

10⁰
Property of
Chaut. Co. Hist. Soc'y.

GENEOLOGICAL

AND

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

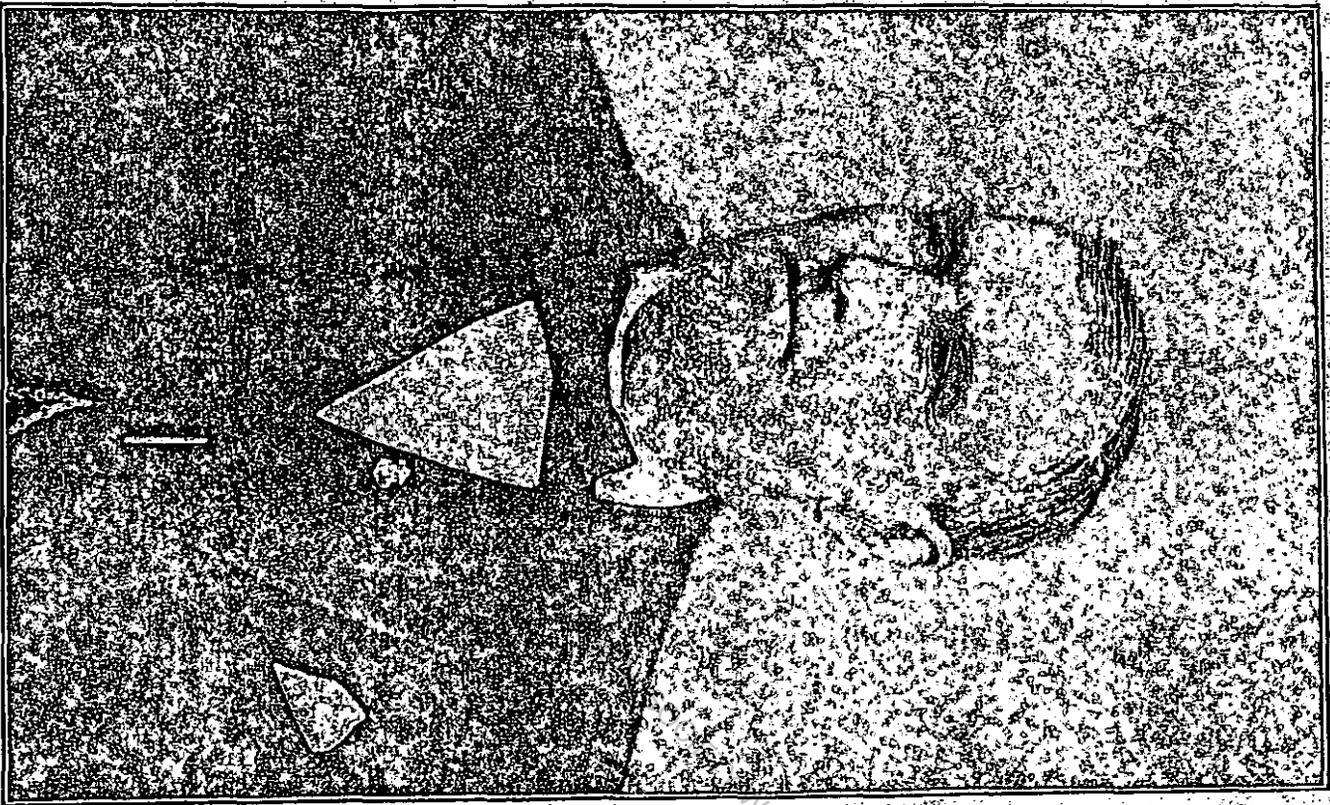
ROSS FAMILY.

1754-1903

1903:

THE BROWN PRINTING COMPANY,

JAMESTOWN, N. Y.



EMERY ARMSTRONG ROSS

WESTFIELD, NY 2012

PIONEER LUMBERMEN AND MILLS
OF THE
CASSADAGA AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

The following were extracts of the original manuscript of this work, and prepared and read—by request—before the Chautauqua County Historical Society, and as this embodies most or all of the important part of that part of the original manuscript, I make this explanation to cover a possible repetition (which might occur in a few instances) by incorporating this article instead of the original, as it might appear to break the thread of the original plan of this story.

All matter of history connected with the early life of those hardy pioneers, who made the first inroads into the unbroken and dense wilderness, and made the giants of the forest bow to the will of man, must be of interest to their descendants as well as to the general public. In ages hence, when these beautiful valleys, sloping hillsides and table-lands, are stripped of their forests, are shorn of their majesty; when the larger streams have diminished, in size and volume, and the small ones have nearly or quite disappeared the evidence of which we already

see by the destruction made in the sheltering forests by the husbandman in the interests of agriculture—where the scorching sun of the summer days drink up the moisture of the exposed earth that in primeval times was the wellspring of supply, that gave to our forest streams and mountain brooks their abundance of water, which contributed to swell the increasing volume of the Alleghany, Ohio and the Father of Waters in their majestic course to the Gulf. Then will the coming generations deplore the wanton destruction of the original forests—that might have been saved in part—to protect the sources of forest streams, and add beauty and freshness which nature has so bountifully provided.

Where once these valleys and uplands, that are already thickly dotted with farm houses, hamlets and villages, teeming with life, and threaded and crossed all over their length and breadth with public highways and pleasant drives; where once roamed the red man in peaceful possession of the domains that were his by inheritance—undisturbed as yet by the intrusion of the white man—while he stealthily followed the wild beast that supplied his wigwams with food, or arrayed in gaudy paint and feathers, he followed the trail of his rival to drive him from his hunting ground and adorn his belt with the crimson scalp of a vanquished foe; where once the bear with his shambling gait, the cougar or panther with their stealthy or catlike tread, or the graceful deer as it bounded away in its timid flight—what have we now?

Where once the Indian trail wound in its serpentine course through our wooded valleys, whose stillness was broken only by the whoop of the savage or the howls of the wild beasts, there now courses the iron horse, whose neigh is *not* the whoop

of the savage, but is the trumpet blast of civilization and science, heralding its advance in its onward march to subdue new wilds and found new empires. Where once roamed the wild beasts at will in an unbroken wilderness, there now graze the sleek herds of domestic animals of the thrifty husbandman, whose green pastures and furrowed fields show no relic of a giant forest, no trace of the beasts is sheltered, or the red man who gave them chase.

Where once stood the majestic pines, the king of the forest, towering above their neighbors, their spire-like forms standing sentinel over the smaller and weaker members of the tree family, now stand here and there, the country and village churches, their tall spires pointing heavenward, seemingly a monument to the Creator, erected by man to take the place of those by him destroyed. When, in the not distant future if the despoilers of our forests are as persevering in its destruction for the next half of a century as they have been in the past, the child is now born, who might in his old age, from some eminence of observation, cast his eye over this beautiful stretch of landscape of hill and valley, of plain and upland, without perhaps *one* cluster of the original forest trees to obstruct the view. Then will the happy possessor of these domains the probable descendants of the far back pioneers amazed at the transformation, treasure these records and appreciate the interest shown by the writer to preserve

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE PIONEERS OF CASSADAGA AND ITS TRIBUTARIES.

The Cassadaga Valley comprises all the territory lying between the Cassadaga and Bear Lakes,

the sources of the Cassadaga Creek, and its junction with the Conewango. Its entire length, following the windings of the stream, is about thirty-five miles. The upper one of the Cassadaga Lakes—of which there are three—lies in the southern part of the town of Pomfret; the two lower ones immediately adjoining lie in the northern part of the town of Stockton. Bear Lake about three miles distant, due west of Cassadaga Lakes lies mostly in the town of Stockton; the extreme northern portion being in the town of Pomfret. These lakes lie on the divide between the waters flowing into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and those flowing into the Gulf of Mexico. A portion of the waters of Cassadaga Lake, many years ago, flowed north into Lake Erie through an artificial channel and a portion south through its natural channel at the same time.

The formation of the ground, at the head of the lake, was such that a very little labor was required to turn its waters north; which was done stealthily and in the night by parties interested in water power on the Canadaway Creek—a branch of which stream has its source quite close to the head of the lake. Although the Canadaway people had succeeded in getting their canal sufficiently advanced to draw on the waters of the lake, the Cassadaga Valley people, who were equally interested in keeping the water in its proper channel, soon rallied in force and would fill up during the day all of the canal opened by the others during the night. Thus a war of forces was kept up till an injunction

was served on the aggressive party which put an end to the enterprise for the time being. In later years an effort was made to procure a part of the water by purchase from mill owners of the Cassadaga, but the project fell through, I think, from doubts of its legality and excessive prices asked by parties interested.

These lakes are situated eight or nine miles from Lake Erie and at about seven hundred feet elevation above the latter. The length of the Cassadaga Valley proper is about twenty-two miles, and averages two miles or over in width; containing about thirty thousand acres of land which would be equivalent to three hundred farms of one hundred acres each.

The soil, rich and productive, is of alluvial formation along the streams, changing to a clayey, and from that to a sandy loam as it approaches the hills.

Of the geological formation of the valley, I am incompetent to speak; but the production of numerous artesian wells is of local interest and has been the theme of discussions as to their source of supply. I am not aware that any scientist has given it a thought, but local savants have advanced theories satisfactory to themselves.

There are two wells at Ross Mills and also quite a large number at Levant. These latter wells are from 75 to 130 feet deep and supply the City of Jamestown; they produce an abundance of pure cold water of unvarying temperature. The water is invariably found in a layer of coarse sand and gravel under a layer of clay. My theory is that this clay dips from either side of the valley and also from the upper end of the valley to the depth men-

tioned. Under this, and perhaps filling the entire space between the clay and bed rock and dipping in the same form, is this layer or strata of gravel through which the water from Cassadaga Lake passes as a natural filter.

The formation at the foot of Cassadaga Lake, and for some distance below, unlike that farther down the valley, is of gravel from the surface to the depth of a number of feet; thus giving the water free induction into the gravel and under the clay, which, being impervious to water, forms a natural bond that holds it in a compressed state as it passes under this bed of clay to its lower depth only wanting an opportunity of escape which it finds through the pipe of the driven well.

In proof of this theory, I would say that the water can be carried by its own force to a height of twenty-five feet above the surface of the ground at the wells, or about on the same level of the surface of Cassadaga Lake. There are other matters of local interest that might be mentioned here (the late development of gas wells, etc.) besides the main subject yet to be presented; but it would make this article too long and, I fear, try your patience and my credit.

The following are mainly extracts taken from a family history now being prepared by the writer of this paper.

About this time, (1820) perhaps a little earlier, and for a succeeding period, the available mill-sites were rapidly taken up; the excellent pine timber skirting the streams and covering the table-lands and hillsides adjoining, being the main inducement although a few were already looking to agriculture as a means of support.

The names of the first owners and the locations of the first mills on the Cassadaga and its tributaries, I will give as far as possible; not expecting to make a complete or accurate list as I have to depend upon my memory partly, and that does not reach back quite far enough, and partly upon what I have learned from my parents and others, and have incidentally treasured up in my mind, merely as interesting incidents of the time, not expecting to have occasion to use them as a matter of history.

The first stream tributary to the Cassadaga above its mouth on which mills were built (except the Chautauqua Outlet, a full history of which would furnish ample matter for an article of itself) was on the eastern side and known as the Russell Run, and, emptied into the Cassadaga about two miles above the mouth of the Chautauqua Outlet. The first mill built on this stream was by Thomas Russell in 1816, located one and one-half miles from its mouth. It was owned and operated by Russel for a number of years and until about worn out. It was later owned and rebuilt by E. W. Scowden, who kept it running as long as there was any timber to cut. It still stands a mouldering monument. I think the only one left to mark the original site of any of the mills on these small streams.

The next was built by Charles and James McConnell, one-half mile above the Russell mill, operated by them for a number of years, and sold to Cyrus and Artemas Fish.

The third was built by Elisha Hall about one mile above the preceding one; was run but a short time by him, when it passed into other hands

The fourth one built and lower one on the stream, was built by Gideon Gilson and afterward sold to

Elisha Hall. It was located about one mile from the Cassadaga, near the public highway and the residence of the late William Clark, one of the old settlers, who in later years bought and moved on to the property, now a fine farm in possession of his grandchildren.

The lumber from these mills was of fine quality, was hauled to Gilson's Landing at the mouth of the run where it was rafted to run down the river.

The next mill stream up the Cassadaga was the Folsom Run which empties in the Cassadaga a short distance below Ross Mills. The stream had four mills on it. The first and lower was built by Elijah Aiken, afterwards owned by Cyrus and Artemas, Fish, and lastly by Anson Chamberlin. This mill was located on land now owned by Nelson Chamberlin.

The next one built and third one up the stream was built by Joel Tyler; owned by other parties for a time and again by Tyler, and sold by him to John Cobb; afterward owned by Jos. Darling, who I think, was the last owner and who cut the last lumber. This was a double mill and was capable of cutting and did cut the most lumber of any mill on this, or any other, of the small streams.

The next mill built on this stream was between the two last described and about one mile from either and was probably built by Nathan Cheney as he was the first owner that I have any knowledge of. It was afterwards owned by Adolphus Hooker, who, after operating it for some time, built another one a short distance above and ran them both till the timber ran out and the mills ran down. When I say the timber was all cut, I mean the pine timber, for that was the only timber worth cutting at the time.

The Cheney mill was supposed to be owned by a Mr. Luther at one time. These mills cut a large amount of lumber for mills on dry or thunder shower streams—as they were sometimes called

The first mill located on the Cassadaga proper, and the first one up the stream from its mouth, was built by Benjamin Ross at what is now Ross Mills. He with his young wife and one child, moved in the fall of 1816 on an ox sled, into a log house without any floor, doors, or windows; cutting his road from Work's Mills (now Falconer) to his future home, and making the first marks of civilization.

In the following spring he commenced and completed the first mill. This mill was located in the bed of the natural stream, thereby forming a part of the dam, and occupying the site of the present dam. How long this mill was run, I do not know, but a dam was built on its site, and a new mill, its successor, built on a race dug from the pond, which was a more modern way and in fact became necessary as the old way obstructed navigation.

The mill irons for the first mill were brought from Pittsburg in a canoe; I think it took about two weeks to make the trip up the Alleghany River. How does that compare with our facilities for travel and transportations of the present day? The mill irons included castings for the gig and bull-wheels big crank and gudgeon for the main water wheel, beaver tail for the pitman, bail dogs and bars for the old fashioned head-blocks, bull wheel chain and saw.

How many of the mill men of the present day would know what these phrases mean or what the articles were for? These irons did service in all the the mills built in the old style on this site. This last, or second mill, was run only a short time when it was burned.

By this time a number of families were living about and employed on the mill as well as some living in the adjoining new settlement. The mill I think was being run by Joseph Darling and others; Darling being on duty when the mill caught fire during the night. Whether from the slab-pile which was burning at the time, or from lights in the mill, it was never known, as Darling was asleep at the time and barely escaped with his life.

This was in July about 1832, and was a severe blow to my father as he was not able financially to stand such a loss at that time; and it was enough to discourage any one under the same circumstances.

When the alarm was given my father jumped out of bed and ran as far as the bridge where my mother found him, partially dressed, turning around, the image of despair, the tears streaming down his face and looking as though he had lost his last friend. She asked him: "What are you standing here for; why don't you try and save something?" With a despondent shake of the head he replied, "No use! might as well let it all go together".

I think that my mother showed more presence of mind and fortitude, for the time being, for she helped to organize a bucket brigade of all the men, women and children who could be mustered into service; she with other women doing nobly in passing pails of water from one to the other, trying to save the lumber, in which they were partially successful some of the women standing in water up to their knees, exposed to the intense heat, till the flames had spent their fury and reduced to ashes, what, a few hours before was the pride and hope upon which they depended largely for future support and prosperity. Thus in one short hour went up in smoke and ashes years of labor and incessant toil.

Although my father was despondent and discouraged when he saw the best part of his earthly possessions ascending skyward in flames, it was only of short duration, for, in a few days, he had a force of men hewing and framing timber for a new mill.

The neighbors were sympathetic and generous, for they turned out to a man for miles around and in the short space of six days had the mill frame ready to rise and did raise it on the sixth, as the following stanza improvised for the occasion will testify;

"Here is a good frame
That deserves a good name
And what shall we call it?
Ross's, industry and the carpenter's delight,
Framed in six days and raised before night."

That was pretty quick work for those days and show the energy and perseverance of the hardy settlers, whose will was law; who, inured to hardship and privations, were able to overcome all obstacles of an ordinary nature.

This mill was worn out and rebuilt with modern improvements having the iron or patent water wheel. This was the fourth and last mill owned by my father, and was sold to M. J. Morton, who owned it for a number of years and sold it to Joel Partridge; who rebuilt and sold to Wesley Martin, the present owner.

The next saw mill on the Cassadaga was located about three miles above the Ross mill and was built by John Hines and William Newton in 1819, and in 1822 they erected the first Grist Mill in that vicinity.

The mills were afterwards owned by Joel and Thomas Walkup and were for a long time known as the Walkup Mills.

They were for a time operated by John Cobb, who with his brother Roland, was about this time largely interested in lumbering. These mills passed through several hands, R. M. Miller being the last owner. They have long since gone the way of most lumber mills in this section—crumbled away to dust from whence they came.

Hatch Creek, the next tributary on which mills were built, empties into the Cassadaga about a half a mile above the Walkup mills. It flows through what was in an early day known as Vermont settlement or Bucklin's Corners. There was only one mill on this stream at any one time, so far as I know, and I have but little knowledge of its early history; but I think that Maj. Samuel Sinclair was the builder and owner of one of the first mills.

The Tower Run, a small stream which had its source in Ellery, was the next stream; on which Henry Shaw built the first mill about 1816. Elisha Tower and Jesse Dexter built in 1827 a mill on lands the owned, as now, by the Tower family. This mill after running eighteen months was burned, and reported to have been rebuilt and running in six days.

A third mill was built on this stream by Holden Moon about 1840.

Mill Creek, the largest of the upper tributaries takes its source by two branches—one in Arkwright and one in Cherry Creek—and flows through the entire town of Charlotte and part of Gerry.

A part of the following are extracts from Young's History of Chautauqua County.

Among the first who settled on Mill Creek in 1809, was Major Samuel Sinclair from whom Sinclairville derives its name. During the summer of 1810 he

built the first saw mill and in the fall of the same year a frame house which was for many years the village tavern, and in 1811 a grist mill. Each of these buildings was the first of its kind erected in Charlotte or in the central part of the county.

Forbes Johnson and John M. Edson built a grist mill at Sinclairville at an early day. The lower mill on this stream was located about half way between the Cassadaga and Sinclairville, and was built by John McAllister, one of the early settlers, and on the land now owned by his son James McAllister.

About four miles from Sinclairville at Charlotte Center, through which this stream passed, a mill was erected in 1817. There were no doubt other mills on this stream, but I have no authentic knowledge of the number or date.

A small stream emptied into the Cassadaga just below the Johnson mills at South Stockton on which a mill was built by Abel Bronson. This mill never did much business for want of water.

The mill on the Cassadaga at South Stockton was built by R. W. Fenner in 1824; later owned by Forbes Johnson and known as the Johnson mill.

In 1827 a grist mill was built by Johnson and Fenner; still owned by members of the Johnson family. I think that this is the only instance of a grist or saw mill owned or operated at the present time by descendants of the pioneer owner.

The next and last mill on the Cassadaga from which lumber was run to southern markets was built by Bela Todd about 1827, sold to Charles D. Cooper who also built a carding and cloth dressing establishment. A saw mill is still there.

A saw mill was built in 1830 on the Bugbee Brook which empties into Bear Creek, a branch of

the Cassadaga, the junction of the later creeks being about one mile above South Stockton.

A grist and saw mill were built at the foot of Bear Lake (Delanti) by John Hines, Hiram Lazelle and Elijah Nelson about 1818.

This is not a complete and full history but circumstances have been such, that I could not prosecute a thorough research.

If any of my younger readers have ever seen the upper Cassadaga Creek about and above South Stockton they might well be surprised and wonder how a lumber raft could ever be run down that small stream.

When I give for the benefit of the uninitiated the size of a raft, they may be still more surprised.

The usual size of a five platform piece, as they were sometimes called, was sixteen feet wide, and the length of five sixteen feet boards, making the length from seventy to eighty feet, according to whether the bottom frame or crib was lapped, which would make the difference in length. These rafts were from fifteen to twenty courses deep and were rigged up with an oar or sweep on each end to guide the raft. This was a pretty large raft to run out of so small a stream. They were run in single rafts to the mouth of the Cassadaga where two were coupled together putting one before the other making the raft twice as long in which shape they were run into the Alleghany River at Warren where they were coupled together into an Alleghany fleet, three abreast and twenty long (in raftsmen's parlance); the twenty long being twenty platforms or four rafts long—altogether twelve pieces.

The rafts were firmly bound together with coupling plank, and when a shanty was built, pilot secured, provisions and other necessaries supplied,

they were equipped and ready for their trip down the Alleghany, if the river was in the proper stage which was generally the case as it took about the same stage of water to get out of the smaller streams.

It took from four to six days to run to Pittsburg; landing at night in some convenient eddy, as the Alleghany was too rapid and dangerous to run at night except under unavoidable circumstances.

Arrived at Pittsburg, unless the lumber was to be disposed of there, two Alleghanies, were put into one grand Ohio fleet which was run to Cincinnati, Louisville, or other intervening points.

These trips were generally made on the spring freshet—usually in the month of March—or April and during the preceding winter it was a busy time with lumbermen in stocking their mills with logs, and in hauling the lumber cut on the small streams to the larger ones where it was to be rafted; and with the shingle makers who were diligently at work day and evening in shingle shanties, turning out as large a stock as possible, ready for the spring market as they were in need of all the money they could raise to support their families and make payments on their lands

How like a dream to look back forty years as I can see it, as it was then, and in imagination follow the winding sled roads through the woods from one little opening to another, or to some settlers camp in the woods without an opening, each with a log house for the family and a log shanty where they worked all the winter shingle making.

They would cut down the grand old pines, cut them into logs or bolts, haul them to the shanties where they would be cut into proper length for shingles, the bolts taken into the shanties where they were split the right thickness with a fro and

mallet and shaved and packed—one-half thousand in a bunch.

It was quite a cheering sight to visit these shanties of an evening, lighted as they were by the pine shavings, thrown by armfuls into the large open fireplace, lighting all within and giving from the open-mouthed chimney and through the chinks of the wall, a welcome light to the wayfarer, and a mute invitation to enter; whose entrance would be announced to the busy occupants within by the creaking of the door on its wooden hinges.

It was the usual lounging place, for the unemployed in the evening, about the only place of entertainment they had—almost as good as a theater.

During the latter part of winter, the lumber and shingle men would be busy hauling their products and by the first of March the banks of the rafting streams would be lined with piles of boards and shingles for a long distance, the lumber soon after being rafted on which the shingles were loaded, when all was ready for a start. It was a grand sight to my boyish eyes to see the long line of rafts in the different stages of construction, lying in the water, while scores of men were busy rafting the lumber, making and loading the rafts with shingles.

For days and weeks, men would be coming from the surrounding country to get a job to help raft the lumber, and a trip down the river. When all was ready, the ice gone, the streams at the proper stage by the melting snow and accompanying rains, then would commence the grand hejira for "down the river;" and I think there would be hardly a time during the day for a week or more during these spring freshets, but could be seen a raft coming or going down the creek.

I have sat for hours, and watched the rafts running the dam, as they would take the "suck of the shoot" and final plunge as they went through the rushing waters and struck the eddy water below, where they would frequently drive under water taking off a forward oar and sometimes a man with it.

When we come to make an estimate of the amount of lumber made on the Cassadaga and its tributaries, you can form some idea of the vast amount made on the upper Alleghany and its tributaries. As I make about eighteen mills putting lumber out of the Cassadaga, and allowing two hundred thousand for the smaller, and five hundred thousand for the larger, as the annual product of these mills, we have a total of about five million feet, which would make two hundred and seventy-five to three hundred rafts; requiring five hundred and fifty to six hundred men to run them to the mouth of the creek and half the number from there to the Alleghany.

Where all these men came from is more than I know, but many of them came from the northern part of the county and the balance probably from about the mills and adjacent settlement. When all these men were mustered into service and were put in their line of march, or drift, it took about all of the resources of the inhabitants along the streams to furnish them with food and lodging.

Many a time, do I recollect, during the "spring runs" would these hardy raftsmen, wet and hungry, invade our house and turn its occupants into hosts and hostess and the house into a wayside inn; levying tribute upon the larder to furnish the inner man the requisite for a hearty supper and breakfast which, although the variety was perhaps limited, the quantity was sufficient and the quality

good; and after supper as they were setting around the blazing fire, telling the incidents of the day, and of their former trips down the river, how I almost envied them and longed for the time when I should arrive at manhood's estate so that I *too* might enjoy some of these (to me) wonderful experiences. But I in good time enjoyed some of the pleasures and *all* of the realities of a trip down the river.

On these occasions of extemporizing the unpretentious dwellings into hotels, the great difficulty was to provide places for all of the men to sleep. As there was seldom more than one "spare bed" in *any* one house, it was a problem not easily solved; but after putting three into the spare bed the balance of the men would be allotted places on the floor with such covering as could be had, perhaps a blanket or coat.

If "necessity is the mother of invention" she must have been kept busy at such times, for it was surprising to see how fifteen or twenty men could be lodged with only one "spare bed." But everything would be done that could be, to make each one comfortable to the mutual satisfaction of all, for it was considered incumbent in those days for each to aid his neighbor in time of need, for such compensation as could be rendered.

Such were some of the experiences of the pioneer lumberman of the Cassadaga and its tributaries.