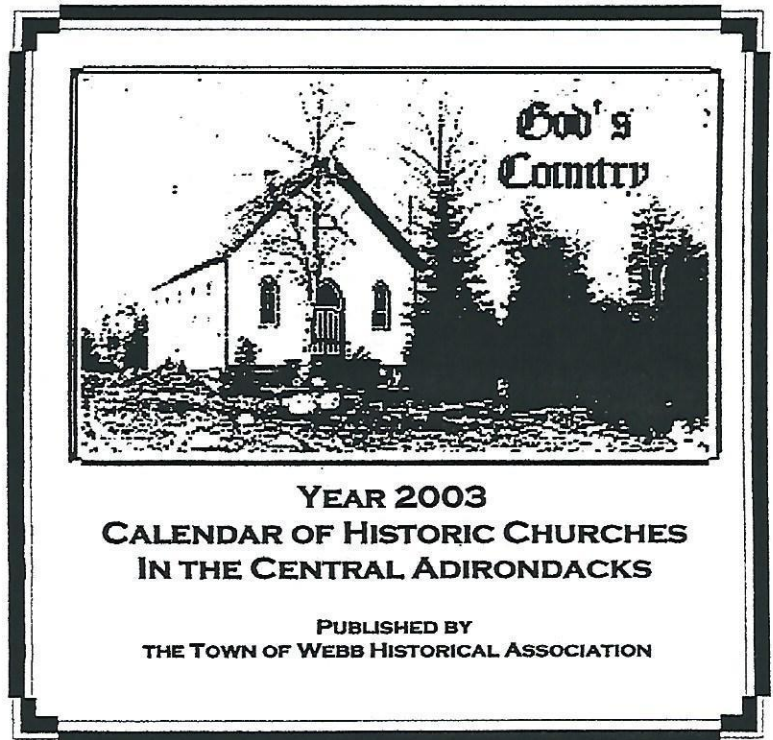
Thanks you to everyone for your generous financial support. Most of our donors have given well beyond the Association dues levels of \$5.00 for individuals, \$10.00 for families, \$100 for patrons, and \$200 or more Business sponsors. (See table on page three) Our membership campaign for 2002-2003 will begin May 1st with *dues at the same level as the past three years*. This would not be possible without the wonderful support of the following 2001 donors:

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**Collector Calendars on Sale
 This Summer at the Association
 Limited Edition – Only 750 Printed**

\$10 each – plus \$2.00 for postage if required
 Call us to reserve one at 315 369-3838

Greetings from our New Director

A new chapter in my life will begin the first week of April as I assume the position of Director of the Town of Webb Historical Association. I look forward to working with the previous Director, Peg Masters, in April during the transition period. There is much to learn. I plan to use my organizational skills and knowledge from previous positions in the community to enhance the work already done.

Please consider stopping by to see "God's Country," an exhibit of local churches as well as new items on display when you are in the area. I look forward to getting to know the Association's members and friends.

Gail Murray