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Some Spencer History

By Floyd I. Ferris

1958

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Preface

In these days of world tension, it is reassuring to look back 150 years, in some instances, to the days shortly after the Revolution. We see pioneer families settling in Spencer, firm in the belief that all wars were over and a Divine Providence was guiding their destinies. And so they set to work to build their share of the Nation that emerged.

In a book of this size, it has been impossible to list all names identified with the history of the town and village. Available material has been checked and it is hoped dates are correct. So many persons have assisted me that there is not sufficient space here to list all but to them go my sincere thanks, for preparation of the material has required a great deal of correspondence with them in a search for dates and other vital information.

The work was undertaken on the invitation of William Heidt, Jr., curator of the DeWitt Historical Society in Ithaca, in an effort to enable pupils,

parents and teachers to learn some of the history of pioneer Spencer. If I have succeeded in even a small measure, I shall be satisfied.

FLOYD I. FERRIS

1609 15th St. W., Bradenton, Fla.

September 2, 1958.

Contents

Spencer's Historical Background

Many centuries ago this section of Tioga County we now call Spencer was a primeval forest, virtually boundless and trackless. The dense carpet of decaying leaves and other vegetation formed a sponge that soaked up rain and melting snow. This water was released from the hillsides in small trickles which supplied moisture for crops of the agriculturally-minded Indians, sustained luxuriant forest growth, kept streams filled and limited erosion.

Just which tribe of Indians had its villages and longhouses near Spencer is not known. The Cayugas were at Ithaca. The Tuscaroras, ethnically related to the Iroquois, migrated from the Carolinas about 1715 and were settled among the Cayugas and Oneidas, the least warlike of the Five Nations. The Saponis from Virginia were located at Pony Hollow and the Tutelos from North Carolina were assigned a site at Coreogonel, now known as Inlet Valley.

Preceding the Revolution, the British incited the Iroquois to fight as allies against the French. At the outbreak of the Revolution, the alliance was turned against the colonists and the Iroquois began raiding outlying settlements. However, the Cayugas and Oneidas often befriended the colonists.

To end these raids, in 1779 Gen. John Sullivan led an expedition from Easton, Pa., that was augmented by New York State militia at Tioga Point, now Athens, Pa. After a quick victory at Newtown, now Elmira, Sullivan laid waste to the Iroquois country as far west as the Genesee. On returning, he sent a detachment down each side of Cayuga Lake to complete the devastation of the Indian settlements. Sullivan's orders were to destroy the villages, orchards and crops so utterly as to put it out of British power to derive the smallest succor from their Iroquoian allies.

The Indian lands were declared a part of the new nation by right of conquest and, after being surveyed, were opened to settlement in 1788. Twenty-eight towns were laid out in a military tract and awarded for military service. Disbanded soldiers of Sullivan's forces told such glowing stories of this territory that adventurous groups soon started west to establish new homes in the wilderness. When trails gave out, they blazed their own—the Dark Forest awaited the construction of roads.

Log cabins were the first dwellings of the pioneers and were built as soon as possible after the arrival of the settlers. They were made of logs cut on the spot and squared on three sides with broadaxes. Cracks between the logs were chinked with mud; floors were of earth that soon packed down;

a thatched roof topped the house; oil paper served for window pane and for a door a piece of cloth or pelts sufficed. There was but little room and neither attic nor cellar.

Tallow candles were the first means of lighting. These were dipped by hand, and every home had a candle mold. Kerosene or coal oil, as it was sometimes called, was next used after the late 1850's until electricity became available about 1898.

Fireplaces large enough to hold 4- to 6-foot logs supplied heat. Ovens were built at the ends of the fireplace to provide facilities for baking while the cooking was done in kettles hung on trivets or cranes over the fire. Johnnycake and corn meal mush made of ground corn were staples in the diet. Johnnycake was another name for Shawnee-cake, a kind of bread made by Shawnee Indians.

Older people slept downstairs but the younger usually slept on the second floor after two-storied houses replaced the cabins. Not infrequently the upstairs was reached by a ladder. Bed warmers, made of sheet iron or brass and having a long handle, were filled with coals and rubbed over the bed sheets to remove the chill. Soapstones were heated or bottles of hot water were placed in beds to warm the feet. Ropes were webbed to the bedsteads and served as springs and supported a strawtick on top of which was another "tick" filled with chicken or goose

feathers. Pillows were filled with these feathers.

The first settlers were Benjamin Drake, Joseph Barker and John Barker in 1794. Also among early settlers were Joshua Ferris, Henry Miller, Edmond and Rodney Hobart and George Fisher from Connecticut. Andrew Purdy and Thomas Mosher were from Westchester County, N. Y.

The town was named after Judge Ambrose Spencer, an eminent jurist of the state at the time the town was organized in 1806.

The first town meeting was held in the home of Jacobus Shenichs, who presumably lived somewhere in the southwestern part of the town. This was in 1806, and Joel Smith was elected supervisor; Joshua Ferris, town clerk; Edmond Hobart, Daniel H. Bacon and Levi Slater, assessors; Joseph Barker, justice; Moses Read, Benjamin Jennings and Joseph Barker, commissioners of highways; Lewis Beers and Samuel Westbrook, overseers of the poor; Isaiah Chambers, collector; John Shoemaker, Nathan Beers, William Cunan, John Murphy and Isaiah Chambers, constables; John F. Bacon, John McQuigg, John Mulks, Jacob Swartwood, poundmasters; John L. Speed, John English, Joseph L. Horton, Jacob Herinton, Alexander Ennes and Lewis Beardslee, fenceviewers.

Town officers included—Supervisors: 1806-10, Joel Smith; 1811, Nathaniel Scofield; 1812-13,

Isaac Swartwood; 1824-29, Horace Giles; 1830-32, Mose Stevens. Town Clerks: 1806-31, Joshua Ferris; 1832-34, John McQuigg; 1835-36, Elihu Butts; 1837, John McQuigg; 1838-45, William Post. Justices: 1806-29, Joseph Barker; 1830, Israel Hardy; 1831, Elihu Butts; 1832-33, George Fisher; 1834, Robert Pennett.

In 1806, Tioga County was divided. All east of Owego Creek was assigned to Broome, then being organized. Newtown (Elmira) was made the county seat, but it was so far off the center of the county that Spencer was selected.

On Feb. 17, 1810, the State Legislature authorized the building of a courthouse and jail at Spencer. The cost was $6,000. The county clerk's office was erected at Spencer in 1818. John J. French was caretaker of the courthouse and jail.

In 1821, the courthouse burned, and for the next two years court was held in improvised quarters.

When the towns of Owego, Newark Valley, Berkshire and Richford were detached from Broome and restored to Tioga about 1822, Owego was made the county seat.

By the act of Feb. 17, 1810, Joshua Ferris, Isaac Swartwood and Samuel Westbrook were appointed a committee to superintend the construction of a courthouse and jail at Spencer. The building was erected by Andrew Purdy. In 1818, Joshua Ferris,

Abel Hart and Henry Miller were appointed commissioners to erect a fireproof county clerk's office. Three years after the other county buildings were burned, the clerk's office building was sold in 1824.

Early traders brought tea, coffee, tobacco, crockery, sugar, powder, lead and whiskey which they traded for the pelts of marten, otter, beaver, fox, bear and deer.

As in most towns emerging from the pioneer era, railroads opened for Spencer a new avenue of communication and faster moving of farm products to market. With the advent of motor vehicles, better highways were built. By use of trucks, payloads are pin-pointed to any place in town. This competition has gradually had its effect on the railroads with the end result that many have been forced to curtail if not abandon many passenger trains and lines. Freight stations usually but a few miles apart have been abandoned and freight is now consigned to nearby villages and cities.

The first macadam highway in Tioga County was built in 1908 and was under State supervision. It was a stretch of about four miles from the corner of Main and Tioga Streets to the Candor town line. It followed the contour of the old road but was well built and lasted 40 years. Since then more macadam, concrete and county roads have been built.

Airplanes and buses have taken a large part of

railroad passenger revenue. Buses, in particular, have proved more convenient for travel to and from Spencer.

Introduction of the farm tractor and power-driven tools has practically eliminated horse-drawn implements. The tractor has been harnessed to do a large share of the work once done by hand labor. After displacing the pioneer's ox team by 1880, during the last 30 years the horse has all but been replaced by the tractor. Availability of electricity to the farm is changing tasks around house and barn. Rural living has been revolutionized since the era of our parents so much that one early essential—the hired man—approaches the point of extinction.

Agricultural education through colleges, high schools and extension courses has taught farmers scientific and practical methods of profitable farming and a far less arduous life than that accepted at the opening of this century. Future Farmers and the 4-H Clubs are doing their share to make life on the farm attractive to rural boys and girls.

Second-growth timber is being harvested in many parts of the town and processed in portable sawmills. There seems to be a good supply of hardwood trees. Chestnut trees never recovered from the disastrous blight which ruined them 50 years ago, but a blight-resistant species holds promise that these majestic trees will return to northern uplands.

John Avery Nichols

John Avery Nichols, born in Athens, Pa., came to Spencer in 1815 and opened a law office. Twice married, he was the father of 11 children. He died November 17, 1885, and was buried in the Nichols plot in Evergreen Cemetery.

Mr. Nichols took a leading part in town improvments. Among these was landscaping the park later named in his honor. Older citizens say that he operated his own nursery, which included most of the land bounded by Academy Street, Park Street, Tioga Street and Railroad Avenue.

His first home was just south of the present baseball diamond and near the Henry Emmons residence. This burned, and Mr. Nichols next occupied a home on the south side of Academy Street, near the creek. Residents of later years cannot pinpoint the exact location of either house but those given here represent a consensus.

The first interment in what is now Evergreen Cemetery was the six-year-old daughter of John A. and Maria Nichols in 1858. Immediately thereafter Mr. Nichols founded the cemetery and added six acres of land and furnished the evergreen trees which were planted around it.

Evergreen Cemetery Association was formed in 1864. It is given credit for improving and decorating the cemetery so that it is one of the best-kept in the county. Mr. Nichols was a trustee of the association.

He built the brick store which was later owned by S. Alfred Seely. After Mr. Seely's death it was owned and operated by Manley Hollenbeck. This store burned some years later.

He is given credit for building the Rice Hotel, later known as the New Grove Hotel. This burned several years before the turn of the century but was rebuilt by S. Alfred Seely. The latter was interested in temperance so he willed the hotel to the Baptist Church with the understanding that it would be operated as a temperance house.

In 1870 Mr. Nichols, with Amos Hixon of Van Etten, Col. Charles Wells of Athens and four others of Ithaca, obtained a charter for the Ithaca and Athens Railroad. Among them was Ezra Cornell.

After the Tioga County Fair was moved from Spencer to Owego, Mr. Nichols purchased the grounds, buildings and race track of the then unused property. The grounds were rented to parties conducting camp meetings at very good rental. These summer meetings were very popular in those days and drew large crowds.

The bandstand was used many times later for con-

certs by the Spencer Cornet Band and often by the world-famous Patsy Conway Band of Ithaca. Last building to withstand the elements was one of the exhibition halls which was later used by the Spencer Glove Factory before its removal to Waverly.

The quarter-mile track extended from Evergreen Cemetery to the location of the present Lehigh Valley tracks. The cemetery association purchased the land containing the race track and added to the older cemetery.

The track was often used by local men to exercise horses obtained at horse-traders' conventions popular at the turn of the century. Neighbors, who thought they were good judges of horseflesh, would try to outdo each other in a "swap." A horse may have had a bad case of heaves but the owner, with a secret dosage of stromonium or other "tranquilizing" powders, could show his steed as being sound of wind and a truly desirable piece of horseflesh for any experienced driver who appreciated the finer equine points.

One such enthusiast would take his horse to the track after his day's work at the Seely mill and put his steed through a workout. One evening, after a strenuous burst of speed, the horse dropped dead. The owner got down from his sulky, took off his hat and goggles and said: "Gosh, I never saw him do that before!"

S. A. Seely

S. Alfred Seely of Spencer was a partner in the lumbering firm of A. Seely & Bro. in the early 1870s and became the sole owner in 1887. He died in 1901, and thus ended a life dedicated to civic betterment.

Seymour was the other partner and had charge of milling and other outside activities, while the former was chief salesman and head of the office force. Two other brothers, Obed and Frank, were employes but not identified with the firm.

The original cluster of buildings consisted of the Seely brothers' residences, two-story sawmill, gristmill, general store, creamery, blacksmith and carpenter shops, lumber dry shed, horse and dairy barns. The store was formerly owned by John A. Nichols.

The original Grove Hotel was known as the Rice Hotel but burned, possibly in the 1880s or before. Mr. Seely rebuilt it and shortly afterward deeded it to the Baptist Church, of which he was a leader.

In the fire of 1900, the grist and feed mill burned. The old creamery building, unused for many years, was moved onto the old gristmill foundation, enlarged and modernized.

In the early days Mr. Seely milled "Our Daily Bread," a well-known bread flour, but it was not marketed after the fire. Seely's Pure Buckwheat Flour still is being processed. Buckwheat hulls were blown into a storage bin in the sawmill and used as fuel.

The general store contained groceries, furniture, hardware, clothing and a meat market. A slaughter house was another adjunct and most of the meat sold in the market was home dressed. Mr. Seely's office was in the store.

The blacksmith shop was a necessity. Repairs to mill machinery, farm implements, wagons, and horseshoeing were done there by a blacksmith. A carpenter shop adjoined the blacksmith shop; several carpenters were employed.

The lumber dryhouse contained a priceless accumulation of choice milled lumber. I remember specimens of quarter-sawed chestnut and oak in widths of 18 and 24 inches. This was lost in the fire.

The sawmill has been partly treated in the story on cork pine. In addition to information given there, a description of the layout of the mill will be interesting. Steam power used in the two mills necessitated use of three boilers. Four-foot slabwood was the principal fuel used, although sawdust, shavings and buckwheat hulls from the gristmill were blown into a large bin above and in front

of the fireboxes and fed as needed through chutes. Steam heat from the boilers was used to heat the gristmill, store, hotel and the residence of S. Alfred Seely.

On the lower floor were the steam engine, shafting, resaw, planer, and molding machines. The second floor contained, besides the regular milling operations treated in the cork pine story, the band saw filing and conditioning room. It was not a part of the original mill. A shingle mill adjoined.

Spencer Glove Company was a corporation owned and managed largely by Mr. Seely. It was located in the old exhibition hall of the Tioga County Fair which had been abandoned for many years after the fair was removed to Owego. After Mr. Seely's death the glove factory was moved to Waverly by Hart I. Seely, younger son of the founder. The Spencer Glove Company name was retained.

Mr. Seely gradually enlarged his farming operations. Besides a large acreage on the hill above the mills, he owned farms in Dean Settlement, Fisher Settlement, West Danby and Seely Hill. The bulk of his herd of 100 cows was kept in a barn a short distance northwest of the mill. Mill employes did the major part of the harvest work. He built several houses that were occupied by employes.

In the early days of the creamery, the skim milk and buttermilk were pumped about 200 feet to a field

atop a steep bank where hogs were raised. Adjoining this field was the slaughter house.

After the death of Mr. Seely, the eldest son assumed management of the Spencer property. An addition to the gristmill was built south of the mill and used to store feed and grain.

The table factory, located near the new depot, was built by Mr. Seely during the early 1890s but it burned a few years later. Mr. Seely had a contract with the Cornell Table Company.

A. Seely & Bro. started their farming operations on land from which the timber had been removed. Not all such land was suited or desired for farming. Cut-over timberlands with the best soil were the ones chosen. This was especially true after the firm was dissolved and S. Alfred Seely became the sole owner. The farmland in Spencer probably was the richest and it has been kept so by the application of scientific methods employed by Mr. Seely's eldest son. He was graduated from Cornell in 1904 and promptly put to practical use knowledge gained. Grade cows were sold and registered stock replaced most of them.

In 1915-1942 the Seely Company planted nearly 300,000 trees on its property in Dean Settlement, averaging nearly 1,000 trees per acre.

An amusing incident centers around a young man employed by the company. There was a car on the

switch by the table factory which had just been unloaded. The young man was sent to get its number so that it could be reported to the railroad to avoid paying demurrage. He made the trip to the car and on his return reported: "It said capa city, and had a one and a heck of a lot of o's!"

Canal Once Advocated for Spencer

There was a 30-mile gap between Ithaca and the Susquehanna River and a canal through Spencer to Athens seemed at the time to be a solution to shipment of freight and coal. Instead, the Chemung Canal was authorized which would link Seneca Lake with Elmira on the Chemung River.

A railroad to connect Ithaca and the Susquehanna River was next considered. The Ithaca and Owego Railroad was built but went into bankruptcy.

The Ithaca and Susquehanna Railroad succeeded the first road but this was leased to the D.L.&W. At one time there was a plan to construct trackage through Spencer to connect Ithaca and Owego. It was to have passed through the village at the foot of East Hill, continue past Spencer Lake and down Inlet Valley. It is said residents opposed the plan.

A rise of 679 feet from Ithaca to North Spencer was 86 feet greater than the route through Willseyville. This rise may have defeated the canal plan.

Marvin D. Fisher

John Philip Fischer and wife came to America in 1742 from Frankfurt-am-Main in western Germany, and settled in Philadelphia. They brought three sons: George, Thomas and Leonard, but these sons never lived in Spencer. (The "c" in the original name probably was dropped soon after arriving in America.)

Leonard moved from Philadelphia to New York but his two sons came to Spencer, Thomas II in 1809 and George II in 1810. Leonard was a lieutenant in the Revolutionary War. At one time he owned 7,000 acres of land in Spencer and the southern portion of Danby. This was acquired mainly through purchase of soldiers' land grants.

George Fisher II was born in Philadelphia Nov. 18, 1782, and died in Spencer July 21, 1872. He was appointed a major in the State Militia Mar. 4, 1817, and promoted to brigadier general in Colonel Lishar's regiment on June 7, 1827. Later he operated a store and ashery in Spencer.

Thomas Fisher II had one son, Leonard II. This Leonard built a wooden store at the corner of South Main and Tioga Streets. When this burned in 1877,

he rebuilt the front part of the present brick store.

Marvin D. Fisher, the son of Leonard II, continued the business and built an addition in the rear of the store, enlarging it into a department store.

One of his sons, Henry H., had charge of the grocery and hardware departments on the south. He had charge of a feed store together with farm implements and fertilizer in a separate building near the south side of the main store. A tin shop was on the second floor.

The northern part of the building housed a pharmacy with George E. Jones, a son-in-law of Marvin D. Fisher, in charge. Opposite the pharmacy was a ready-to-wear and drygoods section with Mr. Jones in charge. A shoe department and a jewelry section were in the rear.

Myron and his brother, Henry H., were founders of the telephone system in Spencer. The exchange was located in their father's store; a night watchman handled emergency calls.

Myron L. Fisher had charge of the office which was situated near the central section of the store. He attended the University of Michigan to study law but returned home after one year as business in his father's store had increased to such an extent that he was needed in the store.

Marvin D. Fisher built residences for his daugh-

ter, Sadie Jones, and his sons, Myron L. and Henry H. The youngest son, Dr. A. Max, preferred the Abraham Miller house on Tioga Street. A colonial-type structure, it is complete with two brick ovens and cooking facilities.

The Farmers and Merchants Bank was moved from its original quarters about 1896 to the rear of the Fisher store. Mr. Fisher was the first president and he lived to see the bank expand steadily to become one of the most stable small-town financial institutions.

Always interested in higher education, he served on the school board. But his hobby was farming, and the latest farming practices were applied on his large farm southeast of the store and just across the E.C.&N. tracks. His large dairy of blooded stock was housed in a barn half a mile south of the store.

House of Handmade Bricks

The brick house on N. Main Street was built of handmade brick produced in a small brickyard at the foot of East Hill. Of good quality, the bricks have probably 100 years of use. The house was built by Lyman Bradley, Sr., and later traded to William Hyatt for his interest in the Spencer Springs hotel property.

Store Razing Recalls Lucius Emmons

Demolition of the Alfred S. Emmons store building brings memories of Lucius Emmons who came to Spencer from Simsbury, Conn., in 1833.

He carried a pack slung over his shoulder and started out selling maps. Later, he added watches, jewelry and silverware. His business prospered and in a few years the high seat of his wagon became his first trading center. It was necessary to add salesmen, some with packs, the others with wagons.

In April, 1844, his headquarters became a store on the site later occupied by Charles Emmons as a residence, but presently the home of Ralph Hodges. At this time, he employed 75 men, some afoot and some on his 19 wagons.

In 1851, he dispensed with the traveling men and opened a store on the site of the present brick building. When he became ill in 1857, the business was carried on by his two sons, Alfred S. and L. Edward Emmons, then only 15 and 11 years of age, respectively.

The father died in 1864 and Mrs. Emmons became associated with the business, then known as the Emmons Brothers, until her death in 1878.

The original wooden building was burglarized and

burned in 1877. In 1879, the present brick building was erected. While the new store was being built, business was carried on in the building just south of the residence of Mrs. L. Edward Emmons now owned and occupied by Mrs. Bert Puderbaugh.

The firm carried complete stocks of hardware, dry goods, ready-to-wear and groceries. In the warehouse and barn to the rear were stabled the horses together with stocks of fencing, farm machinery, feed and grain.

In 1886, the brothers dissolved the partnership, Alfred S. Emmons taking the general store and L. Edward Emmons the pharmacy which had been housed in the store.

Henry L. Emmons, who succeeded his father, Alfred S. Emmons, in the business, sold the stock in 1931. After that time, the second floor of the building was converted into living apartments by Paul S. Emmons, younger son of Alfred S. Emmons. Paul conducted a dry goods business in the building for a number of years.

The Grand Union had a store there at one time, and the Janhonens, father and sons, conducted a Red and White store there after the Grand Union. Mr. and Mrs. Janhonen had operated a bakery on the western side of the building before going into the grocery business.

Dr. O. A. Hirvonen occupied the apartment and

housed his dental office in the building for 13 years after coming to Spencer. Mrs. Dorothy Ashlund conducted a beauty salon in another apartment which Mr. and Mrs. Ashlund occupied.

Carl Steenburg occupied the north rear room on the first floor as a barber shop shortly after his former shop burned in the fire of 1934. His shop had been located in the A. S. Hudson building across the street.

In the early 1900s the Farmers and Merchants Bank occupied both the above room amd later the room occupied by the Spencer Insurance Agency. This agency purchased the insurance business of Henry L. Emmons after his death in 1950.

Another Spencer industry that leased space in the Emmons Block was the egg transport business of Merritt Jones.

The Spencer Library occupied the central east portion of the first floor for 15 years.

When Jesse R. Hart sold the building and mechanical equipment of the Spencer Needle, he was offered space in the Library. He used this both as a news and subscription office, where he wrote news for the paper and collected subscriptions. The Needle and subscription list were sold to Hart I. Seely of Waverly where the paper was published several years before being sold to the Theodore P. Popes and again published in Spencer.

The Alfred S. Emmons Estate sold the property in April, 1953, to Benjamin Feldman of Owego. Henry L. Emmons had been administrator until his death. The building could not be sold until the death of both Henry L. and Paul S. Emmons because the property had been willed to Alfred S. Emmons' nine grandchildren.

Elliott B. Emmons was manager of the estate after the death of Henry L. Emmons in 1950. This made the fourth generation to be connected with the original building or the brick building.

The building was erected south of the site where the county clerk's office stood when the county seat of Tioga was in Spencer. There is a marker now on Main Street at the northeast corner of the original county lot. It reads:

NEW YORK

SPENCER WAS THE

COUNTY SEAT

1811--1822

ON THIS LOT STOOD THE

OLD COURT HOUSE

DESTROYED BY FIRE 1821

STATE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT 1932

William D. Seely is the new owner of the Emmons lot. He is to conduct an Atlantic service station on the historic site.

Cowell's Corners (Baptist Corners)

Joshua, Abram and Benjamin Cowell, three brothers from Connecticut, settled about 1806 at what was called Cowell's Corners. This is about a mile and a quarter east of Spencer at the junction of the Candor and Halsey Valley roads and near Catatonk Creek.

Joshua lived on what later was known as the William Cass farm. A fourth brother, Truman Cowell, settled at the head of Huggtown Pond (Spencer Lake.)

Cowell's Corners contained a schoolhouse, a shoe shop, two cooper shops and had about 40 inhabitants.

The first church in town was the Baptist Church at Cowell's Corners. It was built in 1835 and was located next to the cemetery. Later, the church was moved to Spencer and occupied the building now known as the Federated Church.

The hamlet has sometimes been known as Baptist Corners.

Oxen Shod in Stocks

Oxen were the pioneer's draft animal. To shoe their cloven hooves, two thin plates were used. Nearly every blacksmith shop had an ox stock into which the ox was guided. A wide cinch fastened to a windlass lifted the animal off his feet while the shoes were fitted and nailed to the hoof. Each hoof required a right and a left plate which the blacksmith shaped on his anvil.

Joshua Ferris, Founder of the Town

A prominent early-day citizen, Joshua Ferris, was the founder of the Town of Spencer. The centennial celebration in 1906 had his activities as its theme. He removed to Ithaca where he died and was buried in the old cemetery. His son, Benjamin, was elected president of the Village of Ithaca in 1841 and 1851. A graduate of Union College, he read Latin and Greek with a fluency that characterized his English.

Two Women Civic Leaders

Mary Hall was a prime mover in historical matters and did most of the planning for the celebration. Mrs. Henry H. Fisher was long active in community affairs and the annual Spencer Picnic and Parade has been successful largely through her efforts.

Virgin Forests of Cork Pine

Often I wish that I could wave a magic wand and be back at the turn of the century again to stroll through the virgin pine forest of some 80 acres where I once worshipped Mother Nature. This was the Hall Lot, about three miles south of Spencer, and not too distant from the route taken by General Sullivan in his expedition against the Indians in 1779.

These "cork" pines stretched their heads heavenward for nearly 100 feet and some of them were six and seven feet in diameter at the butt, with but a few branches at the top. These "cork" pine were so called by many because of the very thin layer of pitch beneath the bark. Thus, the inner portion of the tree was much lighter and easier to work.

They made a beautiful picture, one never to be seen again in our life. Gazing at their sheer magnificence in a true sylvan setting, one could visualize Indians of long ago silently moving about in the shadows, with deer, bears, and other wild animals camouflaged and with nerves and senses alerted,

The dense carpet of centuries-old leaves and pine needles stored the rainfall and released it slowly to keep alive the liquid habitat of brook trout. Raccoons used the narrow brook to wash their food.

Farther downstream beavers were actively engaged in felling trees, using the smaller branches to weave the background for their dams; bark of larger sections served as food, and some were ferried downstream to be used in the dams.

All this was destined to become a memory when woodsmen started felling these guardian angels of wildlife. Not only did the ravaged home of these forest giants start retrogression, but all other cleared timber lands suffered the same fate, more so if the bared soil was on a hillside. These slashings or cut-over lands were cleared of stumps and brush and for a few years produced good crops. But erosion slowly washed the lifeblood of the soil into creeks, then rivers, and finally into the ocean.

Two brothers, S. Alfred and Seymour Seely, came to Spencer about 1870 and formed the firm of A. Seely & Bro., but the partnership was dissolved in 1887. They began logging and milling operations some three miles north of the virgin forest. As the years passed and local supplies vanished, logs had to be brought from greater distances. Farmers with good teams and heavy bobs counted on earning extra money in the winter by hauling logs to the mill, sometimes as far as 15 miles.

The millyard was something to see, after the first fall of snow, as the mountains of sawing timber reached added heights each day. The bobs were un-

loaded and logs rolled as high as possible. Then others were placed on a grade to form a new roadway leading to the top of the ones rolled high. Next, this "tramway" was covered with snow and at night soaked with water which froze and made it possible to add another story to the mounting accumulation of logs.

This sawmill was "big league" compared to others of that era. The sawing and edging of boards and timbers were done on the second floor, while the finer milling operations were done on the lower level.

A truck running on heavy steel rails was used to bring the logs to the second floor on about a 30 per cent grade. A heavy chain attached to the truck was connected to a large cylinder of pressed paper beneath the second floor. The motive power was transferred by a lever extending to the upper level. When pressure was applied to the lever it forced a power-driven pulley against the cylinder. This wound the chain on the cylinder and brought the logs to the upper level.

My connection with this forest tragedy came about the time these big pines were cut down and brought to the mill. I had started to work at the mill two years previously at 25 cents a day. I was 15 years old at the time. My first work was on a three-cord slabwood delivery wagon where I helped the teamster

unload the wood. I graduated to the mill where I was "chief engineer" on the slabwood truck. I pushed this outside on an elevated trestle and unloaded it into the delivery wagon.

My final job around the mill was "sticking" the sawed timber (piling it to dry). There were two of us on this operation. We took the lumber, after it was sawed and edged, to the drying yard. When the tailsawyers had loaded the four-wheeled truck, we pushed it down a 16-foot-high trestle to the proper lumber pile.

Oak and maple were the heaviest to handle. The softwoods (basswood, cucumber, buttonwood, or others) kept us jumping as these could be sawed rapidly.

When the big pine logs were brought to the mill, they were transported in the summer months as the dirt roads were crooked and uneven, and it would have been impossible to get the logs around curves or over high spots without the ends dragging, if bobs were used.

It was necessary to use "swing-ups" in the summer to deliver the logs. The butt end of the log was rolled onto a two-wheel bolster truck and the swing-up was placed a short distance back of the center of the log. These swing-ups had at least eight-foot wheels and a high, curved axle, to which a heavy chain was attached at one end of a shaft. The

log was lifted from the ground and "swung up" by turning handles attached to the shaft. When raised to full height the log was held in position by using a ratchet wheel. It was necessary to use two teams to handle the heavy giants.

The actual milling of these huge pines created an indelible impression in my mind. It was necessary to use two "carriages" to hold these lengthy logs for sawing. The carriages were the traveling platforms on which the logs were fastened. A cable attached to the carriage drew the log into contact with the saw. The latter was a band saw, somewhat thinner than the conventional circular saw. It was about 12 inches wide and 28 to 30 feet in circumference. On this quality and size of logs a considerable saving was made by the thinness of the cut made by the saw. It was necessary to have a specialist file and condition the saws daily.

The pines were sawed into 4x4s and 12x12s and used in ship building. I think these brought $85 per thousand board feet but would be priceless now.

The teamsters fed their horses around 5 a. m., then curried and harnessed them, ready to be on the road by 7 a. m. at the latest. Quitting time was 6 p. m. Top men received $1.25 a day.

The horses were fed plenty of grain, most of which was grown on the owner's former forest land. The feed was processed in his gristmill.

A disastrous fire wiped out the owner's entire mill and allied holdings in 1900 which never could be duplicated. The mill was rebuilt but as timber was the keynote of his operations, the mill was dismantled a number of years ago.

Of course, there were many other other sawmills in those early days, often several in a single town. Several of my mother's relatives were connected with milling operations in the same town, and my father owned a watermill at one time.

My great-great-grandfather, Richard Ferris (Ferier) was a Revolutionary soldier and was the first member of the family to settle in Spencer. He came there and built a home on a military section. He, too, had a stand of virgin timber, but nothing to compare with the "cork" pine.

Felling these tall trees was a science that only the old-time woodsman knew. It was, and is, fairly easy to make a deep cut on the side the tree was supposed to fall. Crosscut saws with a man working at either end completed the job of felling the trees. It took real woodsmen to fall the trees so that these would be eased to the ground by falling against giants other trees and not be broken.

After the trees were on the ground they had to be trimmed of all limbs and the tops cut off at the highest point that contained sawable timber.

Railroads Come and Go

Early railroad ventures in this section were many. The one that may interest local people most probably was the failure of the Ithaca and Owego Railroad in 1842. A committee from Ithaca and Owego met in the latter village on November 30, 1827 and passed a resolution to petition the New York State Legislature for an act of incorporation for this company with a capital of $150,000. This was the second railroad to receive a charter in the state.

In April, 1834, the first train of cars made the trip to Owego, a distance of 33 miles. After being windlassed to the top of South Hill, horses became the motive power for the balance of the trip.

The owners of the railroad borrowed $300,000 from the state to build it but the depression of 1837 so reduced revenue that they could not make interest payments. It was sold on foreclosure by the state May 20, 1842.

The new owners incorporated the road as the Cayuga and Susquehanna Railroad Company and started to improve the service. The Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad obtained a 99-year lease on this road on Jan. 1, 1855. They have since then purchased a majority of stock. In 1956,

the D.L.&W. abandoned the line from South Hill in Ithaca to Owego. The Lehigh purchased the remaining trackage from their station to South Hill so they could serve the Morse industries and the South Hill Coal Yard.

A steam engine was purchased to supplant horses. Later, a heavier locomotive was used, but this was too heavy for the strap rails and wooden bridges. The iron straps were spiked to stringers but the weight of the engine rolled up the straps and some of them pierced the floors of the cars; and finally a bridge gave way under the burden.

In 1836 an Ithaca-Auburn railroad was chartered and soon after a charter for an Ithaca and Chemung Railroad was issued but never built. It was over 30 years before a train was run to Geneva or Auburn.

The end of the Civil War was followed by eight years of unprecedented railroad building. It was clear to Ezra Cornell and his friends that if Ithaca was to survive as a center of transportation, a network of railroads must be developed.

A road known as the Southern Central was completed from Auburn through Freeville to Owego in 1869. That year Cornell and his friends obtained a charter for the Ithaca and Cortland Railroad which was to meet the Southern Central at Freeville. This later became a part of the E. C. & N. Railroad.

Contractors had hardly started grading the Cortland road when a second and more ambitious scheme was initiated. The Lehigh Valley Railroad, a line chartered in 1847, extended from Easton, Pennsylvania, to Athens, Pennsylvania. Cornell, John A. Nichols of Spencer, Amos Hixon of Van Etten and others proposed to bring Pennsylvania coal directly to Cayuga Lake by rail and to send western products south by the same route. They obtained a charter for the Ithaca and Athens Railroad.

Among the casualties of the panic of 1837 was a proposed Ithaca and Geneva Railroad to divert the products of the rich Genessee, Canandaigua and Seneca valley through Ithaca and Spencer. And so, soon after the authorization of the road to Athens, a charter was issued for the Ithaca and Geneva Railroad. Ezra Cornell and others promoted this part of the web.

As soon as the first of the roads had been successfully completed from Ithaca to Cortland, its directors reorganized to complete the last link of the Cornell trackage by extending their line southwest through Spencer, Van Etten, Horseheads to Elmira; and northwest to Canastota. In 1884, the line was extended to Canastota, Sylvan Beach and Camden, a distance of 135 miles. The line was first called

the Utica, Ithaca and Elmira Railroad. That name was soon changed to the Elmira, Cortland and Northern Railroad.

The Ithaca and Cortland Railroad was the first of these lines in operation in Ithaca and built its station, a 15x20-foot shanty, on the Cornell campus. Later, to avoid paying village taxes, the company moved its terminal to East Ithaca.

Six months later, about July, 1871, while the Ithaca and Athens line was under construction, the first train left a 10x16-foot shanty on the west side of the Inlet in Ithaca to make the 3-hour trip to Athens. A select group had received this invitation:

ITHACA AND ATHENS R. R.
Office of the Secretary

You are invited to become one of the passengers to ride in the first train that will run from Ithaca to Athens and return next week, Wednesday. It will be a jubilee train. Yours, etc.,

L. L. Treman, Secretary.

That year grading was begun on the Cayuga Lake Railroad and on the Ithaca and Geneva line. Each of these was difficult to construct, the former by waves from the lake washing the roadbed, the latter because it was necessary to bridge so many gullies, gorges and ravines.

The Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad was chartered May 26, 1870. It was to run from Summit (North Spencer) to Newfield, Enfield, Jacksonville, Trumansburg, Covert and northward through Romulus and Seneca Falls to Sodus Bay. The roadbed was graded and kept to high ground from Spencer Summit to Trumansburg. The original grading can still be seen in many places.

Work had progressed so far that by May, 1872, 5,000 ties had been delivered at various points along the line, and it was announced that rails had been purchased. The railroad had planned to use the Lehigh tracks from Spencer Summit to Athens but negotiations failed.

The relics of the Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay railroad were purchased with the object of completing the line, or at least from Seneca Falls to Romulus. A company was formed with a capital of $100 and a floating debt of $15. Nothing happened and the road was a bad dream, except for $152,000 of bonds which caused a financial headache for the investors for 50 years.

The new Ithaca railroads had been very expensive to build and very difficult to finance; and with the crash of the financial system on Sept. 18, 1873, the failure of Jay Cook and Company, the nation's lead-

ing bankers, precipitated a national panic. One after another of the Ithaca railroads came under the auctioneer's hammer.

The control and ownership of these lines went out of the hands of Ithacans and were transferred to President Asa Packer of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, who bought 189 miles of trackage for a very small percentage of its worth. The roads became parts of a great trunk-line system.

In 1892 the Lehigh Valley built the last link of its double-track road from New York City to Buffalo. This allowed fast passenger trains to make better time as they did not have the steep grades from Spencer to North Spencer or the grade out of Ithaca to slow schedules. Through-freight trains also made better time over the Seneca Lake branch.

Passenger revenue and freight earnings had been declining to such an extent since the advent of the auto and trucks that the Lehigh discontinued the Ithaca-Horseheads trackage in 1936 and also that of the Cortland-Camden division. The Lehigh still maintains tracks from Cortland to Ithaca to carry coal and freight, mainly for Cornell. The Cornell heating plant, which furnishes heat for the entire university buildings, uses 50,000 carloads of coal yearly.

The Cayuga Lake branch of the Lehigh suffered discontinuance of part of its trackage. The tracks running from Ithaca to the new Milliken generating plant of the New York State Electric and Gas Corporation have been maintained as the plant requires some 300,000 carloads of coal annually.

Mail formerly carried by passenger trains now is delivered by highway postal trucks, one from Binghamton and the other from Syracuse, thus giving postoffices between these two cities a mail service each way daily. This is the case in Spencer and differs from city delivery of once daily. The Lehigh Valley has discontinued also passenger and freight stations in many other towns, three of them being North Spencer, West Danby and Newfield. Freight to these communities is consigned to either Spencer or Ithaca.

The Lehigh ran its first freight train through Spencer in 1871. The first carload of revenue freight consigned to Spencer was machinery for the sawmill of A. Seely & Bro.

The Lehigh depot at Spencer was built near the center of the Seely industries, across the street from the John A. Nichols store (later owned by S. Alfred Seely), and opposite the Rice Hotel (later the New Grove Hotel.) The depot burned in the big 1900 fire.

I remember hearing my father tell of drawing lumber to Ithaca just prior to the advent of rail transportation. It was possible to make one trip only a day from the Van Marter water-power mill on the Halsey Valley road. There was deep mud in the spring and fall, ruts and deep dust in summer and, of course, snow-blocked roads in winter.

About the time the first auto came to Spencer in the early 1900's, the railroads ran extra trains to nearby points of interest. S. Alfred Seely sponsored Baptist Church Sunday School excursions to Cornell University campus, Renwick Park (now Stewart Park), and boat rides on Cayuga Lake via Lehigh.

The Elmira, Cortland and Northern Railroad also ran excursions to Eldridge Park in Elmira and Sylvan Beach on Oneida Lake.

There was a freight siding on the east side of the depot, extending from the Frank B. Smith coal shed nearly to Liberty Street. The Jetter milk station was just north of the creek where a Lehigh morning train southbound for New York stopped on the main track to load milk. Next was the John Smith hay barn where he stored and then baled hay for shipment to New York and, last, a cattle yard at which cattle, sheep, hogs and calves were loaded.

The Black Diamond, a Lehigh Valley de luxe train,

made its maiden run shortly before the Seely fire. I remember it was held on the main tracks at the depot for several hours while Spencer people were given an opportunity to examine the latest advances in their most modern train. To us in those days the train seemed like a picture from a fairy-tale book.

The Elmira, Cortland and Northern had to build three trestles to bridge deep gorges. Two were at Swartwood at the top of the hill and the other at Brooktondale. They were wooden structures that never looked too sturdy. I was always glad when I had crossed them.

Creameries were to be found all along the E.C.&N. This was before trucks were used to haul milk in tanks to New York. This road is still in use between Cortland and East Ithaca principally to haul coal for the mammoth heating system at Cornell. Coal trucks use the hard-surfaced highways to bring coal direct to the consumer.

Produce buyers bought apples, potatoes and other farm crops which farmers delivered to freight cars, usually on a switch near the depot. The E.C.&N. depot was south of The Needle office. A barrel of whiskey consigned to a hotel in Spencer was unloaded from a freight train too late in the day to be delivered so it was placed in the freight room over-

night. As the floor was quite a distance from the ground it allowed some thirsty souls sufficient clearance to crawl underneath. An auger was used to bore through the floor and into the barrel. The liquid was caught in tubs and other available containers. Needless to say, there were several intoxicated men in town for weeks. The miscreants were never identified so the insurance people paid for the whiskey.

Spring freshets and summer cloudbursts usually brought torrents of water from West Hill and deposited debris and gravel under the bridge near the Seely sawmill. This sometimes flooded the top of the bridge and trains were held up until the tracks could be cleared.

When local sawing timber was depleted, logs were hauled considerable distances, on bobs in winter and on flat cars in summer. I remember how a freight engine made a flying start from near the Smith coal shed and pushed a carload of logs ahead of it up a steep grade to the Seely log yard. The track was not kept in the best possible condition and, as the engine speeded up the grade, car and logs weaved from one side to the other. I shuddered and always felt sure car and engine would jump the track, but they never did. Perhaps, I was disappointed!

Pioneers oftentimes were forced to drive their stock to market. My great-grandfather, who lived in Groton, was one such drover. He drove flocks of turkeys to New York. He was Jonathan Louw, born October 19, 1796, at Peruville in the Town of Groton. He died June 10, 1842.

My maternal grandmother was his eldest daughter, Mary Jane, who married Isaac Knapp. He was a direct descendant of Nicholas Knapp, a member of the Puritans who landed at Watertown, Mass., in 1630.

Often I heard my grandmother tell of the trips her father made to New York, herding a flock of turkeys. It took two weeks to make the round trip. The small round-top trunk in which he carried his food is still a family heirloom.

On a buckboard wagon, he carried grain for his horse and birds, which he fed in the morning and at night. Toward dusk, the territory was scanned for a suitable location to spend the night. The preferred place was a tract of small trees in which the turkeys could roost in safety. The drover slept under blankets nearby and kept a close watch on his birds; they had a habit or rising early and wandering off to become a loss to the drover.

Although these trips were made in the 1820's, before railroads made possible shipment of farm products to city markets, there was no interference from

persons along the route but a sharp lookout was necessary to spot wolves and foxes.

Drovers seldom found it necessary to take their turkeys into the city as buyers waited outside to bid on the flocks. If offers were too low, the birds were driven nearer the city until a reasonable price was bid. After selling their flocks, the drovers usually went on to New York where supplies were bought. The return trip was briefer and less arduous.

Willis Fisher of Bradenton, Fla., says his grandfather, Robert H. Fisher, formerly of Fisher's Settlement in Spencer, also made overland trips to New York City. Besides turkeys, he drove herds of cattle. The route was through Athens to Newark, N. J., where the stock was sold to the highest bidder.

North Spencer was often called Spencer Summit, as there was a trickle of water just north of the depot where a public watering trough was maintained for many years. This was on the west side of the highway opposite the Henry Johnston farmhouse. Part of the water flows south into Catatonk Creek, then into the Susquehanna River at Owego, and finally into Chesapeake Bay. The other drainage finds its way into Cayuga Inlet, through Cayuga Lake to the Erie and Oswego canals, to Lake Ontario and thence to the St. Lawrence River and the Atlantic Ocean. The supply for the watering trough has since been piped into the former home of William Brown.

The depot at the "Summit" was an important telegraph station and a 24-hour vigil was kept. Part of its work was to warn stations ahead of approaching trains and later clearance of the train from that point. An extra engine, or "pusher," was necessary to assist heavy trains negotiate the steep grade from Newfield to North Spencer, and this had to be reported ahead to the next station. Today, it is not necessary to maintain telegraph stations as the Lehigh has the Hall signal system that halts trains a mile behind the one ahead. The road has also a telephone installation to report arrival and departure of trains.

New York State many years ago started a systematic elimination of grade crossings. One of the first was the underpass at North Spencer, where formerly early makes of autos were liable to stall after reaching the top of a steep grade to the track. Others were near Newfield and West Danby. The underpass near Spencer depot eliminated one of the most dangerous crossings for it was on a curved grade and blind to vehicles approaching from the west.

Fire Protection

Fires were a bugaboo in the life of the early settlers. Possibly one of the first dangers in this respect was the shooting of flaming arrows by the Indians. These landed upon roofs of houses and barns and usually meant destruction of all buildings and contents. Bucket brigades would have been of little use if Indians were lurking in the shadows and waiting for a chance to loose flame-bearing or death-dealing shafts. After danger from this source was no longer a major threat to the pioneers, they made good use of bucket brigades in their efforts to combat fires.

Hand pumpers next came into use. These had a handle on each side that was long enough to allow six or eight men to operate each handle. These primitive machines were fairly effective when apparatus and men arrived early, and if there was a good supply of water from creeks, ponds or cisterns.

A chemical tank mounted on two wheels was the next big effort in Spencer to protect the property of its citizens. This, also, was effective when used before the flames had a head start.

The fire that practically destroyed the S. Alfred Seely sawmill and allied holdings in 1900 was one that I can never forget. The weather had been very

hot and dry for several weeks, a perfect preparation for this holocaust.

The night fireman sounded the alarm on the steam whistle shortly after 6 p. m. I was eating supper at home about 200 feet from a direct view of the mill. I started at once for the fire, but when I came within sight of the mill the whole structure was a mass of flames. It was obvious that any chance of holding it in check was doomed to failure.

No one ever learned how the flames started but the consensus was that a spark had ignited layers of dust which had accumulated in a bin containing sawdust, shavings and buckwheat hulls that were used as a fuel. The swiftness with which the fire spread probably was caused by an explosion in the fuel bin. Stephen Mosher, the fireman, kept the whistle blowing until he was badly burned.

Leaving the sawmill, flames spread to the lumber-drying yard, piled full of lumber. This was completely destroyed and with it the elevated track and truck which was used to distribute sawed lumber to various piles. The fire spread so rapidly, it is hard to say which building was next ignited.

Besides the mill and lumber, the flames destroyed the gristmill, blacksmith shop, lumber dryshed, tool shed, Mr. Seely's residence, as well as the old Lehigh Valley depot, John Smith's hay barn, the

Jetter milk station and icehouse, and the Grove Hotel barn.

A pumper was loaded on a flatcar at Ithaca and was ready to be rushed to Spencer, but as there was no water supply it wasn't sent. This was true in the case of the hand pumper owned by Mr. Seely.

Flying embers filled the air as many shingled roofs ignited, but these fires were controlled by bucket brigades. A conservative estimate made by experts placed the loss at more that $100,000, which would be small when compared to present costs.

Many cities were fortunate in getting early water systems. These enabled fire departments to use steam pumpers which always were a source of admiration to the younger generation as they beheld the beautiful spans of horses come tearing down the street in answering an alarm.

But even larger villages with water systems had to depend on hand-drawn fire-fighting equipment until advent of motorized machines. Now fire districts have been established in most villages and in many rural communities. Such nearby communtiies having modern firefighting apparatus are Candor, Van Etten, Newfield, Danby, West Danby and Halsey Valley. With the help of these companies, the Spencer department is well equipped to battle fires such as the Seely disaster.

Farming Has Kept Pace with Change

Farming in the early days was at a barely subsistence level. When settlement began here at close of the eighteenth century, danger of Indian attack had been eliminated by Sullivan's campaign of 1779, but land-clearing was fraught with other threats to life and limb. Falling trees, burns, sunstrokes, drownings, malaria bred in the swamps, smallpox and other diseases were dangers faced in the new land.

The first labor was expended falling trees, shaping logs from them and erecting a rude shelter—the log cabin. Cut-over land was cleared of underbrush and stumps pulled in later days by use of a capstan, heavy ropes and ox power,

Grub hoes and wooden plows gave way to iron plows adapted to sidehill or flatland. Sulky or riding plows succeeded the walking plow and they, in turn, gave way to present-day tractor plows often equipped with three or four bottoms.

The soil was pulverized by merely fastening a few limbs together to make a brush drag. Spike-tooth harrows followed the brush drag, then they were replaced by spring-tooth harrows that were in use many years. Steadily improved, the harrows are now equipped with levers to gauge the depth of

cultivation and are use in gangs drawn by tractors.

The flail was the early tool for threshing. It consisted of a short arm, called a swingle, attached to a longer handle by a thong of buckskin. Sheaves of grain were spread on the barn floor and beaten with the swingle. Lifted with forks, the straw was shaken and the grain was taken outside on a windy day, tossed into the air to pemit the wind to remove the chaff. The threshing machine has made the flail a museum piece along with the fanning mill.

Threshing time was a gala occasion, and farm wives were busy days ahead at planning a big meal. Usually, it was chicken with all the trimmings served liberally and eaten with gusto.

Farmers pooled their labor for such occasions. At threshings the least desired job was in the straw mow or the tail end of the thresher if the straw was stacked. This was the dirty, dusty part of the operation that usually fell to the host. The owner of the threshing outfit generally had a feeder and a fireman after steam superseded the horse power.

Breakdowns were frequent and often held up the operations for several days until repair parts could be obtained from a factory. This usually meant the traveling unit was forced to be guests at the farm.

After the grain cradle, came the dropleaf reaper which cut the grain and, by use of revolving rakes, deposited it in bundles ready to be bound and col-

lected into shocks to cure. The next improvement was the binder that cut and delivered the grain tied in bundles.

In binding the sheaves, a handful of straw was grasped, separated into two roughly equal parts and the tops twisted together. This band was wrapped around the loose bundle, the ends quickly twisted together and poked under the band to hold the sheaf securely for subsequent handling. The work was completed in a matter of moments, and there was keen competition among men who bound grain. It was an art in itself to set the bound sheaves and cap them with a spread-out sheaf to shed water.

Field corn was cut with a sickle or corn knife and stood upright by use of a corn horse. This device was made by using two four-foot legs fastened to a 10- or 12-foot board that sloped backward to the ground. A hole was bored through the board at the legs and a round handle inserted. The cornstalks were stacked on its four sides until the ultimate size of the shock was made. The stalks were then tied by using either cornstalks or twine and left in the field to cure.

Husking was usually done in the field and meant cold feet and fingers. If snow was imminent, the shocks were hauled to the barn. Finding a red ear usually meant a doughnut and a glass of cider.

Since advent of high-powered tractors, reaping

and threshing are done with combines in one operation, even to bagging the grain. These haul also machines that cut corn and hay, chop them and deliver the fodder into a wagon or truck, ready to be blown into a silo. Sixty years ago silos were few.

Farmers even today go into their woodlots in winter and thin out trees which are drawn to the family woodyard and buzzed into stove lengths at the convenience of the farmers. Others buzz their stove wood where it is felled.

Many rural residents who have a source of water are building ponds for fire protection, for raising fish and for recreation.

These developments, as well as many others, are a striking contrast with rural life when this century dawned. Then farming was a way of life that was characterized by long hours of drudgery and little time or opportuity for relaxation. The Spencer area has kept step with the changes, an almost unbelievable advance to those whose memories span the last half-century.

Spencer Springs a Health Resort

Spencer Springs flourished for many years in Crumtown as a health resort. Two or three different kinds of water were claimed to combine to make a curative potion. It must have cured everyone as patronage kept dwindling until the resort was abandoned.

Seely Electric Co., a Civic Advance

The Seely Electric Company, organized in 1898 and incorporated in 1916, was another link in the broadening civic improvements contemplated by S. Alfred Seely.

The plant was built and operated as a sideline of the mill interests, but this was frowned upon by the Public Service Commission, hence the reason for the separation.

At first, electricity was available in Spencer for street and residence lighting only. Later, the same services were made available in Candor and Van Etten through transmission lines.

The first plant manager was Morris Moon; the next one was Lew Kendall. The final manager and operator was Harry M. Goundry, who operated the plant until it was sold to the Associated Gas and Electric Company of Ithaca in 1924. Mr. Goundry continued as manager of the Spencer branch of the Ithaca company until ill health forced him to resign. He had been an employe of the Associated Gas and Electric Company before coming to Spencer.

The fire in 1900 destroyed all equipment of the plant and this had to be renewed entirely. The work

progressed rapidly so that in a short time electricity was again being distributed.

It was necessary to build an 80-foot chimney to service not only the three arches (or fireboxes) of the sawmill but also the firebox in the electric light plant which was used with the high-pressure boiler to furnish steam to operate the dynamo.

As the height of the chimney increased so did the wonder of the spectators: kids, and oldsters, too. The bricks were laid from the inside and the brick and mortar were hauled to the top by a rope and pulley, also from the inside. Rods were laid in the corners about 18 inches apart and served as a ladder for the workmen.

The first street lights were of the incandescent type and of low candlepower but their size was increased later. Most of the wiring was of the open type but later it was changed to concealed wiring to conform to insurance regulations.

The New York State Electric and Gas Corporation is the successor to the former electric company in Ithaca. A transformer station is maintained on the site of the former Seely Electric Company and is the headquarters of maintenance men for the three towns.

Did you ever taste chicken cooked under 80 pounds of steam? The method was simple. The birds were dressed as usual and then placed in a 10- or 12-

quart pail which was fastened under a steam pipe. A cloth was placed over the pail and the steam turned on. After about 20 minutes the cloth was removed, the pail drained, and lots of butter, salt and pepper added. This was fit for a king!

An Incident in Road Building

When the first macadam road in Spencer was being built about 1908 between the Corners and West Candor, Ralph Ferris, the State engineer in charge, became suspicious of the way the contractor was delaying work on the last bit of grading.

This was a swampy spot where the creek comes nearest the road. Contract specifications called for removing the muck to a certain depth and filling with stone.

Ferris spread the word that he was going to attend Cornell's Spring Day festivities, but instead remained at the Grove Hotel until about 9:30 a.m.

When he reached the job the contractor had every available team and dump truck drawing earth and filling the low spot. It was an expensive operation for the contractor, as he was forced to remove the dirt and substitute stone.

Winter Sports

The village is blessed with many natural settings for winter sports. Being at a higher altitude than many surrounding towns and villages means a longer season for skating and sledding.

Skating was one of the earlier forms of diversion for the younger generation. The most popular spot was the "Circle," a spring-fed, small body of water in Nichols Park. This was similar to the marsh at North Spencer as it also was filled with decayed vegetable matter and was very deep. It was never completely frozen over, owing to the warm, spring water that fed it.

Pupils of the school were forbidden to skate upon it but some of the older and more daring youths took advantage of the ice after school hours.

Many variations of skating games were enjoyed. Among these was a form of present-day hockey. Instead of the rubber puck used today, the players used a crotched stick, usually three-pronged, that would sit upright on the ice. The sport was called shinny. The stick used at first was as near like the present stick as it was possible to cut from a willow or other tree. Later, better models were fashioned from ash.

Other games were duck-on-a-rock and prisoner's base. In the latter game, if a player was taken prisoner and was forced to stay in the prisoner's box for any length of time, he had to exercise vigorously to keep warm.

Skating was enjoyed on Spencer Lake also and, as on the Circle, was continued until snow became too deep to be cleared.

Sledding was a winter sport that could be enjoyed on hill roads or in open fields. In earlier days there were no autos to guard against and the roads were never plowed. After a heavy fall of snow and a crust had formed, innumerable sloping hillsides were perfect locations for all sorts of sliding. Sometimes a pair of barrel staves was used to descend on the crust; less often a scoop shovel was pressed into service. The latter, contrary to some of the youngsters' beliefs, never got hot from friction created by contact with the crust, but they were hard to steer.

After a snowfall, the schoolyard often would be the scene of fox-and-geese. The players started the layout for the game by trampling the snow to form a circle with a diameter of about 30 feet. Two paths were trampled crisscross to the edge of the circle. Any "goose" unlucky enough to be caught became the new "fox."

Snap-the-whip was a game that was pretty hard on the outside player. A line was formed and a pivot-

man stood still while the rest started a circling movement. As the tempo increased the end man, or whip, eventually lost his balance and fell.

Hayrides to a friend's home for an evening of fun could be held with either a wagon or pair of bobs. Usually, the weather was cool, and the conveyance was a hay rigging filled with hay or straw. Heavy clothing and plenty of blankets were necessary.

One of the most exciting winter sports was that of coasting with a pair of heavy bobs. A favorite spot was the road leading down from East Hill. With a good base of ice or snow and a gang of four or five riders the bobs traveled at a high rate of speed and seldom were able to negotiate the curve at the foot of the hill so were steered into a field.

When the bobs hit a "thank-you-mom," the riders got the thrill of their lives as the bobs leaped into the air. (Thank-you-moms were shallow ditches dug across the road at frequent intervals to carry excess water to the lower side of the road.)

There was fair skating on Catatonk Creek, but it rarely froze the whole distance. Where there was a slight riffle, the ice was the last to freeze solid, thus making skating extremely dangerous. One winter the creek was frozen for miles from Spencer to Candor, and Myron Downie made the round trip on skates. He suffered an attack of appendicitis that was probably brought on by the exertion.

Farmers and Merchants Bank

The Farmers and Merchants Bank of Spencer was chartered by the State of New York on March 24, 1884. The first officers were Marvin D. Fisher, president; Thomas Brock, vicepresident; and C. P. Masterson, cashier. Brock was elected president the following year.

At the initial meeting of the board of directors, an agreement was entered into with Emmons Brothers (L. Edward and Alfred S.) for rental of quarters for the new institution. This was the front office room in the rear of their store at the following terms and rental:

The sum of $60 to October 1, 1884, and $75 if used until the second Tuesday in January, 1885. In case the bank used the rear office vault in the Emmons Brothers' store, an additional $25 was to be paid.

Salary for the cashier was fixed at $1.000.

The bank was capitalized at $25,000. It remained at that figure until January, 1953, when an additional $25,000 was added.

A statement of condition of the bank in 1884 is not available. The first such statement on record is that of 1892, which follows:

RESOURCES

Loans	$57,000
Cash in vault and due from banks	22,300
Fixtures	1,100
Bonds	1,040
Other	315
	$81,755

LIABILITIES

Capital	$25,000
Surplus	5,000
Undivided Profits	1,755
Deposits	50,000
	$81,755

The bank remained in the original quarters until about 1896, when it was moved to the rear of the Marvin D. Fisher store. Later, it occupied quarters in the Post Block. In 1957, an addition of 1,000 square feet of floor area was built. This gives space for a posting room, a fireproof storage vault and record room, plus a private conference room used by the directors and by the staff for mortgage closings and similar purposes. The new addition was made to the rear of the old building. The alley leading to the Emmons drug store was utilized and the addition used space also in the rear of the drug store.

Growth of the bank reflects the development of

the community which may be measured by comparing the earlier statement of condition with that of December 31, 1957.

RESOURCES

Cash on hand and due from banks	$ 352,463.23
U. S. Government bonds	1,191,282.82
State and municipal bonds	310,696.64
Other bonds and securities	105,885.55
Loans and discounts	1,205,193.34
Other resources	9,340.00
	$3,174,861.58

LIABILITIES

Capital stock	$ 50,000.00
Surplus	170,000.00
Undivided profits	45,712.56
Deposits	2,880,325.18
Other liabilities	28,823.84
	$3,174,861.58

Directors of the bank are T. J. Banfield, Marvin L. Fisher, Richard G. Roess, Ferris H. Fisher, Theodore P. Pope, Charles A. Seeley and Jorma Uotila.

Officers are Marvin L. Fisher, president; T. J. Banfield, vicepresident; Ferris H. Fisher, cashier; Roberta W. Wells, assistant cashier, and Theodore P. Pope, assistant cashier.

Myron B. Ferris was cashier for many years. He

was the only Democrat ever to be elected to the State Assembly from Tioga County. He was an ardent baseball fan.

Fred B. Cooper, after disposing of his general store in Halsey Valley, became cashier of the bank. For many years he drove to the bank from his home in Breeseport and back again at night. He finally purchased a home in Spencer.

Bank examiners now come six at a time and stay one week. In the early days, one man came and stayed half a day. As Myron L. Fisher once said, "He would spend most of his time talking baseball with Fred B. Cooper," at one time cashier.

The bank provides banking service not only for Spencer but for VanEtten and Candor as well. It has a staff of seven.

Cranberries Grown in Marsh

Marcus Cowles planted a cranberry bed in the marsh at North Spencer which produced berries for many years before the fruit was shipped in from Massachusetts.

A high board walk was built into the marsh and the canes were planted in close proximity, so picking was made easy.

Berries may still be found there but picking them is hazardous now.

Hunting and Fishing

Hunting and fishing were not considered sports in the days when the Indians roamed the virgin timber lands and streams; instead only enough game was taken to supply food and clothing requirements. The coming of the white man and the ensuing spoliation of red men's hunting grounds was a cause for the bitter but losing struggle against the intruders.

I loved the outdoors and knew the hiding places of game on West Hill, above the Seely mills, for at least two miles. There was no greater thrill for me than to be in the woods at daybreak and hear the chorus of birds, the chatter of squirrels, the drumming of partridges and the boasting notes of a cock pheasant.

You could see the squirrels cavorting about in the highest maples or working in the leaves on the ground, hunting chestnuts or acorns to store against the rigors of a snowbound forest. If there was a cornfield nearby, the furry little animals could be seen running to and fro on rail or stump fences with a supply or corn to be added to their winter cache of food.

Partridges were partial to buckwheat and, if there

was a brush lot near a buckwheat field, they were daybreak visitors for breakfast. When a partridge was flushed in thick brush, it started so swiftly it took an expert to make a hit. I found that if I placed the forefinger of my left hand under the barrel of the gun and pointed the finger at the bird, it was surprising the number of hits I could make. Quail also were plentiful in the early days.

If a light snow had fallen the night before, rabbit tracks were numerous, but the animals which made them were seldom seen unless surprised. If a hunter had a beagle and the dog found a fresh track, then a survival-of-the-fittest drama was enacted. When the dog started the chase, the rabbit invariably made a complete circle; so, if the hunter stood still, the barking of the hound came nearer and nearer until Mr. Bunny came back within shooting range.

Fox hunting was said to have been a great but cold-fingered sport. The hounds of one group picked up a fresh track in Fisher Settlement and followed it to Burhyte Glen. The dogs must have been getting close to their quarry as the fox was found in the top of a small tree that had grown horizontally from the bank of the glen.

Before white settlers had felled the forests and exposed the soil to the sun's drying rays, streams abounded in brook trout. In later years, big-mouth bass, grass pickerel and pan fish were quite plenti-

ful in Spencer Lake until German carp were placed in it under the impression they would uproot the eel grass that had become an impediment to boating and fishing. Instead, they uprooted the spawning beds of other fish. However, the lake is now practically free of this weed.

Bullhead fishing in the lake used to be good in the spring until these fish migrated to the marsh to spawn. I used to go to East Spencer with my father and fish in Catatonk Creek for bullheads and eels. When he was a young man, he lived there with his grandfather, Daniel Ferris, Sr., and came to know all the best places to fish.

Fresh-water clams were found in many of the creeks.

In the early days, rattlesnakes were plentiful on the east side of the valley from the marsh to Buttermilk Falls, but blacksnakes from the marsh exterminated them. It is said that the blacksnake circled its prey, then suddenly sprang upon and killed it. One time I saw a blacksnake, about seven feet long, stretched out in the sun near Buttermilk Falls. He was in a stupor after he had swallowed a rabbit which was being digested. A bulge in the snake's body told the story.

Indians used bows and arrows to kill their game. The earliest settlers had the blunderbuss; later came the flintlock, then the percussion cap, the Zulu and

down to the present repeater and double-barreled shotgun. Black powder was long used, and when brass shells were introduced they were loaded by hand. Later, smokeless powder was used and shells could be obtained with various combinations of powder and shot.

The Spencer Sportsmen's Club is performing a valuable service in planting trees, stocking streams and otherwise promoting conservation.

Tobacco Once Grown in Spencer

Very few persons will remember when tobacco was grown in Spencer. This was on the Daniel Joy farm in West Spencer, south of the Lehigh depot. The drying and curing shed with hinged doors was still standing the last time I was in Spencer.

Flax was grown in early Spencer. While there was little use for the straw other than for linens, the grain was in great demand. The seed had a therapeutic value, mostly as an ingredient of poultices. In later years the seeds began to be used in producing linseed oil and meal.

Mutton tallow was another healing agent. After it was tried-out, it was used in the home and farmers' wives found a ready sale for it at drug stores as a base for ointments. Lanolin, still another healing agent, was refined from oil in the wool of sheep.

Spencer Noted for Baseball

Spencer was always noted for its baseball teams, especially those before the beginning of the present century.

Baseball diamonds in those days might have been a meadow, a wheat stubble, or possibly a pasture field. Flat stones sometimes served as bases.

After the village acquired Nichols Park, many improvements were made, especially in the baseball diamond. A grandstand was built and considerable grading was done. A rubber home plate, regulation bases, and a pitcher's rubber were added.

Charles H. Emmons was manager for many years of the town team known as the "Champs." He was one of the best-known local pitchers the team ever had. While playing a girls' team on a lot across the creek from the George Jones residence, he was struck on the right temple by a ball thrown by a male pitcher on the visitors' team. I don't remember that he played much afterwards.

A native boy who went farthest in the game probably was Harry Taylor. He was born at Halsey Valley April 14, 1866, the son of Frederick H. and Hannah C. Taylor. He graduated from Spencer

Academy, received his A.B. from Cornell in 1888 and an LLB. in 1893. He was admitted to the New York State bar in 1893 and practiced in Buffalo. Elected county judge of Erie County, he served from 1906 to 1913, and served as a justice in the New York State Supreme Court, Eighth District, from 1914 to 1926. He was a trustee of Cornell University from 1903 to 1913.

He was a member of the Cornell team and went on to play big-league ball.

Another High School graduate was Jim Knox, a catcher, who with his brother, Clayton, a pitcher, formed probably the best-known battery in the history of Spencer High School. I remember one game in particular. This was played in the early evening and the opponent was a girls' team. An all-girl nine played the first three innings, when a professional male battery was inserted.

Shortly after this the visitors had the bases full and no one was out. Jim called me to the home plate and said: "Tig, I'll have the next three balls hit to you at third base; play the ball home." He knew where the ball should be thrown and Clayton had perfect control. The next three pitches were slow curves and were hit to me at third. I threw them as Jim had suggested and the three batters were easy outs at home. His strategy paid off.

Another pitcher on High School teams was

Claude Emmons, who played semi-pro baseball around New York City following his graduation from Cornell. Later, I saw him pitch a professional game in Syracuse. He was having a tryout with Troy of the old New York State League. He had pitched the day before in Elmira but the Troy manager had him start the next day in Syracuse. No iron man could give his best with no rest between games. He was released.

Probably the best known hitter in Spencer history was Wilbur Patchen. He, too, was a former big-league player. Some of his friends said late hours possibly was the cause for his not lasting in the big time. He had an enormous amount of baseball savvy and his experience behind the plate helped many a pitcher work his way out of a bad situation.

He was a member of the "Champs." About 1907 a West Danby team was signed to play at the Trumansburg fair. I remember I played third base and Harry Dresser was at first. The pitcher was Jack Cotter, a Pennsylvania boy who had mastered the spit-ball. I will never forget the first "spitter" Jack threw that day. Patchen followed the course of the ball as it took a sudden curve to the right and fell flat on his right side. He caught the ball, got up, took off his mask and started for the mound. He had a quizzical expression on his face when he said: "Jack, where did you get that darned thing?"

The first time I handled the ball I threw it over the first baseman's head.

We played a July 4 game at Interlaken which we lost, the first in a long time. When we arrived on the 9 o'clock train that evening, Willis Sager had fashioned a coffin and on it was the inscription: "The Champs Are Dead." A large crowd at the depot gave us a rousing reception. The pitcher for Interlaken that day was a Cornell player, Nick DeShon, while the Champs had Jack Cotter in the box. I don't remember the score but the game was very close.

Revolutionary War Pioneers

Revolutionary War soldiers who settled in Spencer were the Rev. M. Burdge, the Rev. Asa Cummings, John English, Richard Ferris, Uriah Jacobs, John Jones, Nathan Martin, Nathaniel Scofield and Phineas Spaulding.

Those in the War of 1812 were Samuel Austin, Edward Bingham, Benjamin Coggin, Allen Emery, Capt. John Field, John Forsythe, Hooker G. Hubbard, Milton Hugg, Maj. T. Riker, Lewis Van Woert and Lewis Wheeler.

Among others are Samuel Giles, John J. French and Ezekiel Palmer; but little is known of their service records.

Thomas Brock, Lumberman

Thomas Brock was another influential citizen in early Spencer. He was the first vicepresident of the Farmers and Merchants Bank and, after a year in that office, he was elected president. Today, he would marvel at the financial condition of the bank.

His main outside interest was the numerous sawmills he operated. The largest probably was the one near Cayuta Junction on the site of the present Cotton-Hanlon milling operations.

Besides the ones he operated, others were the Hallock mill in the northern part of the village, Seely Bros. mill in Hulbert Hollow, Cook mill just north of Charles Fisher's, John Ackles' mill on the present site of the Ithaca College camp, the Balcom mill in Randolph Hollow, the Van Marter mill on the Halsey Valley road, the Banfield mill in Van Etten, the L. E. Emmons mill at the eastern village line and the Eastham mill at East Spencer. There were others which I do not recall.

Mr. Brock had small farms in Cayuta, Swartwood and Fisher Settlement, and purchased carloads of steers and used the farms to condition the stock for market. He dealt in other cattle also.

Village of Spencer

The Village of Spencer is not an industrial community; rather, it is an ideal and healthful place to live, especially for families with school children. Retired people find it a quiet and restful spot.

The first village election was held July 24, 1886. Alfred S. Emmons was elected president; Loring W. Hull, Seymour Seely and C. M. Day, trustees; Myron B. Ferris, treasurer; L. N. Hedges, collector; Edward E. Dean, clerk of the board; Albert J. Card, street commissioner; William Benedict, Stephen D. Turk and William H. Lange, police constables; and Oliver Skinner, special police constable. Some of the first village presidents were—1886-87, Alfred S. Emmons; 1888, Dr. William H. Fisher; 1889, S. Alfred Seely; 1891, Charles E. Bradley; 1892, Myron Howell.

The village is located in the center of the Town of Spencer and is situated on one of the highest elevations in this part of the state. Surface drainage is carried both north and south.

Its school system has always been of the highest caliber. Since its inception, the Central School has been a source of pride to the community.

The moral standards of the village have always

been at a high level. Sale of intoxicants has never been tolerated for any long periods. Four churches minister to the religious needs of the community.

Farming and poultry raising with their kindred industries make up the main source of income.

When the village was booming in the lumbering era before the turn of the century, there was great rivalry among the three sections: Seelytown, Bradleytown and the Corners, as the main business section is called.

Spencer Picnic is well known throughout this part of the state and brings thousands each year to enjoy a day of recreation and an opportunity to meet relatives and old friends. This holiday is an outgrowth of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Picnic which was held in Van Etten about 1900 and is now held in Spencer on the third Saturday in August.

A large and colorful parade is held in the morning of picnic day. A different theme is used each year for the parade as a whole. Citizens take great pride in this event and work hard to make it a success, usually spending days in arranging and decorating the floats.

Upkeep of the park is paid for from the sales of soft drinks, sandwiches, ice cream, etc. All fees from the concessions and a percentage from baseball games on Picnic Day also go into the fund and for utilities as needed.

The concrete road on Main Street to West Danby was built by the United States Government in 1924, and the one on Tioga Street rebuilt to West Candor a few years ago, together with the one to Van Etten, are the main highways in and out of Spencer. Nearly all interior streets are macadamized.

The lake created by damming the overflow from the springs in the "Circle" affords skating in winter and a fishing spot in summer. It covers a swampy area and transforms an eyesore of bygone years. An extensive deposit of marl underlies the "Circle."

Stone brought to Spencer about 1900 was the beginning of an extensive sidewalk campaign and in many instances replaced board walks.

The village is fortunate to have available an unfailing water supply in Catatonk Creek and the village lake for use in case of fire. The pumper is a modern piece of apparatus and with assistance from surrounding communities, the village is well protected.

Plans for a water system have been investigated many times. Water from Spencer Lake or Catatonk Creek was to be pumped to a storage reservoir on East Hill and piped to the village under gravity pressure. The cost for piping and hydrants compared to the number of taxpayers has always been declared prohibitive.

Brickyard Started in 1882

Production of brick in Spencer started nearly 80 years ago. The plant was located about a half-mile west of the present Lehigh depot and was on the south side of the railroad tracks. Pat Markham was manager in later years.

The Spencer Brick Company was formed in 1893 as an outgrowth of a business begun by Richardson & Campbell in 1882. The company was capitalized at $10,000 and its officers were S. Alfred Seely, president; W. H. Bostwick, Jacob S. Dresser, and Willis Sager, stockholders.

"Cuffy" Cook, a minstrel man well known in the early days, and other Negroes were the final operators but evidently did not have sufficient knowledge of the business to make it a paying proposition. The clay was not of the highest quality or the manufacturing process was at fault, as the bricks were not of comparative quality with those produced today.

The clay was taken from a field east of the plant and carted in a dump truck to the mixing pit. "Black Ralph," a foreigner, possibly a Hungarian, had charge of the truck. He used a very heavy

Percheron or Clydesdale horse to haul heavy loads.

After being dumped into the pit, the clay was soaked with water and very fine coal added. A revolving wheel, which also traveled from one side of the pit to the other, mixed the ingredients. When of proper consistency; the mixture was shoveled into a wheelbarrow and dumped into the open top of the heavy-duty press.

"Shoveling pit" was a he-man's job. I remember one man who had this job, Jake Southwick, who was a baseball pitcher for the Spencer Champs. His work at the brickyard developed back and arm muscles that enabled him to throw an extremely fast ball. It was said at that time he could throw a baseball through a one-inch board, but I never saw it done or heard of anyone who had.

Molding the brick was done by a press that forced the clay mixture into a mold which contained a series of six separate molds. They were filled about every 30 seconds. The large mold was taken from under the press and turned upside down on a pallet of wood placed by a second helper, then a third man transferred the pallet loaded with freshly-molded brick to a four-wheeled truck. When the truck was loaded, it was taken to the drying yard where the bricks were "cured." I have a vivid recollection of the molding operation as I worked one summer at "putting on pallets."

The drying yard contained a series of covered sheds about six feet high and wide enough to hold four pallets side by side. The uprights were placed far enough apart to hold the pallets which rested on cleats. Two pallets were inserted from either side.

When the bricks were cured, they were placed in a kiln and a fire started to finish the process of hardening the brick. Use of coal dust in the mixing pit now became apparent as it burned on the inside of the brick and helped in the tempering process.

You can see these brick in buildings all over Spencer, and many carloads were shipped to points throughout the state.

Generous Mother Nature, as always, at last comes to the end of her munificence. This happened when the supply of clay dwindled to a point where it was no longer profitable to continue operations. The plant is no longer there, nor the four-story brick apartment house for employes.

"Black Ralph" seems like a legend to me today, although 60 years ago he was very much alive. His home was a shack on the north side of the railroad tracks. He had a garden and one of his principal crops was cabbage. In the fall, he with his horse and dump-truck loads of cabbage was a familiar sight on the streets of Spencer and nearby villages. You knew who it was and what he was selling when you heard: "Cabby, cabby, cabby."

Huggtown Pond Became Spencer Lake

Spencer Lake was once known as Huggtown Pond. Luther Hugg owned land bordering the upper part of the present lake and his home was near the west bank.

The lake nestles between hills that are really foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. If articulate, they could relate an amazing story of life thereabouts eons ago.

Arrowheads and other relics found on the northwest bank show that Indians used the site for a village. Some of the Indians seen in this section were four families which had their dwellings in that area. Deer were plentiful and brook trout abounded in its clear water.

William Voorhis settled at the lake in 1815 and the family owned most of the lake property for many years. Sarah Vorhis (later, by marriage, Dodge-Brown-Sutton) conducted the hotel for many years. Her first husband, Edward Dodge, started the stone hotel near the boat landing but fell from a scaffold and was killed. It was never finished. A bystander hinted this building was to have been a distillery.

At first, the southern shore of the lake ended at

Bushy Island. Before many years a raceway was opened from the site of the present dam to the lake proper. This furnished power to turn a water wheel that operated one of first gristmills in that area. Whole-wheat flour and feed were ground on millstones from grain brought in by farmers. It was in operation until the early 1900s.

The lower portion of the present lake was created when a dam was erected near the hotel, which flooded several acres of land and raised the level of the water so as to join the original lake. This dam gave way during high water, the present one replacing it.

The lake is fed mainly by springs in the lake and those in the marsh to the northwest. The marsh is a morass covering several acres and represents the accumulation of centuries of decaying vegetation. An attempt was made to drain the swamp and use the rich soil for a garden spot but the ditches filled so rapidly that the project was abandoned.

There are two deep holes in the lake. The depth of one was an early mystery as it was said to have no bottom. Later, it was found to be 125 feet deep; the other is shallower.

The lake had plenty of pan fish, big-mouth bass and grass pickerel until a Spencer businessman planted German carp in it. He admitted this act in his last moments, asserting he was sorry but that he

had thought the carp would uproot the eel grass and destroy it as it had become a hindrance to boating and fishing. At present the carp seem to be doing their work as the lake is being cleared of eel grass, although at the same time they are sucking up the spawn of game fish.

Officials in Ithaca at one time were said to have considered the possibility of piping the spring water from the marsh to that city, but a big drawback was said to have been use of a siphon or a deep ditch to carry the water over or under the high ground just north of the marsh. One Spencer man carried on negotiations for a long time with parties in Waverly, Sayre and Athens for piping the water to those villages.

Usually, ice on the lake was 12 to 18 inches thick at harvesting and was cut into cakes 18x24 inches with a man-powered ice saw. A pike pole was used to guide them through open water to the loading zone. Here the cakes were loaded on bobs and transported to the milk station or numerous other icehouses in Spencer. The Lehigh Valley was said to have considered at one time running a spur to the lake to facilitate harvesting ice for its refrigerator and dining cars.

Ice skating and fishing were winter sports that many enjoyed over past years.

About 1906, I and two other youths from Spencer

distributed several milk cans of pike perch (walleye) fingerlings in the lake, but I have never heard of any being caught.

The hotel at the southern end of the lake was in operation before my time. For many years the only cottage was the one built by Dr. William Fisher of Spencer.

An amusing incident occurred when a cottager of foreign extraction, unfamiliar with bird life of this region, shot a crow and anticipated a dinner delicacy. When asked how the bird tasted, he replied: "I pronounce it unfit for human consumption!"

South Danby a Game Refuge

The state purchased abandoned farms in South Danby several years ago and took the land out of cultivation. The section is fast reverting to its original state as ground cover and as a game refuge.

All buildings have been removed. Eight or ten furrows are plowed on the boundaries to serve as a firebreak. In time, a dense cover of trees and a floor of fallen leaves will act as a governor of the water flow.

The creek has been stocked with fingerling trout but the stream nearly dries up in summertime when many trout die as a consequence. It is expected that when a steady flow of water is re-established trout will thrive.

Early Schools

Any person who ever attended the old district schools has memories of what problems both teacher and pupils faced.

In winter, teachers usually boarded at a nearby farmhouse. Some pupils tramped two or three miles through knee-deep snow. The first to arrive had the task of kindling a wood fire, usually in a box stove in the center of the room.

Some schools had a pitcher pump to supply the drinking water. Otherwise, water was carried in a tin pail from a nearby spring or a neighbor's well. All drank from the same dipper as the pail was carried around the room. The pupils carried cold lunches but often used a forked twig to toast sandwiches over coals in the stove. Not only did toasting add zest to the lunch but changed the aroma of the schoolroom for the next hour or so.

Very few rural teachers had the benefit of the one-year training course, but most of them were certified under the Uniform System of first, second and third grade certificates. There was no professional training: candidates instructed themselves. Improvement in teacher-training came after 1900 and normal school or college certificates were required.

The Little Red Schoolhouse disappeared after many years of service to country boys and girls.

Today, with centralized schools, buses from the door to school, hot lunches, and college graduates as teachers, pupils receive the optimum in public school education.

Pupils from district schools fortunate enough to finish in Spencer, had many advantages: grades, high school, trained teachers and State supervision.

Spencer's third school was the Red School House, located on Main Street near the junction with East Hill Road. Immediately following this was the Spencer Academy, known to graduates as "Old Cream Mustard," and located on the site of the present brick high school building.

Centralization of schools called for a more elaborate setup, a development that outmoded the brick school and its curriculum based on readin', 'ritin' and 'rithmetic. Today's pupils are taught, in addition to the standard subjects, music, homemaking, drama, agriculture as well as college preparatory courses. They have a gymnasium and physical education, and baseball, football and basketball teams are directed by professional coaches.

Memory of the Red School House was perpetuated for many years through an association of former pupils. They gathered at the High School and later at the Centralized School, usually the day be-

fore the Picnic. After the original members had departed, pupils of later schools were eligible to join. It was the occasion for students of the older schools to get together, reminisce and partake of a delicious dinner. It is regrettable that the association disbanded under impact of mid-century mores.

However, Spencer High School Alumni Association was formed before the Red School House Association disbanded. It holds an annual banquet shortly before Picnic Day.

One of the principals of Old Cream Mustard was Woodbridge N. Ferris, son of John Ferris who lived east of the Halsey Valley road and about halfway to Halsey Valley. He went to Michigan and established Ferris Institute, a co-educational business college. Chosen governor, he was later elected to the U. S. Senate but died before completing his term.

Cigar Factory Started in Spencer

Calvin and Lyman Bradley came to Spencer from Danby and built a general store at the corner of Main and Liberty Streets. It burned around 1900, and John Ellison later erected a brick-faced store on the site.

Charles Bradley, son of Lyman, was a Civil War veteran who was in General Sherman's march to the sea. He had a son, Lyman II, who conducted a cigar factory in the store for many years before moving to Tallahassee, Fla.

Early Entertainments

Radio and TV were undreamed of in our parents' time. Instead, long winter evenings ofttimes were spent in playing cards and dominoes, the most common pastimes. Others were chess, checkers, backgammon and cribbage.

Card games ran the gamut of pedro and king pedro, seven-up, old sledge, euchre, hearts and pinochle (variously spelled) to such juveniles as old maid and authors. These pastimes have been largely replaced by today's more sophisticated bridge and canasta.

Box socials and quilting parties were two popular activities for providing group entertainment and enabling rural residents to keep in touch with each other. Lunches were brought by the women to the social. Tightly wrapped and devoid of the donor's identity, the lunches were auctioned to the highest bidder among the men folks. The woman or girl who brought the box was luncheon partner of the purchaser. Sometimes, it was so contrived that the bidder recognized a box as one brought by a person with whom he wished to share the contents. The ruse disclosed by his persistence, it is needless to say, made bidding spirited and the swain paid the price for the privilege he sought.

In early days, when the framing of bents for a building had been completed, a raising-bee was held. The timbers to form corner posts, cross beams and rafter plates had been hewn with a broad ax; mortises and tenons cut; and auger-holes bored into which hand-cut wooden pegs were driven to hold the parts firmly together. Neighbors came to help raise the bents and fit them into the sill, raise the rafter plates and stay the whole framework. It was now ready for planking, placing the rafters and roofing. While the men were strenuously engaged with pike pole and mallet, the women were in the kitchen to help the hostess prepare a big, country-style dinner to which they had contributed generously of chicken, pies, cakes and bread. Co-operation was more prevalent than nowadays, possibly because the modern farmer is less dependent upon his neighbors. Yet a vestige of the old days is found in their willingness to help in an emergency.

When a barn was finished, it was a custom to hold a barn dance, usually before any stock or produce had been placed in it. An old-time fiddler furnished music and called off. Food, customarily brought by the women, was served in the barn. A new house was similarly initiated by a house warming.

A new form of entertainment was the wax-cylinder talking machine that appeared in the early 1900s. I recall an amusing remark when Mike Troy,

who lived in Fisher Settlement, saw and heard his first phonograph record. It was in the jewelry department of Marvin D. Fisher's store in Spencer. Mike heard the voices on the machine and squinted at it from every angle, front and rear, then quizzically said: "And what makes the dom thing talk, I don't know!"

There were medicine shows where you were made to believe the show's liquid "cure-all" was a magical potion. Between acts of vaudeville the "doctor" extolled the virtues and healing power of his product. Then you might see an itinerant foreigner with a dancing bear and any donation was accepted. But what pleased the youngsters most was the Italian organ grinder with a trained monkey that collected donations. Traveling minstrel shows performed before the footlights in C. J. Fisher's opera house in Spencer, on the site of the present Presbyterian Church. Sometimes the show was given under its own tent, usually in Nichols Park. One-ring circuses also occasionally appeared in the park.

For many years Spencer Chemical Company produced local amateur minstrel shows in Fisher's opera house; proceeds were used to buy new uniforms. Special costumes were rented from a theatrical company in New York City. Professional copies of the latest songs were available merely to advertise them. Charles Emmons was interlocutor, with

Henry Fisher and Willis Sager as end men. Jesse Hart always presented a comical Irish skit. The olio usually had a cakewalk. A short play and a quartet were other attractions in the olio. Presentations were always given before a crowded house.

Ole Swimmin' Hole a Fond Memory

Oldtimers harbor fond memories of the ole swimmin' hole in Catatonk Creek. It was known as the Oxbow and was on Marvin D. Fisher's farm where the stream meandered through the pasture. The creek followed the line of least resistance, especially during high water. It bisected too much good farm land, so later a channel was cut south of the E.C.&N. bridge and the Oxbow became a memory. A deep hole south of the bridge proved to be an even better place to swim.

There was a water-power sawmill on the Hanson Cook farm just north of Charles Fisher's. When the mill was dismantled, a deep hole below the dam served as a swimming hole for many years. Another deep hole in the rear of Charles Fisher's home was popular for a time.

Farther north, on the present site of the Ithaca College camp, John Ackles had a sawmill. Later, after the dam washed out, a deep hole was used for swimming. It was called the William Mabee swimming hole.

Fire in 1876 Destroyed 14 Buildings

A disastrous fire in 1876 destroyed 14 wooden buildings at the corner of Main and Tioga Streets.

Among these structures was the store on the southeast corner, operated by Leonard Fisher II. An earlier account on page 24 gives the date of destruction of this building as 1877 but later information places this with the others burned in 1876.

Other buildings destroyed were Platt & Stanclift's store on the northeast corner, and John Day's hardware store. Nearly all the structures between the corner and the bridge also were lost.

Another building on the southwest corner was the Platt House. I can find no information regarding the life of this building. It probably burned and may have been a victim of this conflagration. The cellar walls and a half-filled cellar remained until the present garage was built early in this century. Young people of about 1876 have told their children of the good times they had at this hotel.

The present brick Post Block, on the corner, was built by two brothers, Louis and William Post. They were tailors and had their shop on the second floor. Myron B. Ferris conducted a clothing store on the first floor. Later, David Nichols and William Snif-

fin operated a grocery for many years in the quarters vacated by Ferris. Nichols was sole proprietor at the time he moved to Elmira in 1903 and opened a grocery there. The Farmers and Merchants Bank, after making major alterations, later took over the first-floor rooms vacated by Nichols.

The third floor of this block has long been the meeting place of the Masonic Lodge. Several years ago it assumed control of the second floor which is being used as a kitchen and dining room.

A barber shop in the basement was operated for a time by a colored man named Gilbert. Later, Grant Taylor ran it for a long time. He was succeeded by Adelbert S. Hudson who subsequently moved to the building south of the Philip Bower store.

The center block was known as the L. Edward Emmons Block. It was built with brick in 1876 and occupied later when he moved his pharmacy there from the Alfred S. Emmons store. He manufactured Electro-Silicon Liniment which had wide distribution. He had a print shop on the second floor and printed his own literature. After the liniment business was sold, one of the presses and the type were purchased by The Needle. The Maccabee Lodge occupied the third floor for many years.

The northern block, also built with brick, was known to some as the John Day Block. LaGrange Shepard operated a grocery there for many years be-

fore removing to the building north of the Philip Bower store.

The Shepard store in the Day Block was on the first floor. At present, the post office is located there. Odd Fellows and Rebekah lodges used the third floor until these local units disbanded.

The Thornton House, in the rear of the Post Black, was operated for many years by John Thornton. Aaron Van Marter preceded Thornton.

Tanneries Once Numerous

Tanneries were numerous in the days when chestnut and oak bark were used as tanning agents.

Peeling the bark in the woods was a summer job, as it loosened readily when the sap had been drawn up from the roots.

After the trees were felled and trimmed, the bark was scored every four feet and slit lengthwise. A special tool, a spud, was used to peel the bark. This had a head rounded on one side and flat on the other. Mounted on a wooden handle to afford sufficient leverage, the spud was forced through the slit between the bark and the wood.

The bark was piled in the woods to dry and then drawn to nearby tanneries or to shipping points when rail transportation made feasible the development of large commercial tanneries.

Seven Buildings Burned in 1934

A fire of undetermined origin broke out at about 8:15 on the morning of April 30, 1934. Seven buildings were burned at an esimated loss in excess of $40,000.

Flames were discovered coming through a partition into a rear room of the Possinger store where Mr. Possinger was sorting eggs. At first, it was thought to have started from a bonfire he was in the habit of building to burn refuse. This fire had been extinguished. Then, too, there was an icehouse and an old building between the site of the bonfire and the Possinger store, so the possibility of sparks from the trash fire being the cause of the conflagration was discounted.

Structures consumed on the east side of Main Street were:

Grange building, oldest of all burned, was a two-story building. It was first used by James Jennings and Charles Van Kleeck as a salesroom for agricultural implements and machinery. The second story served as a hall and meeting room for the Grange. At one time a photographic gallery occupied these rooms. Carl Steenburg had his barber shop and town clerk's office on the south side of the ground floor.

Elmer Dimmick had living quarters on the north side. A. S. Hudson occupied the ground floor for a number of years as a barber shop and residence.

The Possinger store had been built about 1880 by Philip Bower and his brother as a furniture store and undertaking rooms. Later, Philip Bower conducted a confectionery store there. The property changed hands many times.

The Bernice Vose building was erected about 1884 by W. J. Sager as a jewelry store and later used as a confectionery and grocery. LaGrange Shepard later had a grocery there and made regular trips through the country, carrying meats and groceries. At the time of the fire, Jay H. Hauser and family occupied the living rooms on the second floor. He had a barber shop in the front part of the first floor. Their entire belongings were lost.

The two-story town hall stood about 250 feet north of the Vose building. It was 32x60 feet and contained many justice of the peace dockets and records, which were consumed. For many years the first election district used the first floor as a polling place, while the second district was housed on the second. The Spencer Library was on the main floor and many of its 3,500 volumes were destroyed. The jail and lockup were in a building to the rear of the town hall that for many years had been used to house the chemical truck. This structure was destroyed.

This building and the town hall were erected about 1885.

The Charles Robinson building on the west side of Main Street was consumed. Built by George Martin as a saloon, it was later sold to M. C. Odell who continued in the same business. When the Raines Law went into effect, it was rebuilt into a hotel. Frank Powers, the next owner, operated it as the Central House. When Mr. Robinson purchased the building, he operated a grocery for several years. Later, Emil Kuusiluoto conducted the Purity Bakery and salesroom in the building.

Fire companies from Van Etten, Owego and Candor responded to a call for help. These with the Spencer Chemical Company and a bucket brigade saved other buildings.

Several structures were scorched, among them being Alga Vose's residence, the former Charles Bliven home, Joseph Fisher's bungalow north of the Robinson building, Robinson's barn on the west, and the Kellogg gas station across the street from the town hall. The roof of Harry L. Scofield's residence on the north side of Owego Street caught fire from town hall embers.

Another landmark burned a year previous. It was the Thomas Brock building, located next to the post office. It had been used for many years as a meat market by several different butchers.

Buying Club Start of Spencer Co-Op

Joel Pelto and family came from Minnesota in 1911, the first of many Finnish families to settle in Spencer. Others had come earlier but they settled in Van Etten and the surrounding area. The Peltos located first on the James Griffin farm on West Hill; then after the house burned, they moved to the adjoining farm, formerly owned by Asa Doty.

Edward, one of the sons, entered the real estate business and was instrumental in inducing other Finnish people to settle here. Limbi, the daughter, married John Bolander. They purchased the Myron Seely farm, also on West Hill.

As was the case of the pioneers of other nationalities, these Finnish people became assimilated in the melting pot that has made America what it is today.

They were used to hard work and frugality. About 1924, a merchant was asked his opinion of them. He replied: "When the first of the early settlers arrived in Spencer, I gave them credit for all their necessities and always was repaid. One bill of $5 ran a long time but eventually it was repaid."

Money was scarce with them and they had the same financial problems as the earlier pioneers but

those of the newest pioneers were aggravated by the rising cost of living at the time.

Some of the farms were on hillsides where erosion had washed away the better part of the soil. The newcomers were industrious and eager to learn methods to increase the fertility of these run-down farms. Use was made of the Farm Bureau and all other sources of information pertinent to restoring soil fertility and general farming and woodlot practices.

Their first venture in co-operative buying was a Buying Circle formed by a number of Spencer and Van Etten Finnish farmers. Their object was to buy feed and packaged groceries in carload lots. The organization purchased these goods directly from wholesalers, thus eliminating some costs. The club actually was the forerunner of the Spencer Co-Operative Society, Inc.

Successful initial transactions led the Van Etten Farmers Society to take up the question of a co-opative for discussion, and in the fall of 1927 it began organizational work toward that end. The club received help in organizing a co-operative from the Brooklyn, N. Y., Trading Association and from the Eastern Co-Operative League. Necessary committees to attend to matters of finance, legality and location were appointed in February, 1928.

The Spencer Co-Operative Society, Inc., opened

for business on May 8, 1928, in a small dwelling house on Railroad Avenue which had been remodeled enough to accommodate a small store.

The first manager was John Nummivouri who served for two years. He was succeeded by Theodor Maki who was with the society for one year. John W. Janhonen was the third manager and he served for four years. John Maatta, his successor, was here for ten years and was replaced by William Ruhanen who served from 1945 to 1956. Elias Multila was elected president at that time and was succeeded on March 1, 1958, when Ray Wirtanen was promoted.

The first board of directors consisted of Alfred Tohkanen, president; Aksel Salo, vice president; William Wendela, secretary; Karl Siren, treasurer; Leander Walli, William Lahtinen, Tovio Uotila and William Paolmaki were the remaining members of the board.

The Co-Op was started with a capital of $700 obtained by selling $5 shares. In 1953, their 25th anniversary, the yearly business amounted to $2,-800,000, a banner year. They now have a self-service grocery store, dry goods, feed mill, a coal yard, bulk gasoline and oil tanks, a modern garage, a large hardware store, an egg-shipping department and a fleet of trucks.

Many of the Finnish people are members of the Finnish Lutheran Church. Some time after the Bap-

tist and the Methodist Churches joined to form the Federated Church, the Finnish congregation purchased the Methodist Church building and worshipped there until a Lutheran Church was erected at North Van Etten.

The Finnish people have mingled with many old Spencer residents in many walks of life: through marriage, in business and professionally.

Chestnutting, a Pleasant Outing

Gathering chestnuts was one of the pleasantest outings young people enjoyed up to 50 years ago. After the second hard frost each fall, the burrs were opened sufficiently so that the nuts could be shaken loose. Sometimes, a long pole was used to whip the branches. Nuts were sent showering down from the smaller second-growth trees by a vigorous shaking or by thumping the bole.

When roasted, chestnuts were a winter's evening delicacy still recalled by those who gathered them before a blight killed the species.

Not all the chestnut crop was consumed at home. Each year many bushels were traded out at country stores and sent to city markets.

Nearly every farm had several trees that produced abundantly. Chestnut lumber had a beautiful grain and color, especially after being quarter-sawed.

Spencer Library Opened in 1915

The Spencer Library is now located in the former home of Bert Puderbaugh on Main Street. This building housed the harness shop of David Snook for many years. The new location gives the library a more personal and independent status, and for the first time it will have separate rooms for fiction, non-fiction and reference books, and children's books.

Success in establishing the library can in a large measure be credited to the untiring labor of the Rev. A. O. Caldwell. Citizens had talked about a library for many years and meetings were held but no action was taken until Mr. Caldwell fathered the idea and saw it through to fruition.

The Spencer Library Association was organized in March, 1915. The first officers were: President, the Rev. A. O. Caldwell; vice-president, W. M. Watson; secretary, Miss Helen Bush; and treasurer, Myron B. Ferris.

Trustees for one year: Mrs. Myron L. Fisher, Mrs. Henry H. Fisher and the Rev. A. O. Caldwell.

Trustees for two years: Loring L. Hull, Jesse R. Hart and Mrs. Max A. Fisher.

Trustees for three years: Mrs. Lena S. Seabring, Cornelius O. Seabring and Myron B. Ferris.

Trustees for four years: W. M. Watson, Charles A. Seely and Miss Helen Bush.

The library was officially opened Aug. 12, 1915, in a room in the Town Hall. The Town Hall burned in the fire of 1934 and, of more than 3,000 books, about 500 were lost.

The association rented rooms over the bank shortly after the fire and was in that location until 1941. It was then moved to the Emmons Block, as many of its patrons wished it located on a ground floor. The association completed negotiations for the present location and the library moved there in August, 1958.

The State Education Department rates the library as one of the finest in the state. Its shelves have been filled and kept up-to-date with books that have been catalogued and filed in a creditable way. Mrs. Elinor Bartholomew is entitled to high commendation for her work as the present librarian.

Mrs. Roberta Wells, president of the local library association, was recently named to the board of directors of a newly-organized co-operative Finger Lakes Library System.

This organization is the second co-operative library to be formed in the state under provisions of a state law passed last April. Included are six libra-

ries in Tioga County, including the Spencer Library; four in Tompkins County, four in Cayuga, two in Seneca and one from Cortland.

Each participating library will continue to operate under its own board of trustees, using local funds. The trustees of the new system will draft a plan for services to member libraries, and apply for state aid to finance recommendations.

Josh Smith's Anecdote

A former resident often told of a joke he let materialize on Woodbridge N. Ferris, twice governor of Michigan and later United States senator.

Mr. Ferris, principal of Spencer Academy before he went to Michigan, lived four miles from the village and walked the distance twice daily unless he was fortunate enough to get a lift from a passing vehicle.

One day he was riding home with Josh Smith, a teamster who had delivered a load of lumber to Spencer. Josh had purchased a quart of cherries to take home and had set them on the seat between them. Mr. Ferris, always a deep thinker, became so engrossed in conversation he was unaware that he was eating the cherries until they had disappeared. He was so chagrined that he could only offer a weak excuse. This anecdote was Josh's favorite.

Spencer School Started in Cabin

Many persons are under the impression that the Red School House was the first school in town. From more complete information, it learned that this school was the third one in Spencer.

Joseph Barker and a companion, Benjamin Drake, came to Spencer in 1794 and so were among the first settlers in town. Barker built a log cabin near the corner of North Main and Library Streets. He was the first schoolmaster in the settlement as he started a school in his home which became a community affair. It was supported by contributions from the few settlers who sent their children to him for instruction.

After a few years, "The Log Cabin School" was built which shared the burden of education. This school was situated just east of the Methodist Church. Sliding doors opened toward the church. A large fireplace in the northern end had a teacher's desk in front of it. Carmi Benton was the teacher.

The Red School House was erected between 1822 and 1824 and was continued as Spencer's two-room public school building for 35 years. It was a well constructed two-story schoolhouse that had a cupola intended to house a bell but none was ever hung

there. The original structure was sold to Myron B. Ferris in 1859, remodeled and used as a tenant house. In 1944, Marvin L. Fisher purchased it and, after further remodeling, sold the building to the Federated Church for use as a parsonage.

In 1859, the Academy or White School House was built but an addition was necessary 10 years later. In 1900, the school was granted a charter as an accredited four-year high school.

A clock which long adorned the principal's room in the old Academy was affectionately known as Old Cream Mustard. Later it was moved to the hall in the Brick School and finally to the Central School. It is now in the Payne Museum.

A drawing of the clock was made by Miss Louisa Hull in 1908 and used on the front cover of alumni programs for many years. It has often been used since on programs and place cards for the Red School House and Alumni Association meetings.

In 1956, the old school bell which had been molded in 1860 and used on both the Academy and the Brick School, was removed and added to historical collection in the Payne Museum.

As the town and village school-pupil population increased, it was necessary to move the Academy building to the rear so that a brick building could be erected on the old foundation. At the time it was

built, in 1906, it was one of the finest structures of its kind.

Notwithstanding the high caliber of instruction being given in the Brick School, there was a growing demand for a broader system of education. Centralization seemed to be the answer and, after thorough study and discussion, the districts involved voted Oct. 14, 1935, to centralize. Thirteen districts are served by the Central School, 11 being in Spencer, and one in each Barton and Van Etten.

The contract price was $166,990, of which the Federal government granted $75,145. Construction began Dec. 17, 1935, and the building was occupied Jan. 25, 1937.

The Board of Education at that time consisted of Myron L. Fisher, president; Loraine S. Tillman, vice-president; Marsh D. Thornton, Harry L'Amoreaux and Harry Tyler, members. Hilton C. Buley was the first principal.

The capacity of the building at that time was 600 pupils, and the registration 352. Seating for 600 persons was provided in the auditorium, which also served as a gymnasium.

The original school was 275 feet long and 60 feet wide; it had 38 classrooms. All desks were movable and so placed that light entered the room at the left of the pupil.

The school was designed to give recognition to

individual needs of students. The first consideration is given to health. In the health room periodic health examinations are made and first aid given.

The gymnasium has a standard basketball court; it is also used for corrective exercises. Two shower-locker rooms have lockers for each student.

In the cafeteria, a student may supplement or purchase a balanced meal.

Other innovations include an up-to-date library, an agricultual course (until 1957), home making, commercial subjects and complete music courses.

The activity program has a senior play, junior play, an operetta as well as one-act plays and a junior oratorical speaking contest. A school newspaper is published as well as an annual at the end of the school year.

In 1951, additions and remodeling were necessary to house increased attendance. These extensions included a new cafeteria, a new gymnasium, a new kindergarten room, and a new shop. The old shop was remodeled to make two more classrooms, a music room, cafeteria and gymnasium storage rooms, public toilets and a telephone booth. The cost was $230,000.

In 1958, further alterations were made. Included were three new classrooms on the second floor of the 1951 addition, the 1951 shop was remodeled for a second kindergarten, and four stalls of the bus

garage were made into a shop. These cost $124,000.

In 1956, Agriculture was put on a half-time basis and was discontinued in 1957. Industrial arts was added to the curriculum.

A further consolidation affecting not only Spencer but also Van Etten and Candor school districts is under consideration. No final determination has been announced.

General Clinton's Strategy Won

In 1779, General Sullivan under orders of General Washington utterly to destroy all Iroquois villages, orchards and crops, was moving north along the Susquehanna. Gen. James Clinton was at Cooperstown with an army that was to join Sullivan at Tioga Point (Athens). Advices reaching Clinton made it clear that he must speed his movement.

Shallows and riffles made it impossible to use the east branch of the Susquehanna for transportation during a spell of low water. Clinton built a dam at the lower end of Otsego Lake and, when the lake level had risen three feet, blew up the dam.

Boats, brought from the Mohawk, were already laden and dispersed along the stream. When flood stage was reached, the boats were launched and Clinton's 1,800 men rode the flood to Tioga Point. The site of the dam can still be traced.

After the expedition, the only Indians still in the

region were a few stragglers, remnants of the once-great Iroquois confederation of upstate New York.

Lehigh Shops at Van Etten Considered

The Lehigh Valley Railroad at one time considered purchasing the land on the flats west of Van Etten on which to build its railroad repair shops. This site was near the junction of the Ithaca branch and the E.C.&N. The shops never materialized and at the time it was thought the president of the road wished to build the shops at Sayre.

If the Lehigh had built the shops at Van Etten, one can imagine how that village might have become a city. Spencer would have been closely connected with Van Etten's growth and would have made a large increase in population and in the number and variety of its business enterprises.