

## Madawaska Historical Society

## Farmers Organize



BY GUY DUBAY  
St. John Valley Farmers  
Organize

MADAWASKA - One would expect to read such a headline in today's newspaper, or in the latest University of Maine Extension reports, but some Valley farmers saw the need to organize well over a hundred years ago.

If the Valley Times had been published at that time, the editor could well have headed the last issue of February, 1870, with the line "Valley Farmers Form Agricultural Society."

During my recent stay at the University of Maine at Orono, I made it a point of looking up old laws of Maine to see what might turn up in the area of St. John Valley history that had been recorded but forgotten. It was interesting to learn that the successful farmers of the last century saw the same need to organize in ways that today's farmers do.

Here is what we find in the Laws of Maine in 1870:

### Chapter 375

An Act to incorporate St. John Valley Agricultural Society.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled, as follows:

Sect. 1, William Dickey, W.C. Hammond, George Seely, Martin Savage, J.C. Miller, A.S. Richards, Charles Farrell,

Julius Ouellet, C.R. Sirois, J.J. Wheelock, Denis Cyr, Louie Cormier, Rame Plourde, Jr., Firmin Cyr, J.B. Fournier, Levi Sears, John Farrell, Belony Violet, Samuel Stevens, their associates and successors, and they are hereby created a body corporate. By the name of the St. John Agricultural Society, to embrace the territory of the representative district on the St. John River in the County of Aroostook with power to sue and be sued, to have and use a common seal, to make by-laws and regulating for management of their affairs, not repugnant to the laws of this state.

Sec. 2, Said society is established within and for the towns of Fort Kent, Dickeyville, Madawaska, Grand Isle and plantations of Hamlin, Van Buren, Letter L, townships of

Wallagrass, Eagle Lake, St. John, St. Francis plantation, in the County of Aroostook, and may take and hold property, real and personal, not exceeding ten thousand dollars, to be applied to the advancement of agriculture and mechanic arts.

Sect. 3, Said society shall have all the powers and privileges, and be subject to all the liabilities and restrictions specified in the several sections of the eighty-second chapter of the revised statutes.

Sect. 4, The first meeting of said society shall be called by any two persons named in the first section of this act, in such manner as they may determine, stating the time and place of meeting, at which meeting the officers of said society shall be chosen, and such other proceedings had for a full and complete

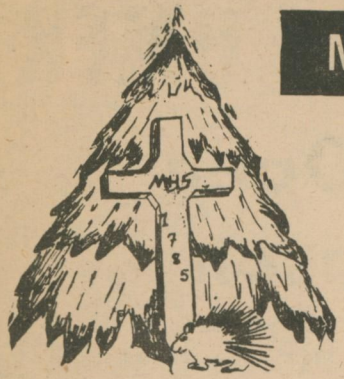
organization, as a majority of the members may determine.

Approved February 26, 1870

It would be interesting to follow this up with a study of efforts and accomplishments of this, our first Valley Farmers Organization. Time did not permit me to do this, but perhaps one of our Valley students at Orono may find further facts this fall. We at Madawaska Historical Society, would welcome and publish any new finding any one might discover concerning the St. John Valley Agricultural Society.

Next week we'll have more on early farmers' organizations. 'Til then, au revoir.

# Madawaska Historical Society



By Guy Dubay

MADAWASKA - Last week, we reported to you the finding of the fact that our Valley farmers learned over a hundred years ago, the benefits of forming an organization for "the advancement of agriculture and mechanic arts."

Apparently that organization met with some early success for in the following year, in 1871, the state legislature increased the membership of the original group.

Let me now quote to you this

act and we render some comments on this society's membership.

## CHAPTER 646

An Act to amend "an act to incorporate the St. John Agricultural Society." Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled, as follows:

Sect. 1. Section one of "an act to incorporate the St. John Agricultural Society," is hereby amended, by inserting after the names of persons in said section the following names, namely: 'Registe Daigle, Romaine Cyr, Dennis Cyr, Gilbert Picard, John Picard, Augustine Daigle, Frederick Thibodeau, Severe Violette, Abraham Dubay, Joseph Dubay, James Keegan, Thomas Keegan, and P. C. Keegan.'

Sect. 2. Section four of said act, is also amended, by adding

after the word "act" in the second line, the words 'as amended' so that said section shall read as follows:

Sect. 4. The first meeting of said society shall be called by any two persons named in the first section of this act, as amended, in such manner as they may determine, stating the time and place of meeting, at which meeting the officers of said society shall be chosen, and such other proceedings had for a full and complete organization as a majority of the members may determine.'

The names mentioned in this and last week's article are interesting in that all were farmers and most were the leaders in their respective communities. Several even served in the state legislature.

William Dickey mentioned last

# Early Farmers Group Successful

week was the ~~perennial~~ representative who earned the title "Duke of Fort Kent."

George Seely and Levi Sears are other names with which Fort Kent historians are familiar. J. J. Wheelock left his name to Wheelock brook in St. John.

W. C. Hammond lived in Hamlin and his family left their name throughout the Van Buren area, notably, Hammond Brook, Hammond Hotel, and Allendale, named after his son, Allen Hammond.

A. S. Richards was an early business man in Fort Fairfield and Van Buren. In 1870 the government hired him to take the U. S. Census in this area.

John Farrell, (1832, 1881) represented Van Buren in the legislatures of 1878, 1879, 1880.

Belony Violette (1817-1879) was a county commissioner in 1835 and a representative in 1867,

Louis Cormier (1818-1912) was our first registrar of deeds in 1844, James Keegan (1803-1892) also became a registrar of deeds and was a county sheriff and a commissioner.

P. C. Keegan (1850-1931), his son, was a legislator for nine terms and Keegan, part of Van Buren, is named after him.

Abraham Dubay (1804-1888) and Joseph Dubay (1835-1902) father and son, lived where St. Joseph Church in Hamlin now stands.

Regis Daigle (1808-1880) lived in Frenchville and had many descendants who now live from Madawaska to Eagle Lake. Romaine and Dennis Cyr were prominent in St. David parish.

So we can see that early St. John Valley farmers saw fit to look beyond their town or parish lines and discovered that valley-wide co-operation could work to the benefit of all.

Will tell you more about early Farmers' Organizations again next week. Till then au revoir.

# Madawaska Historical Society



By Guy Dubay

MADAWASKA --- This is our headline for our Times of 1887, for in that year the Van Buren Agricultural Society was formed. (No, Folks, Forrest Rahrig wasn't around here either, I assure you!)

The names in this column may be familiar to some of you as names of your grandparents or your great grand parents though.

Let us go to the task at hand. We quote this time from the Laws of Maine, 1887.

### Chapter 110

An Act to incorporate the Van Buren Agricultural Society.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representative in Legislature assembled, as follows:

Sect. 1. Thomas Smith, Joseph Dubay, Xavier Cyr, Simeon Cyr, John Ayotte, John Parent, Thophile Parent, Cyrille Parent, Vincent Paradis, Thomas Keegan, Thomas Sirois, junior, Joseph Fournier, Joseph Lapierre, Belonnie Cyr, Severe Violette, Ambroise Violette, Severin Violette, Remi Cyr, Napoleon LeVasseur, Xavier S. Violette, Louis Dione, John Ayotte, and Germain Berube, their associates, and successors be and are hereby created a body corporate, by the name of the Van Buren Agricultural Society,

with all the powers and privileges, and subject to all of the liabilities imposed upon such corporations by the laws of this state.

Sect. 2. Said society is established within and for the town of Van Buren, and the plantations of Hamlin, Cyr, Connor, and Caswell, and may take and hold property, real and personal, not exceeding ten thousand dollars, in value, for the use, purposes and benefits of said society.

Sect. 3. Said society is also authorized to make any by-laws and regulations for the management of its affairs, not repugnant to the laws of the state.

Sect. 4. The first meeting of said society shall be called by Thomas Smith, Thomas Sirois, junior, and Severe Violette, or any two of them, by giving seven days previous written or verbal notice to each of the other persons named in this act, of the time and place of holding said meeting, at which meeting all proceeding may be had for a full and complete organization of said society.

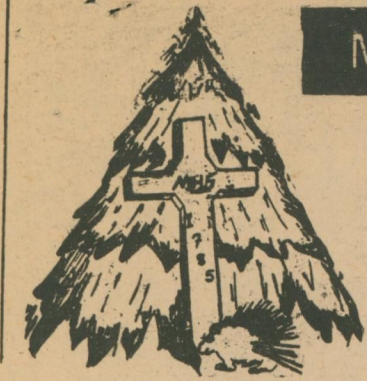
Approved February 17, 1887

We don't know how long or how effective this society was, but we'll hazard a guess that it was

# 1887 Agricultural Society Formed

this society that sponsored the 1905 visit of William Cody (Buffalo Bill) Wild West Show. But, then, folks, this is pure conjecture.

For next week we've saved the last write-up on the nineteenth century Agricultural Society that one founded in 1899, so then- au Revoir.



By Guy Dubay

### MADAWASKA - Scoop of 1899 Madawaska Farmers Unify!

The Laws of Maine will again yield to us another story of Valley groups forming agricultural societies. This, our last one on this subject, will show us that with time a new generation comes around to take up the function of the previous one.

You will note that none of the corporators of this society were part of the original Society formed in 1870. "The times, they are changing," even in times long gone by.

That 1899 law we now quote:

Chapter 44

An Act to incorporate the Ma-

## Madawaska Historical Society

dawaska Agricultural Society. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled, as follows:

Section 1. John Cyr, Joseph Pelletier, Arthur Daigle, Charles Dufour, Alexis Dufour, Joseph Daigle, Ubald Dufour, Alexis Cyr, Eloi Albert, David Dufour, Ubald Daigle, Regis Hebert, and their associates, successors and assigns, be and hereby are made a body politic and corporate by the name of Madawaska Agricultural Society, with its principal place of business located at Madawaska, in the county of Aroostook and state of Maine, for the purpose of promoting and improving generally agriculture, horticulture, stock raising, breeding and raising of all animals, the mechanic arts and manufactures connected therewith. Said corporation shall have the power to make such by laws and regulations, not consistent with the constitution and laws of the state of Maine as it

may deem necessary, for the management of its affairs and in general shall have and exercise all the powers and privileges incident and generally granted to similar corporations.

Section 2. The capital stock of said corporation shall not exceed the sum of one thousand dollars, and shall be fixed at the first meeting of the corporation, and may be thereafter increased to a sum not exceeding said sum of one thousand dollars, shall be divided into shares of one dollar each.

Section 3. Said corporation shall have power to hold by purchase, lease, devise, bequest, or gift real estate not exceeding in value, exclusive of improvements, the sum of eight hundred dollars, and personal property not exceeding in value the sum of five hundred dollars.

Section 4. Said corporation shall have all the police powers together with all other powers and privileges, at all its exhibitions of what ever kind, which are conferred upon agricultural societies by sections sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen of chapter fifty-eight of the revised statutes, and any amendments thereof and additions thereto: and the prohibitions, restrictions and forfeitures and penalties provided by section nineteen of said chapter fifty-eight shall be applicable to all exhibitions of the corporation.

Section 5. The first meeting

# Scoop Of 1899 Farmers Unify

of said corporation may be called by written notice thereof, signed by any corporator therein named, served upon each corporator by giving him the same in hand, or by leaving the same at his last and usual place of abode seven days at least before the time of meeting.

Section 6. This act shall take

effect when approved.

Approved February 21, 1899

Having come to the end of this series on Agricultural Societies, the Madawaska Historical Society would like to offer to any group interested in publishing their charters so as to show their historic import, this forum will be made available to them.

## Madawaska Historical Society

### Farmers Re-Organize



By Guy Dubay

MADAWASKA - This could have been the mid-winter headline of an 1883 St. John Valley TIMES had Forrest Rahrig been around with his paper-but his son, Eddie, assures me that his

dad is definitely not that old!

In any case, it seems that the St. John Agricultural Society which saw incorporation in 1870 and 1871 was re-organized in 1883. Perhaps the depression of the 70's served to re-stimulate the farmers into valley-wide cooperation.

The banding of farmers together into a common cause is very reminiscent of our St. John Valley Soil Conservation District, today. The purposes of each organization might be as different as the times they represented. We can see the object of this second farmers' organization as it is listed in the law quoted below.

From the Laws of Maine, 1883 we quote:

#### CHAPTER 251

An Act to incorporate the Madawaska Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled, as follows:

Sect. 1. Alexis Cyr, Charles Morneault, Remi Plourd, Dennis Cyr, Regis Thibodeau, Cook Hammond, Charles Farrell, Joseph Martin, Xavier Cyr, Peter Charles Keegan, Narcis Dufour, Luc Albert, Maxime Martin, Joseph Daigle, Gilbert Pickard, Jean Cyr, Baptiste Fournier, John A. Nadeau, James W. Bolton, Peter Gagnon, Alexander Martin, William Dickey, Levi Sears, Daniel Hafford, Henry Nadeau, W. M. Cyr, J. J. Wheelock, Martin Savage, Cyrille Pelkie, their associates, successors, and assigns, be and they are hereby created a corporation by the name of the Madawaska Agricultural and Horticultural Society, to be located at Grand Isle and Madawaska in the county of Aroostook, with power by that name to sue and be sued, to have and use a common seal: to make by-laws and all necessary regulations for the management of their affairs, not repugnant to the laws of this state, and to have all the rights and privileges, and to be subject to all the liabilities of similar societies in this state.

Sect. 2. Said society is hereby established within and for the towns of Grand Isle, Madawaska,

Van Buren, Hamlin, Cyr, Frenchville, Fort Kent, St. John, St. Francis, Wallagrass and Eagle Lake, and may take and hold real estate at a cost of five thousand dollars, including grounds for fairs and race-course, and personal property to the amount of 10,000 dollars.

Sect. 3. The first meeting of said corporation may be called by any three of the persons named in the first section of this act, by giving such notice of the time, place and objects thereof, as they think proper: and as said corporation may be chosen, and such other corporative business done as may be deemed proper.

Sect. 4. This act shall take effect when approved.

Approved February 21, 1883.

Fairs were indeed held by this corporation and some of the older postcards published in Madawaska show us a race-course where the municipal swimming pool and park are now located.

A third agricultural society was founded four years later, but that can keep until next week, can't it? Till then, au revoir.

## Thoughts on taxes

## How they impede self-sustaining farmers

by Guy Dubay

ST. JOHN VALLEY — In the beginning farms were much smaller than today. A man would own about 100 acres, mostly wooded, and have six to 10 acres under cultivation. These were not business farms. They were what you call self-sufficient, subsistence farms.

The farm family consumed most of what it produced—buckwheat, oats, hay, potatoes, milk butter, eggs and some meats. There was a clear relationship between man and animal. The animal needed man to shelter and feed him.

But the animals also provided man some of the necessary ingredients of life. For example the animals provided the manure to fertilize the garden plot. It was a close-knit situation.

There was a lot of hard work to be done on the self-sustaining farm. The animals needed to be fed and tended to every day. Crops had to be planted to assure the feeding of all. But all the hard labor had its reward. A man who carried out his tasks did not owe a thing to anybody.

Fred L. Putnam who grew up on such a farm in Houlton in 1880s relates that the county was opened up by such self-sufficient farmers. "If a farmer came to town and bought his milk here," says Putnam, "we thought this man was on his way to ruination. In fact, we even believed that a farmer who so much as ate in town was a disgrace, because, as a rule, a farmer raised a great deal of what he consumed.

"It was considered a rare thing for a farmer to mortgage his farm," Putnam goes on. "It makes you wonder just what this thing is coming out. If you ride out on the back roads, say at Ludlow, for example three out of every four farms are closed up.

"And Uncle Sam owns them. The farmers got loans they couldn't pay. Take within 25 to 30 miles of Houlton," Putnam says. "The farms that Uncle Sam has to sell is amazing. And it's all because of the help we got from Uncle Sam.

"It was a wonderful thing," Putnam explains, "of the government to let the farmers have this money. But on the other hand, the government made it possible for many farmers to hire a lot more than they would ever be able to pay back.

"If they had to go to the bank for money," insists Putnam, "they wouldn't be in that box. And there's a lot that are realizing that today. They say, 'Well if they hadn't let me have so much, I wouldn't be in debt. But that's the way it all worked out.'

"Today...a third of these farms are heavily mortgaged or foreclosed by the government, and that means the government's got them to sell. And here they are growing up with weeds. It's all very discouraging," concludes Putnam. "The only farmer today is the guy who can go in it in a big way."

Tracing the road from the self-sufficient farmer to the bankrupt business is a long task. It all started with the coming of the railroad which opened greater markets to the farm, and to the introduction of machinery which made increased acreage possible. Around 1895, reports Putnam, most farms consisted of about five buildings. There was the home, with its cellar where crops were kept in winter. Then there was a

stable for the horses. Beyond that there was usually another barn for the cattle. This had hay lofts above the stalls to keep the feed. So that made two barns behind the house.

Then there was a third barn where the excess hay was kept. This was where a farmer kept the hay that he hoped to sell. Add to this a shed for firewood and a chicken coop and you'd have the buildings of a typical farm of the day.

The first mechanical planters and diggers came into the county around 1895. Farmers then increased their acreage to 20 acres. And in the following decades, the acreage jumped from 20 to 50 acres under cultivation. Fifty acres then constituted a big farm—but the surplus crop could be shipped by railroad to city markets now.

Finally you came to the point

where the machinery necessary to run a fifty acre farm cost as much as the farm itself. Yet once the investment in tractors, diggers, planters and sprayers had been made, a fellow could just as well cultivate 100 acres with the same equipment as 50 acres required.

Thus when the younger sons of aging farmers went to other lines of work, the retiring 20 to 50 acre farmer sold his farm to a neighbor who had made the commitment to go from 50 acres to a hundred or more.

What people have overlooked, however, is the fact that mechanization not only brought on a more efficient type farm which only a businessman could run, but mechanization brought on an increased need for specialized services which taxes must support.

That is, tractors were followed by trucks and cars. With trucks

and cars, people turned away from railroads and demanded better highways. The better road brought on the need for more highway crews, more state police to patrol them—in short, more taxes.

There are young people today, idealists, who like to get away from the rat race of city life. They appear here in Maine, hoping to buy a farm to become self-sustaining. They face a rude awakening when they find that there's a whole array of services out there, waiting to be funded.

Schools, colleges, police forces, unemployment programs health insurance, etc. are all waiting for their share of the revenue from the farm. Rudely, they find out if taxes aren't paid, the assessors take over.

The point is, a decision must be made. Do we want cradle to

grave government services, or do we want to permit our youth the right to live independent lives on small Maine farms? We can not give our young people both independence and the privilege of total government services. One must be at the cost of the other.

To be independent we must stop taxing ourselves out of the opportunity to be self-sustaining. Yet to have the freedom from worry that only government welfare can bring we must tax ourselves until we are all part of an interdependent network which removes from us all privacy.

The Russian writer Tolstoy asked a question nearly a hundred years ago. He wrote a story called "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" I wish I knew, but then, there's another question which needs to be asked today. It is *how* much taxes does a man need?

# Reflections On The Acadians

by Guy Dubay

Acadians, to borrow Alvin Toffler's phrase, were the first wave of Madawaska history. The English or Scotch-Irish represent the second wave. Today we are faced with a third wave - which is upsetting both the Acadian and the Anglo way of life in this Valley. The conflict and anguish in Acadian Festival activities and our reactions to them bear this out.

The First Wave of our history brought significant change to the Valley way of life. The Acadians with their medieval and feudal outlook to life upset the earlier nomadic hunter-gatherer Maliseet way of living in the St. John. With the establishment of a "settlement" centered around the feudal church, the Acadians put an end to the seasonal migrations of Valleyites between Madoueskak on the upper

St. John and Ecoupahaq on the lower river at Fredericton.

As we watch a wave "break" on the shore, we see it first touch at one spot, and then another, and then yet another.

Well so too it was with the waves of life on this river. No sooner were the affects of the change from the nomadic Maliseet life pattern upset, that the first wave of change itself began to be transformed. No sooner than the Acadians set foot in the Valley, that the precursors of the second wave, the wave of industrialization, were felt.

Indeed, though the organizers of the Acadian festival have yet to recognize the fact, Anglo residents, the symbols of the second wave, already surfaced in the St. John Valley at the time of the first Land Grant. On Oct. 1, 1790 one Thomas Costin, a

British magistrate who had married a French-Catholic native of Quebec province, figures among the earliest lang grantees along with the Cyrs, Daigles, Thibodeaus and Sansfacons.

Costin, as an Anglo, though setting himself in the agrarian environment of Madawaska, can be taken as representative of the second wave. That wave, the force of industrialization, already in 1755 and 1785, had begun to show cracks in the old merchantist form of society that had been established by the Acadians at Port Royal and the English at Jamestown.

In 1794, a point which Rev. Thomas Albert author of *L'Histoire du Madawaska* fails to make, American influence already sought to filter north. That year, Park Holland, a surveyor for the Bingham Estates of

Coastal Maine, came north to survey his employer's land said to reach "to the highlands".

Upon reaching the Valley, Holland not only discovered and Acadian village but spent an evening with Mr. Everett a native of New Hampshire who Holland states had been a resident among the French "some three years."

The American and British element, unlike the Acadians who looked at the valley as a place to settle in an agrarian life pattern, looked at the valley in terms of its trees. In short, the timber operators, whose scouts were here as early as 1790, 1791 and 1794 were the first ingredients of the second wave - industrialization.

Like the peaks and crest of a wave which hit the shore intermittently - industry peaked in Van

Buren from 1904 to 1924. The impact of the St. John Lumber Company and the later Madawaska Company there was felt all the way up the river to Eagle Lake (not the one on the Fish River) where Ed Lacrois built a rail tramway in the middle of the woods.

And in terms of Paper, industry peaked at Madawaska between 1927 and 1981 where Fraser Paper Cos. Ltd created for Acadians a novel way of life - life as members of Industrial unions.

With the defeat of the Dickey Dam proposal this year, the elements of the third wave - the post industrial way of life in the St. John Valley are clearly discernible. Industry, though yet vital, will no longer grasp local power sources for their primary benefit as the one did when N.B. Power harnessed the

St. John at Grand Falls and Mataaquac. Power for our mills will in fact be diversified beyond the local areas to include an international consortium. It will come from a multiplicity of sources, from James Bay (hydro-power) to Wiscasset (nuclear) and on to Appalachia (coal) and Alaska (oil).

In short, Valley life in the future will not be a mere concern of our potato crop (the Acadian), our Paper mill (the Anglo) but will have to be thought out in a world-wide context - in the third wave way of life, where all people share the same problems or gain the same benefits.

The contributions of the Acadian festival will reach their zenith when they assist us in recognizing the Acadian role as but one of several succeeding waves in the ebb and flow of life.

Guy Dubay

May 1975

# Our British Connection

BY GUY DUBAY

Some of us live so close to the river that we don't even realize that its there. It took a downeasterner from Bath to really show me the St. John River; to point out to me all that the river means.

A Bi-monthly commentary  
by the Times  
columnist-at-large

Of course I know about the St. John River. From my home, I peer across it every night and see the lights of Edmundston which reminds me of a string of jewels all planted in a row on the neck of velveteen manikin.

Yet seeing the St. John every day can be like one not ever seeing the forest for the trees. We're simply too close to it to see it in its entirety.

True enough, we have the capacity to envision crisp green dollar bills that float by on its unharnessed power. We're not so close to the river that we can not see its potential. Our dreams for its future are not lacking. Yet our understanding of its present, and of how that is build on its past, perhaps would have eluded us hadn't a Maine Yankee come here to visit and reflect a bit with us.

"The Valley" as we are fond of calling it was first and foremost our "British Connection".

True, there are those like me who extol our "French Con-

nection". Then there have been many years in which our "American Connection" have received unmitigated praise.

But our British Connection - the river - holds a potent place in the reverie of our past. So let us, with our vistor, dip into the far reaches of our psyche and rediscover that tie.

THROUGH THE mind's eye, look at the St. John Valley for a moment. Imagine that there are no roads and highways. At best, imagine that only a few woodland passes mark out the forest between Houlton and the Valley.

Next imagine that there are no railroads. In fact imagine that there are no radios, no T.V.'s, no newspapers penetrating anywhere near 180 miles of this place. Now you have a Valley with a real British connection - for the source of the waters lead you down to the British markets - Fredericton, St. John, Halifax and Liverpool.

In fact, imagine that you are a lumber baron. The most economical way in which you can get long pine out of this dense forest is to float it down river - but then check again, where does this river lead you?

The Penobscot, the Kennebec, the Saco. There's no question that they all lead to Boston. But what metropolis is more convenient for the St. John River traveler than Halifax?

LONG PINE is what the "Bloodless" Aroostook war was

all about - and before the boundary was definitely settled long pine was what life in this Valley was all about.

"If the Valley is ever to become American, the military road from Old Town to Houlton must be extended to the St. John," nineteenth century politicians predicted. And indeed the old military road from Houlton to Fort Kent was the first American connection that the Acadian here could buy. The first road build up to the St. John River came by way of Patten, Ashland, Eagle Lake and the Fish River route. Prior to that, Deane and Kavanaugh, agents of the State of Maine, had traveled up the Penobscot and Piscatquis to reach the future Greenville and Moosehead Lake, for the Allagash was the principal route to the northlands.

The eastern route, by way of U.S. No. 1 through Presque Isle and Van Buren, reached the river only a short time thereafter. Yet the first real link with the rest of the State came by way of a military force which had come to bolster the claims of American lumber interests.

It was only with the advent of the railroad in 1898 that the Valley could economically ship heavy stock down south without relying on its older well tried water route. The iron of rail could and did replace the canoe and paddle, and the British connection could be, and at last, was severed.





# PERSPECTIVE

By

Guy Dubay

**"If you haven't got a half penny. . ."**

Inflation is a permanent fact of life. This is the clear lesson taught by local history.

When the richest man in Van Buren, whose property covered an area of over two thousand feet by a mile, listed his real estate holdings at \$5000, then one must presume that we're dealing with a different dollar than we are today. By studying 1860 Van Buren Valuations, we have arrived at the conclusion that a dollar in 1860 represents a value of a hundred dollars today. How else could you interpret the fact that several Valley farmers eked out a living on farms which sold for \$100.

Grist mill rights were sold in Van Buren for \$1400 in 1872. By our formula of a hundred to one, \$140,000 does not sound unreasonable for a productive industrial property.

In 1905, the Fort Kent Trust listed its Capital at \$50,000.00 - with \$5,000.00 surplus. You would never run a bank on such sums today. Even our small credit unions today operate with figures hovering at ten times the amount. So as a rough estimate, let us compare the 1905 dollar worth ten times the present day amount. That would give Fort Kent trust an operating capital of half a million - which is passable by present day small local banking operations.

In 1929, the year of the Stock Market Crash, The First National Bank of Van Buren listed \$75,000 Capital with \$61,752 surplus and undivided profits. It further advertised its resources at \$900,000. In 1932, the First National Bank of Van Buren was no more. It closed its doors at the Bank Holiday ordered by Roosevelt - and never opened them again. Obviously, \$50,000 which seemed adequate to run a bank in 1905 was not enough to keep the bank doors opened in 1932.

THE FORT KENT Trust cited above with a \$50,000 capital in 1905, listed the same figure in 1929. The surplus of \$5000 in 1905 had become \$62,000 in 1929 - but this again was not enough to keep Fort Kent Trust solvent. Even with a branch in Madawaska, Fort Kent Trust did not survive the Bank holiday.

The Aroostook Trust which opened in Caribou in 1890 had in 1929 a paid-up capital of \$125,000 and a surplus of \$175,000. You wouldn't operate a bank on figures such as these today, but Aroostook Trust survived the Bank closings, and Aroostook Trust operates a branch in Madawaska today.

THE PRESQUE ISLE National Bank founded in 1882 had a capital of \$100,000 in 1929. If you'd set up a one to five relationship - that would give you a capital of half a million. Surplus and undivided profits were listed at \$195,000 - or about a million dollars by today's standard. Its board of directors read pretty much like the list of

Northern National Bank directors after the re-organization of 1932. So with sums like that, you might say, Presque Isle National Bank survived. A million dollar profit would keep an Aroostook county bank open today - but a \$300,000 bank might be looking for a merger.

The figures only serve to notice that a rough estimate of inflation might be tended to show that one 1975 dollar would be worth a penny in 1860, a dime in 1905, two bits in 1932. Statisticians might produce more precise relationships, but local history does indeed point out

clearly enough that when viewed in terms of many generations - inflation is indeed a permanent fact of life.

In any case, National history tells us that Ben Franklin arrived in Philadelphia with three pennies in his pocket. With the one cents bought three loaves of bread. The girl who later married him thought he made a crazy sight - walking down the street with three loaves of bread tucked under his arms - but in any case - that must have been some penny if each could buy off an entire loaf of bread!

1730	\$.01 - \$ 3.00
1860	\$.01 - \$ 1.00
1905	\$.01 - \$ .10
1932	\$.01 - \$ .05
1975	\$.01 - \$ .01

We're reminded by the figures of the old Christmas song - you know, the one about the half penny.

"Christmas is a coming, the goose is getting fat

Please put a penny in an old man's hat

If you haven't got a penny - a half penny will do.

If you haven't got a half penny may God Bless you.

## Economic proscription for Van Buren

# Let us sell flowers not seeds

By Guy Dubay

Van Buren is a river town. It is quite difficult for us who live oblivious of geography to realize just how much of a river town Van Buren is. The twentieth century man, with his trucks and highways, with his railroad and airplanes, with television, telephone and computer lines can virtually ignore geography. Today in Madawaska, we ship pulp across the border pretty much like as if the St. John River were not even there. So the realization of the full impact of the St. John river on a town's life can be hard for the modern man to come by.

Van Buren is what it is today, because of what happened in the past. The Blier affair may be the last swan song of river town's flirtations with industry.

Van Buren once had the largest lumber producing mill east of the Mississippi. It also had a pulp mill employing 237 workers at one time. It had two banks, four churches, a College, and large array of smaller industries. There was a cannery, a box and slat mill, assorted starch factories, and a tannery. In sum, Van Buren had money, real money - not the dollar scripts from Washington it receives these days.

How did Van Buren come to have money - and how did it come to loose it? I can explain the first part of the question. The second part is harder to come by. Nevertheless - let us try.

TO UNDERSTAND WHY Van Buren came into money one must cast one's self into a nineteenth century frame of mind. One must look at the geography of the Valley and consider its affects on the lives of men.

Jump, if you will, with me on a time machine and let us go back to Van Buren the year it came to be incorporated as a town. A thousand people sitting on farms on the bank of the St. John River is what we find. Van Buren, perched with its stores, church and hotel on a stage coach line from Fort Fairfield is about to quadruple in size. Its geography is a natural. It seems to be at the gateway of much commerce.

In 1881, the Van Buren Lumbering and Manufacturing Company is incorporated. Its corporators are Thomas Egery, Franck Wilson, William B. Hayford, Lauriston King and Peter Charles Keegan.

We know Peter Charles Keegan of Van Buren, that ubiquitous star of the European and North American Railway affair. But who are the others? Who are these people who picked Van Buren for a bold new future?

Lauriston King is a gentleman from Limestone - like Keegan he is interested in developing the home area. But Egery, Hayford and Wilson are strangers, so let us become acquainted with them.

Thomas N. Egery, a native of Harwick, Massachusetts, is an Iron manufacturer. In 1838, he joined Daniel B. Hinckley in running a foundry at Bangor under the name of Egery & Hinckley Iron Company. In 1876 when the city of Bangor defaulted on its railroad bonds, Egery and the Hinckley heirs forclosed on St. John Valley properties then held by the European and North American Railway. But in 1881 the question of farmer properties on the St. John is not an issue - so let's pass over the European & North American Railway story. In any case, Egery is a Bangor businessman and iron manufacturer.

Frank Wilson, on the other hand is a railroad man. He is not involved at this moment in building a railroad to Van Buren, but there are interests which turn his mind to the frontier town. In 1867 he became a member of the board of directors of the Bangor and Piscataquis Railroad - which was heir to Maine's first railroad. Then when the European and North American railroad is reorganized after being pulled out of receivership, he becomes in 1881 a director on the board running that railway.

William B. Hayford, also is concerned with railroading. When Bangor defaulted on its \$2,000,000 indebtedness toward the E & NA RR, William B. Hayford along with former Vice President Hannibal Hamlin are the two trustees who "receive" the railroad which falls into "receivership". As the trustees who secured Bangor City's indebtedness, they took over the railroad from the corporation which had run it into bankruptcy.

THE NATURAL QUESTION which comes to mind then is why would these big businessmen from the Queen City be interested in a lumber mill in Van Buren,

The point is, to sell steel, a good growing railroad is a natural partner. An expanding railroad buys a lot of forged steel. But then laying rails for hundred of miles will require a lot of timber for railroad ties. The best wood for railroad ties lie in the virgin forests of the Allagash.

Now in 1881, the railroad extends up to Mattawamkeag, and a railroad to Houlton is in the realm of possibilities. The B & A railroad which can obviate Canadian Pacific's influence in Presque Isle, Caribou and the St. John Valley is still a dream. But the possibilities exist and somebody's going to make a lot of money somewhere.

"If money's to be made," Egery, Wilson, and Hayford, figured "It might just as well be us making it." So with the local politicians, they dreamt up a drive of logs in the spring from Allagash to Van Buren, which would bring them the best railroad ties around. Hayford, Wilson, and Egery signed agreements and secure the incorporation of Van Buren Lumbering and Manufacturing Company.

VAN BUREN IS a river town. Its streams and brooks brought its first industries: grist mills in 1827 and saw mills in 1844. (There were earlier mills in 1791 but by 1831, these earlier structures were gone). But the river, the great river, brought Van Buren its first large scale business: producing railroad ties.

There was lumbering on the river long before Van Buren Lumber and Manufacturing Company was founded. There is evidence in our records of much transaction taking place between up river Madawaska settlements and the down river city of Fredericton. In those days, it was a lot easier to go down to that city than it was to go to Bangor.

A court case showed up in the Maine Supreme Judicial Court in 1855 to show how much geography and the river played into men's affairs. William C. Hammond of Van Buren, as a citizen of Maine, refused to recognize an indebtedness made toward Charles Long of Fredericton. Maine backed up the New Brunswick case and W. C. Hammond was defaulted by the court. Business transactions between up river and down river folk were then to be considered entirely legal.

Lumber driving companies were founded to get long pine down to St. John, New Brunswick and on to Liverpool, England, but what better place than at Van Buren could Maine business men put a stop to that flow of value Maine resources to foreign ports. What better place to sell Egery-built iron chains for log booms and Egery-founded logging equipment? Van Buren became then a gate for lumbering in Maine, and a gate with which to clamp shut to competing New Brunswick interests.

Bangor had long been hungry for northern Maine spruce. The natural flow of the St. John River into New Brunswick had long been a source of chagrin for Bangor lumbermen like Rufus Dwinel and Samuel Veazie.

IN 1839 WHILE MAINE'S militia was marching up to Fort Kent, Dwinel and others devised a scheme to diminish the St. John river's influence by altering the flow of the St. John River's headwaters into the flow of the Penobscot River head waters. A million square acres of prime timberland were withdrawn from future St. John Valley drives and diverted to Bangor rather than Fredericton.

In more modern times, Edward Lacroix's Keegan based Madawaska Company produced 250 million board feet per day. Yet his Eagle Lake railroad sent timber down the Dwinel way to Millinocket. He drove the river from both ends!

Of course, discord with Penobscot Valley lumber interests later cut short Lacroix's stay in the State. After the way, Lacroix withdrew his operations into his native Quebec province, and yet another Van Buren industry died.

Van Buren came to be because of the river. In spite of the wholesale robbery of its head waters, Van Buren grew because of the river. Its largest and heaviest industry came by the river in the days when geography determined men's affairs. International Paper Company, St. John Lumber Company, The Hammond Lumber Company, The Madawaska Company, and the earlier Van Buren Lumber Company - all relied chiefly on the geography of the Valley for their source of supply.

Van Buren had a potential far beyond what was ever realized. It was so busy being a Gateway for its raw products that it forgot to build industry of a finishing nature. Van Buren as a river town hardly got involved in the finishing of products. Only at Simplex are we today finishing the wood rather than merely gathering it. At International Paper, we did not finish the product - rather we shipped pulp stock and let other jobs in the finishing phase be created elsewhere.

IT'S THE SAME with potatoes. Van Buren Starch Company has closed its doors. We send out the raw product rather than provide work to finish them. For example if gin can be produced from the potato, why isn't there a legal gin making factory in Van Buren? Why couldn't we ship gin instead of potatoes out of the Valley.

Blier Cedar Inc. had the idea to ship finished fences out of the Valley. That provides work. But Van Buren? is a river town - it ships rather than manufactures.

I can't say Madawaska is a better town. It is busy sending out paper to Sears and Roebuck printing plants elsewhere. Now the cost of sending rolls of bland paper must be no more than that of sending printed catalogs. But in this Valley, we can't conceive attaching a printing shop to our mill - and sending out a finished product produced entirely by Valley labor.

If we have the raw products, why are not the finishing mills here? Northern trading sends out a finished product (I think). Could you imagine Northern Trading shipping out St. John River water to be mixed with Swank chemicals in New York?

Why then are we sending out potatoes and not gin, or starch, or potato chips to New York? Why are we sending plain white paper to Boston? Why will fences no longer be made in Van Buren? When Methanol is made from Allagash spruce, do you suppose a refinery could be built below the Dickey Dam? Most assuredly not! Dwinel and Company would not have it! Let's ship it down to the Penobscot where future polluting Atomic energy plants can provide the power to finish the oil into a marketable product. We are a river town. Our job is shipping not manufacturing.

ISN'T IT AMAZING that the Valley's richest men are potato shippers? Oh they are growers secondarily, but primarily they are shippers. The money's made in the shipping, not the growing - can you figure out why?

Old habits die hard. Someday I suppose, when we're tired of our hills and scenery, we'll ship them too. Why, wouldn't there be money to be made shipping loam to some God-forsaken desert out west which is being reclaimed? Or what about our slate? Wouldn't money be made by shipping that out to be finished into an array of products elsewhere?

Since the Civil war, we export our people like we've exported our products. We are a river people - we ship. Old ideas die hard - but alas, they do die.

Let us go back to nineteenth century Van Buren. Let us see what we did right; What we did wrong - and let us act with twentieth century resolve to fight for an end to the rape of the Valley.

Gentlemen, let us sell flowers - not seeds.

# History repeats itself

To the Editor,

The marvel I see in the Allagash repeat of the history of 1974-75 in 1998-99 is how little has changed. Battle lines are drawn, but the story never gets told.

In 1929, International Paper Company had a dream to control all of the headwaters of the St. John River, that includes everything from the Allagash to the Madawaska Rivers, everything from Churchill Lake to *Lac Temiscouata*.

Historians have forgotten that in 1835, Madawaska, the old *seigneurie* of 1683, became an American *seigneurie*. In 1854, when the subjects of "Reciprocity" was initiated, the *seigneur* of Madawaska, Cyrus S. Clark, lived in Bangor. He moved to Portland after having bought the saw mills on the St. Francis River - no, not the St. Francis on the St. John, but the *Rivière St-François* that runs through Shawinigan, the present home stomping ground of Jean Chrétien of the Canadian Liberals.

Back in 1854, the prime movers of the Maine forest were international in scope, but nobody ever tells you the story of the *seigneur* de Madawaska of Bangor. "Reciprocity" in 1854 was another name for "Free Trade" as we use it today. The boundaries were lowered, that is until the Civil War, but the results were rail lines that stretch from Portland to Montreal and dreams to tie Portland with St. John, N.B. So much for the Aroostook War, but then came the Civil War.

A generation later, it was

Reciprocity again - the Treaty of Washington of 1871. By then the American Ambassador to Sweden, W.W. Thomas was the *seigneur* de Madawaska. He literally owned a third of the woodlands around *Lac Temiscouata*. Then the rail lines in 1876 extended from Bangor to St. John, N.B. and in 1878, from St. John To Edmundston, N.B. The first line was called the European & North American Railway which was later absorbed into the Maine Central Railroad.

These were prime movers - people who understood that things which stand still, like mills, factories and churches, stand on a foundation of motion. If nothing moves, if there's no trade or commerce, buildings fall on their own like the old sawmills of the Madawaska Company in Van Buren in 1929.

Which brings us back to IP in 1929. It's written in the Maine Law books, IP had plans approved in Maine Law to build a paper mill in Fort Kent. With the power to control, the water of *Lac Temiscouata* and the head waters of the St. John, including the Fish River chain of lakes, IP would have the source of energy at Grand Falls to power the mills at Fort Kent. The entire watershed would be controlled so there would be no spring freshet or floods, and the rapidly rising and falling of the St. John River would be regulated evenly through spring, summer and fall, giving Grand Falls an even flow of energy for IP paper mills in Fort Kent.

But then the New York stock market crashed and IP drew its

power lines from Grand Falls to Dalhousie instead of Fort Kent.

To understand Allagash in 1998-99, one must understand the prime movers who make things stand still on the basis of motion. Power, energy, motion, the prime forces, stand behind monuments which stand still - monuments we call landmarks, like paper mills and cathedrals.

We already have an east-west highway in Maine. It's been called in New England Magazine, the Golden Road. We already have the highway, but we don't realize it because its in private hands, in the hands of prime movers with whom the Pamphile road blockers want to negotiate.

The problem with the Allagash matter is a case of untaught history. So long as the scholars will have us fiddling old songs and telling folktales as the fodder of our history, no one here will ever understand the Irving rationale of "cut a tree, plant a tree" and no one will understand that only reciprocity can build I-95 to Fort Kent.

A road stands still to permit motion - movement. But you'll never understand still life in northern Maine until you grasp the history of prime movers like Cyrus S. Clark, W.W. Thomas, Edouard Lacroix and K.C. Irving.

Irving was once asked what motivated him. He answered, "I like to see the wheels turn."

There's so much history to be told, yet we gather together and sing "Evangeline."

Guy Dubay  
Madawaska

# To dam or not to dam

by Guy Dubay

Editor,

To Dam or not to dam? That is the question. Frankly, few people would credit me with being undecided on the dam. I went to the public hearing last Thursday not to convince but to be convinced.

What I saw disappointed me. I saw a group of people who came not to hear but to be heard. They came not to deliberate but to proselytize. They came not to learn but to teach. Before you can teach, however, you must learn and I felt hurt personally to see so many trying to teach before they had learned.

Frankly, I came into the meeting wanting to be convinced that the dam should not be built, but the prejudiced behavior that I saw on the part of some dam opponents only serves to polarize my thinking - and if there's anything that I resent it's polarized thinking.

Rumor has it that the commercial property of a Dickey Dam proponent was vandalized during the hearing. I certainly hope that such damage can never be traced to what was happening in the hearing, but if it does, I'm sorry to say that violence not only tends to polarize my thinking but crystalizes it. Such would tend to make me hate even myself because I've always said that I hate closed minds.

I am willing to hear and be convinced, but rudeness and violence will do the exact opposite. The violence belies inner weakness. It is characteristic of a child's temper tantrum. Patient consideration of an opponents thoughts and ideas requires greater maturity and strength.

The comments that I made at the hearing were formulated in part at the hearing, after giving consideration to the thoughts of other people. I do credit the opponents of the dam with good arguments but the general behavior of some partly discredits their cause.

The opponents' message which did penetrate into my hard head

and which still gnaws at my heart was delivered in part by Mrs. Hope McBreairty and Robert O'Leary. I can't quote or recite the main tenor of their thoughts but both came across as being deeply rooted in Allagash living.

That made more sense to me than all superficial arguments which ran the gamut from drugs and prostitution to elusive mercury and selenium. There's was not the hackneyed arguments of the "avoid the boom or bust crowd" which can readily be answered by equally superficial logic. (E.g. I understand you do not want to create a job for me now because you fear that in seven years I'll probably end up on the welfare roles, but why do you want me to join the unemployment roles seven years a head of time?)

Such arguments do not get at the heart of the matter. The fate of the Allagash community does. That is why I call those arguments semantics - words that feed the debate but do not get at the roots of the situation. And I'm sorry to say that so much of the Dickey Dam debate has dealt with peripheral and less substantive matters than the fate of the Allagash culture.

But the opponents of the dam have reduced the Allagash Community to a statistic. They translate the humanity of these people to a number. They talk of the 161 families without reference to the hearts and minds of the people. But history shows that what made the Acadian people understood was not the cold statistic of 8000 persons deported from Nova Scotia but the tale of one girl, Evangeline, as written by Longfellow.

Perhaps, that's why I'm more touched by the thoughts of Hope McBreairty than all the scientific and technological arguments. I'm told that of all people, I as an Acadian, should have a sympathetic understanding of the Allagash Community's impending "deportation." But when I'm

faced with the rudeness and closed mindedness I saw on the part of some opponents, I'm tempted to react in kind and become an unthinking and unsympathetic Acadian.

I believe that if another hearing is ever to be conducted on this issue that it ought to be held at Allagash School or St. Francis School rather than at UMFK. Some would say that it would be an inconvenience to move the crowd up there and that it would be impractical. But why must we always make the Allagashers come to us to have us discuss their fate? Why shouldn't we be the ones to disrupt our routines a bit to

go to them when we discuss Allagash's fate? You see little injustices like this speak to me more clearly than does all the proselytizing and haranguing. Words are often empty. Actions speak more clearly.

I'm not against the dam opponents. I only want them to do their job well. They must be convincing or their fate is sealed. They must learn to answer their critics, not to close their minds. We must not be opposite poles of a magnet. We Valley people must all learn to be one magnet pulling together.

My advise to "Valley Residents Against Dickey-Lincoln" is: Stop

acting like scientists and engineers which you are not, start acting like residents which you are. Take your position patiently with its nine arguments and choose eight of them out for you are sociologists, economists, t consultants, etc.

Concentrate on the first face 1, the displacement of 161 families from their homes for you a home owners (or mortgages) a residency is the one fact you really know something about. You've got to get into the blood and guts of the issue, man.

"And this above all, to thine own self be true."

# Lessons of the past

To the Editor,

In troubled times as these are, we have the lessons of the past to help us, and if the lesson of the Fort Kent Trust Company were heeded, bankers today would do everything they could to pull their monies out of their investment portfolios and thrust it back into their loan portfolios where the money would do the most good - that is, if they understood the lesson of the Fort Kent Trust Company.

A bank can cease being a bank while making money just as the Fort Kent Trust showed a net profit every year it was in operation including the year it closed. The lesson of the Fort Kent Trust is that there's more to a bank than making money, there's a public service role, too - and a bank that begins to swing its money into investment portfolios begins to move away from public service to concentrate on making money, period.

In the late 1920s, the Fort Kent Trust did just that by switching its portfolios from Main Street to Wall Street. Instead of investing in the people and products on Main Street, it began to invest in paper money in its several forms, but the problem with that is that paper money ends up in a house of cards.

I repeat, the Trust made money every year it operated and here's the story of what led up to its failure:

The best years of the Fort Kent Trust, if its net profit is used as our measure, were the post World War I years. That was when its stockholders received 12% dividends (I'm not referring to interest on deposits, but dividends on stocks here). Then there was that dip through 1922-23 when the country went through an economic adjustment. This was followed by a mad investment spree (buying stocks on margin) during the Model T-Ford years, the Charleston dance era, flappers and rum-runners of the Prohibition era.

While the country went money crazy, however, the lumber market went soft and the Trust's directorship was heavily interlocked with area saw-mill directorships. Yet, the vital point that must be noted is that 1927 was the best year the bank had in five years, but still that was the year that the bank president's life ended tragically. Now why would there be such a sad ending when the figures looked up?

We don't know but perhaps the president understood what the directors did not want to hear. He, who understood banking, could read the signs and didn't like the direction which the directors had begun to carry the bank. Maybe he understood that a bank's profits ought to be based on services rendered. With his passing, however, the bank marched head-long into building up its investment portfolio.

In 1928, the bank's profits dropped 20%, still showing a profit. Nevertheless, its impending doom shielded from its own eyes. 1929 profits fell another 50%+ but a profit no less still showed the entire operation to be in the black. No red ink was in sight.

In fact, 1930 proved good as profits doubled over 1929. So everything looked fine if you looked at it from a stockholder-director's point of view. But what of the guy on Main Street? He came in to ask the bank if he could borrow in order to restock his automobile tire stock in his service station. The directors said, no deal. A pastor, who had earlier received a loan to finance construction of a new church, came in for more in order to complete the job. The bank said no. A neighboring priest tried the same thing. The bank said no.

A farmer came in to get an extension on his loan. He had already sold his crop but was still awaiting payment from the farmer's exchange. The bank insisted on calling in the loan, threatening foreclosure rather than offering refinancing. In short, while making a profit, the bank had ceased to be of service to the people on Main Street.

Why was this done? The answer may well lie in Boston and the Atlantic National Bank which had earlier advanced the Trust with large loans, loans invested not on Main Street (loan portfolio) but on Wall Street (investment portfolio).

When banks do that, they become like denatured alcohol - it loses its taste for customers. It happens every other generation. When a new generation of managers and presidents get wise to the fact that liability management (the true function of banks) can be supplemented by asset management. That is when bankers rediscover money markets and paper assets anew. That is what happened in the late 1920s when the generation that hadn't experienced the panic of 1893 began to replace the older

generation, like the late president of Fort Kent Trust. It happened again in the 1970s (remember getting 15% on your CD's? when the 1930s bank presidents who held on through the 1950 and kept banking tight, began to be replaced by a new breed, a la *Lance*).

However, the asset management process denatured the bank itself as its money-making capacity became ingrown rather than being outwardly oriented as it would be if the bank concentrated on its service role.

If the pastor wants a loan for a new church roof, let him have it for that means lumber sales on Main Street, carpenter salaries on the side streets and Christmas sales in the malls. But deny him the loan and the impact is a belt tightening all around that cuts off sales and hence sales tax revenues to the state.

Yet, while doing that, moving liabilities into assets gives a bank an influx in its profits that drugs bankers as much as mescaline shot in an arm on a back street. These profits cause bank managers to hallucinate and they believe they are doing their organization a service. They really do, but it's a denatured bank that they operate. Try buying a house, even at a deflated price. you can't because there aren't enough liability managers around to offer you a service.

We can blame our governor all we want and call him a liar and lots of dirty names. We can rage and fume and spit wooden nickels but it's not going to fix things. Raise taxes, you say? You can't raise taxes on those who have no revenue to pay them. You really have got to look deeper and rediscover the strength within ourselves, the strength of the guys on Main Street. The real way out of the crisis lies neither in cutting state budgets or raising taxes, but in turning the money markets away from a paper market back to a solid market. Such solids as the physical products which money will buy on Main Street.

Roosevelt turned the economy around by extending credit (increasing liability managed portfolios). Today, government itself is not postured to help, it's too deficit ridden to provide a solution, because it's loaded over with all of those so-called assets which the banks are busy managing.

So government cannot do now what Roosevelt did, but the banks can. If they will shift their policy from betting on government to betting on people they can avoid the plunge taken by the Fort Kent Trust in 1931 when its assets were taken over by the Atlantic National Bank which, in 1932, was taken over by the First National Bank of Boston.

To understand our own times we must recover our own history, a heritage of a little bank that failed. Not as a banker, but as a historian, I could tell that story and the lesson of the Fort Kent Trust Company.

Guy Dubay  
Madawaska

Guest column

# Clearcutting and the rising spring freshet

by Guy Dubay  
Madawaska

Tessie Dubois's marvelous work on the Allagash about moving homes out of the flood way and making distinction relative to the flood way and the flood plain leads me to what I call the long view of the St. John River.

While doing research for the American Folklife team based at the Library of Congress, I had the opportunity to think about the St. John River as it once was.

Though we can only go back in time in our imaginations, while looking at certain historical facts, I was led to imagine a very different river from that which we know today.

In checking into the background of certain Daigle homes, I had to consider references which states that originally the Daigle Brothers, Hilarion, Dominique and Firmin, made their home on Daigle Island, once called Pine Island, from 1810.

Giving thought to the Fred Albert home, now an Historical Society house, once again I was told that originally it had been built "closer to the river" than where the family later set it.

The same tradition is told about the Val Violette house in Van Buren - that it was originally set "closer to the river" and that it was brought up on the rise above the river and enlarged in 1850, the year Ambroise Violette was born.

In Frenchville, there is an old barn on Raymond Island and flood waters come near it very spring, but might it not be that there once was more logic to building that barn there back at the barnraising than today? Could it be possible that there was a time when the spring freshet was not as severe as today because the forest cover in the headwaters did a better job of retaining snowmelt than today?

What about the names Big Black and Little Black? How did those

names come about? Rivers reflect the color of the sky. The St. John River, from some vantages, looks blue on a clear day and has a somber grey look on rainy days. That is because the St. John's gentle slopes allow us certain vistas.

*La Rivière-Verte*, or Green River, is set in a steeper valley whose hillsides, more than azure of the sky gets reflected in its waters, thus Green River. But when tall pines, soaring a 120 feet high hugged the banks of the Little Black, the very narrowness of the stream was such that the forest cover nearly obfuscates the skies and, when a river runs deep, what color does the water take when the forest nearly arches overhead? - Why, black, of course.

In the days when the Daigle's lived on the island, the Alberts and Violettes near the sore and virgin pines hugged the banks of the Little Black, the forest may well have retained a coolness which our clearcut areas allow to dissipate more rapidly. So it tickles the imagination to wonder whether the spring flood in the pioneer era were perhaps less severe than today. Snow melts in mid-April might have lingered into early May under the shade of the towering forest which gave the river a back appearance. Only when the gentle summer breezes whispered through the pines did the last of the snows - yea, even into early June - yield to their eventual liquid form.

Thus our ancestors may not have been subjected to the 25 foot waters raging past the Fort Kent dike when the first of the Diamond sisters stopped to pee on Gardner Island

(or was it Savage Island, Cathie?). The logic of building on Daigle Island may well have been sound in the years when all the islands were much valued for the forage they provided for oxen.

Now the people of Allagash are forced back from the river like the Acadians of Madawaska were forced of the flood plain (*le plain des Dufours*) several generations ago, for the new clearcut has been forced back further and further upstream - and, as it happens, the onrush of spring waters increase as the barren soil gets a sun tan. As this happens, the onrush of spring waters increases.

Unlike the Allagash, the St. John has always been a rapidly undulating river because of its lack of major lakes and ponds in its head waters. The forest cover tended to regulate the flow some, back in the day when the Little Black and the Big Black rarely saw the azure sky.

But John "the Main" Glasier began to change things and so did Shepard Cary and the Perley Brothers, John and Thomas E. Thus, shortly after, when Big-Twenty began to yield ton-timber and even masts and spars for his Majesty's Nivee (Navy), the Alberts and Violettes and Daigles began to think just what Arthur Kelly now has to contemplate.

Of course Big Twenty is further north than Baker Lake on the St. John and snowmelt there comes nearer to ice-out at Dickey than at Daaquam. Removing the forest cover might not have the same effect there as one might find at Daaquam or some other places due south of the county line that warms

up two or three weeks earlier in the spring than our portion of the valley. Haven't you seen the snows in the gullies at St. Honore while the crocus were budding here? This Allagash flood was an ice jam flood - not a river crest flood like we get from snow-melt below St. Francis. This means that the ice cover in the more southerly reaches of our head waters may be breaking earlier in the season than we are used to seeing - largely as a result of man changing the forest rapidly.

Trees die and trees have always died, but skidders are not oxen, and Glasier's teams may have been more selective in making their cut, so the trees did not all die at once, as in a clearcut. The Glasier crew never cut to the swell of a tree because they wouldn't bother an axman to shovel deep snow. But now the snow dissipates in March and April as the lengthening days and warming sun impacts directly onto rock and soil. The rate of ice-out upstream is more rapid and sudden, so the ice pressure becomes greater and greater because the Little Black and Big Black aren't black any more.

The sun knows that even the Allagash is no longer the Allagash beyond a thousand feet from its shores. Oh, we've kept a few trees on the shorelines to give canoers an illusion as have we done with superhighway - wide roads crisscrossing through the wild. We've created creatures that run in the wood on imported Arab oil rather than fodder from the Michaud farm or the Seven Islands Settlement. Oil, Arab oil, had conquered even Cunliffe Dept. Nobody worries about "widow-makers" any more.

Welcome to the logic of civilization somewhere above the flood plain.

# The battle of Ripogenus

BY GUY DUBAY

Nothing made me more American than the battle of Ripogenus. Yet, how strange it is, one can not find it listed anywhere in the history books.

The Battle of Ripogenus was not fought by standing armies. No clash of Arms ever resounded out of Ripogneus, yet there in the mid-forest of the north, the fate of a people was sealed. At Ripogenus, the Acadians became Americans.

A Bi-monthly commentary  
by the Times  
columnist-at-large

Ripogenus is a dam somewhere in the head waters of the Allagash. I have never been there, so I can't tell you precisely where the dam is. But Ripogenus was the key to re-affirming the Webster-Ashburton treaty, for at Ripogenus they cut out the St. John Valley's "British Connection".

OLD TOWN everybody knows is a French town. Ever since the 1840's when the Acadians of the Valley became Americans, Old Town has witnessed the flow of Dubay's and Lavoie's from this valley to the Penobscot.

The point is, that with the Building of the Ripogenus Dam, lumbering on the St. John gave way to lumbering on the Penobscot. Just at that time our cousins like wise made the switch from driving lumber down the St. John

to doing the same on the Penobscot. Our ancestors were lumberjacks, you know.

Prior to the building of the Ripogenus, then, the head waters from the lakes region of upper western Maine (e.g. Churchill, Umsumskis, and others) all flowed down the Allagash and the St. John. This made the St. John into a mighty river. This powerful current caused by the melting snows served as the ideal force to deliver the highland, long-pine down to the ocean-tide.

Yet this meant that Maine lumber had to travel down to Fredericton and St. John N.B. In those days, the Frenchmen who settled here in 1785 most often spent the winter in lumber work, while summers could be devoted to the family subsistence-level farm. The lumber brought then Shillings from London and Liverpool.

Ripogenus changed all that by diverting head waters of the western Maine lakes into the Western branches of the Penobscot. Thus Bangor rather than Fredericton became the birthplace of Paul Bunyan.

PAUL BUNYAN was a Frenchman, you know. His parents could well have come from the St. John Valley, but being lumbering people they moved to Old Town when Ripogenus was built: and Old Town is just a spit's throw from Bangor, heh?

Ripogenus ripped the St. John Valley's British Connection.

We know that in the 1830's,

French sentiment in the Valley was more pro-British than pro-American. In fact, when Pierre Lizotte "won" election to the State Legislature, he wrote to the Governor that we would not serve because he, Lizotte, was in fact a British subject.

Indeed most residents who held land deeds for their Valley properties had gotten them in 1790 or 1826 from Fredericton authorities. Hence during the Bloodless Aroostook War, so called, we can understand the reluctance with which our ancestors declared themselves "American".

WITH THE DAM at Ripogenus however, the mighty St. John lost some of its head waters. Lumbering in the north took on a lesser importance than that on the Penobscot. Long pine afterwards was floted to Van Buren instead of Fredericton. There the Hammond Lumber Company processed it and shipped it by way of the new Bangor and Aroostook railroad to southern markets.

Lumber built Bangor and Bangor built the railroad. The railroad linked the Valley economically and politically with the State. The battle was over, the war was won, and the Acadians became Americans.

# Tid bits of history

by Guy Dubay

There were six of them, Dennis Pelkey of Allagash, Nazaire St. John of Fort Kent, John Sweeney of Fort Kent, John Ranney, the leader, a Mr. Gardner of Allagash and another man whose name escapes me right now. They went way upstream to blow the dam...Chamberlain Dam,

that is.

The year was 1907 or so, a fairly dry year and, come July, the drive was still hung up just below Allagash Falls.

Arthur Brown from the St. John Lumber Company in Keegan came up to Fort Kent to lay a mouthful in John Ranney's ear. "Get the water", Brown said, "I don't care

how, just get the water."

Now Ranney was no shaman. He didn't believe rain dance hocus pocus would work. He probably didn't expect prayer to work either. So he got himself a crew and poled his way up to Chamberlain.

What the Chamberlain Dam did back then was to raise the level of the lake some so that the water, instead of flowing out the Allagash like God intended, would spill out the Telos Cut and from Webster Pond down the Penobscot like man intended.

When the party of six left Fort Kent in late July, they set out to get St. John water back from the Penobscot. They got the water and thus the drive down to Van Buren.

F. W. Aver of Bangor was rip-roaring mad, but our boys got the water anyway.

Now that may seem hard to imagine today with Grand Falls on the St. John sitting more than 200 miles from the Argyle Boom above Old Town, but that's exactly what the men did that year.

*(Notes drawn from Attorney William Smith's Collection on the St. John River Commission.)*



# Understanding our history

To the Editor,

The Allagash is our symbolic beacon portending the future. Small towns experience the future before larger organization get to feel the present. Large organizations, like the government, often live in the past. Take as example the bonded laborer programs in the Maine woods. Why do we have a bonded laborer program in the Maine woods? The answer is: to do what is necessary to beat Adolph Hitler.

Yes, you read that right: to beat Adolph Hitler. That's why we're importing foreign labor in Maine - and yes, Government is that slow to change its laws.

Our government is locked in the past, but Troy Jackson lives in the present - with his need of getting nine months' work to keep ahead of the mortgage collector on the equipment he needs for his job.

I understand Troy Jackson. The question is can we understand our government? To that requires a run through history in order to grasp the origins of the Maine bonded laborer program.

In the 1920's, Edouard Lacroix, a prime mover, came in from St. Georges de Beauce, Quebec, and took over the forest industry from the preceding generation that had built Keegan mills. The St. John Lumber Company organized in 1902 had the largest sawmills east of the Mississippi. Lacroix consolidated these assets and those of the Van Buren Lumber Company into what he named the Madawaska Company. With that company, he drove the St. John River-Allagash River both ways. He sent long lumber down river to Keegan and wood pulp upriver to Millinocket.

The came the depression, during which Lacroix himself aged. After running the Keegan mill in spurts through the early thirties, the mills ground to a halt. Then came World War II. At that point K.C. Irving was supplying veneer to de Haviland Aircraft of Great Britain from his company called Canada Veneers. The US, on the other hand, needed hardwood for the inner parts of the P-38 wings. The government under the War-Time Small Industries Act formed a new corporation. The Van Buren-Madawaska Corporation headquartered in Portland. This corporation bought out the Lacroix interests in Keegan.

In order to supply the mills of Keegan with the lumber products required by the US government through the Van Buren-Madawaska Corporation, the Maine bonded labor program was set in place. De Haviland got its veneer from Irving and the Army Air Corps got its parts from Van

Buren and as allies, we won the war.

But once in place, a government regulation does not automatically drop out of sight as the original need does. After the war, Irving's St. John Sulfite Ltd. bought the Van Buren mills of the government and founded Van Buren-Madawaska Corporation.

Van Buren, through crops subsidy programs and the Limestone Air Force base construction in the 1950's, lived through such prosperity as to feel confident in rejecting K.C. Irving's requested tax concessions on a planned new mill in Keegan. His reaction to Van Buren's negative decision was to pull out that corporation's movable assets, largely to Escourt, from whence supervision of Irving forest-land interests in Maine could continue. Eventually, those interests reemerged in Maine as present-

day operators of the Van Buren-Madawaska Corporation mills at St. John.

There are other sundry details of the Maine Forest industrial history, but this, briefly is our rarely discussed view of history of the Maine woods as it concerns the origin of the Maine bonded laborer program.

As a child, I witness the sight of K.C. Irving's twin engined seaplane drop down behind the horizon as it headed for a landing in the head pond of Grand Falls, a pond that reaches up the St. John River to Van Buren. It is a memory etched in my mind. We interrupted our sandlot baseball at every arrival of K.C. Irving in town. It's a history I cannot forget. I believe it's history that is relevant to understand our own day.

Guy Dubay  
Madawaska

# Railroad brings FK into the 20th century

To the Editor,

Why have a museum in a railroad station? First of all, there's the generosity of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company itself in granting the real-estate to the Fort Kent Historical Society. But beyond this current generosity, there are historical reasons as well that make the old railroad station a fine site for recollecting our past.

Even with a teacher-training school in 1878, a telephone company in 1895 and other assorted amenities, Fort Kent, before the railroad era, was valued at a rate no different than the neighboring agricultural-pastoral communities near by.

But then, look at what happened to Fort Kent's valuation upon the arrival of the railroad. Look at the jump in Fort Kent's valuation from 1901 to 1902, and note the continued progression in Fort Kent's valuation in the years

immediately following the arrival of the railroad, while near-by communities continued to progress at the more moderate pastoral rate.

The fact is the railroad brought Fort Kent into the 20th century. In fact, not only did the arrival of the railroad result in establishing a bank like the Fort Kent Trust in 1903, but it provided area farmers with increased access to city markets - and hence, you would find a growth in farming activity being attributable to the arrival of the railroad in Fort Kent.

It's the railroad that allowed Fort Kent to evolve into a modern business and commercial center. Thirty businesses now operate on Market Street where at the turn of the century, we saw the rise of potato storage and shipping facilities which we have portrayed in an old photo on exhibit at the Fort Kent Historical Society Museum.

While the Blockhouse repre-

sents a valued artifact of the community's pioneer era, the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Station represents a tremendous record of this community's development to our modern way of life.

I believe traffic surveys can show that Market Street-Main Street is the corner with the heaviest traffic load of all intersections in the St. John Valley today. That vitality and dynamism owes its origin to the establishment of the railroad here in 1902.

Through July, the Fort Kent Historical Society maintains open hours at the museum on weekdays. In addition to tourists, guests, visitors, ordinary citizens and regular residents of Fort Kent are invited to come and tour the real historic artifact: the railroad museum which lies at the roots of our present-modern heritage.

Guy Dubay  
Madawaska

# 'So it is between a trucker and his family', like old Acadians

To the Editor,  
Acadians today.

No one perhaps is more like the Acadians of old than a trucker. Much like cod fishermen at the helm of their boats, the man behind the wheel of the 18 wheeler acts like his forefather - he leaves home and family behind and goes "*au large*" to bring home the bacon.

Like the coastal fisherman, he relies on his wife who utters the same kind of inner prayer that he does, for safe passage and return with a full boat. To come back empty is as much a defeat for a trucker as the man with an empty hull.

When we moved away from the sea more than 200 years ago, it was still the same. The wife kept the home fires burning while he went "*au Large*"

*dans les sentiers* - and, much like the Acadian facing a tidal wave, the man felling a tree might be crushed by some falling limb or even a sudden wind that shifts the fall of timber on him.

Today, a sudden white-out of blowing snow can leave a trucker as blind as a cod fisherman in a squall and send the tractor-trailer careening off the road.

We've all seen tractor trailers by the wayside with contents spilled on the road. These are the tragedies of Acadians today.

The dangers are as present on the road as they were at sea and forest, and it is still the longing between the man, wife, family and even community that is the basis of our Acadianism - for what was the religion of the Acadians but a sense of family in the hand of God?

While the husband was out at sea, the wife worked her own portion - cleaning, salting, drying, packaging and even marketing the fish, the produce of her husband's labor. She lived the uncertainties of her husband and his absence and thus had to show a spirit of decisiveness and initiative on her own.

To the rhythm of her husband she shared his interest,

anxieties, prayers, beliefs and hopes.

Just as there was a community of spirit between the man and his family that ran across the waves in the days of old Acadia, so it is between the trucker and his family today. The kids may be in

school and mom may be at her own worksite but all centers around the trucker's return.

Recently one trucker I knew called home just before he died on the road and said to his wife, "You and the

children are the best thing that ever happened in my life".

Aimes, partonts sans bruit;  
La peche sera bonne; La lune  
que revonne elairera la  
nuit.....

Guy Dube  
Madawaska