

Chapter 14

THE CAUSE OF TEMPERANCE

In the early days, country lanes with their whiskey bars were plenty. The licensed liquor sellers of this era were John Phillips in 1817, on the Kimball farm, Shadrach Ward and his sons continued the traffic. Peter Barnard, John Wing, L. O. Davis, John Petitt, Halsey Whitaker, Victor Putnam, E. Coykendall, John Welch, H. Lewis, G. O. Spencer and the list goes on to amply demonstrate the universal custom. The truthful delineation of the effect produced by so general a traffic would show many a drunken vagrant prowling for a drink, while his family suffered at home for food and clothing. Not frequently, death closed the sad drama, and friendship drew the veil of oblivion.

The duty of the Overseer of the Poor of any town or city, on complaint of satisfactory proof by a wife that her husband is a habitual drinker of intoxicating liquors to have published in some newspaper of the county wherein the said parties reside - which said newspaper shall be designated by the Board of Excise of each town, a notice to all dealers in intoxicating liquors, it is illegal to sell to such a husband, for a term of six months from the date of the notice, under penalty of \$50.00 with costs, for each and every sale or giving intoxicating liquors.

The justice docket indicates the effect of temperance. Robert Armstrong, in office for 5 years, left a record of over 400 closely written pages. Andrew Ward was in office for 4 years, and his docket lengthened to 343 pages. William Chamberlin, 3 years, and his writings covered 160 pages, and this in a town less than four by six miles in size. Those days are past.

L. A. David became a strenuous temperance man. Henry Hoagland was one of the most conscientious advocates of reform. He desired to raise an addition to his house in 1824, and no help would come without whiskey. He exchanged some corn for the liquor, and solemnly vowed it was the last exchange - and it was.

Maurice Brown, a temperance justice, was elected in 1837. He was elected Supervisor in 1848, filled a vacancy on the Excise Board, and for the first time, licenses were refused by

Thomas Doolittle voting with Brown. The question of “license” or “no license” was voted on and the “no license” was declared the winner by nine votes. The law was charged vesting the power to grant licenses to the Commissioners. Under that law Joel Coykendall took out a license; since then no applications have been made, and the people of Canadice became known as temperate, honest, and Christian.

When the hotel owned by Joel Coykendall and his wife Sally, referred to many times in town records as the gathering place for annual meetings, was dismantled, a newspaper article was written thus in reflection.

“One of the oldest landmarks of the Hemlock Canadice region has been removed at “Aunt Sal’s Corners” quaint sobriquet for a quiet intersection of country byways, seven miles from the village of Hemlock, that once teemed with a busy stagecoach line (running from Canandaigua to Dansville).

Tightly closed and empty of the richness of living it knew for more than half a century, the old frame building had fallen into a forlorn desuetude, a ghostly relic of a vanishing day.

Widely acclaimed for her cooking and genial hospitality throughout the hills and valleys of Ontario and Livingston counties was Mrs. Sarah Coykendall, proprietress of the rustic hostelry, popularly known as “Aunt Sal” to her neighbors that included the rural folks for miles around.

It was a place of rugged life in stage coach days. Drivers of the unwieldy conveyances discharged their passengers here for good food and a nights lodging with many a shout and flourish. Peddlers made the inn a regular stopping-place on their spring and fall treks across the countryside and visiting drummers put up at the comfortable inn and ate lustily of the bountiful meals prepared by the innkeepers skillful fingers.

The reputation of the inn spread and travelers from distant points in the state made it a point to stop there for a meal when in the locality. The postman, arriving on horseback from Canandaigua with the mail at dinner at “Aunt Sal’s” before riding on to Dansville, where he spent the night. He would stop again for dinner on the return trip the next day on his return

toward Canandaigua.

Horsemen could ride up on the low veranda to the bar on the front of the house, and purchase a drink without dismounting. It was an early form of curb service. Whiskey brewed at the local distilleries sold for 5¢ a glass and 25¢ a gallon.

A kitchen of unmerciful size as a neighbor characterized the ample sized room, became a scene of bustling activity when transients arrived. Chickens were cooked on short notice. According to legend of the Corners, the proprietress named her flock of chickens and had only to summon the chicken desired by name to have it killed and cooked for dinner. A well stocked preserve room on the second floor held quantities of fruit, preserved in enormous crocks as was the custom in the old days before fruit cans were used.

The tavern held added importance in the community as an assembly place for town meetings. Business that mapped the welfare of the township was transacted over a rough pine table now in the possession of Mrs. Carrie Blank (my grandfather's sister).

Stables were very ample and said to be capable of accommodating 72 horses.

A spacious dance hall accommodating scores of dancers occupied most of the entire second floor. Rural merrymakers from surrounding hamlets and farms cavorted until dawn in the brisk measures of the square sets to rollicking old tunes unmindful of the lack of professional finish of the local fiddlers and banjo players who furnished the music.

When "Uncle Joe" as the proprietress' husband was familiarly known, and "Aunt Sally" closed the hotel to transient trade, gates were shut in front of the tavern. When peddlers appeared as usual, demanding admittance, the phrase "Don't you see those gates closed," turned them away.

Lewis Hoppough, Hemlock octogenarian and grandson of the famous "Aunt Sal" spent boyhood days in the old hotel and recalled many stories of the old days.

A curio reminiscent of the bygone day is a battered tread power in which a horse furnished power to saw wood.

On an opposite corner formerly stood a blacksmith shop now used as a barn. Life which

formerly centered about the inn is now reduced to a handful of families in the settlement. A half mile east of the locality on the middle road running north and south through the township is located Canadice Church Corners so named it to distinguish it from "Aunt Sal" or Canadice Corners East, as the crossroad is officially termed in town records.

An effort was made in 1882 by Davenport Alger of Springwater, who built a summer hotel called the "Port House" at the head of Hemlock Lake, to run a drinking place. After learning that the people of Canadice would not tolerate the traffic, he built a pier out into the lake with a cabin at the end and took out a license from the adjoining Town of Conesus in Livingston County, and began selling there. As the statutory boundary of the west side of town was somewhat ambiguous, he construed it to fit his purpose. He contended that the boundary line was at the water's edge. An action was begun by the Overseer of the Poor, A. W. Doolittle before justice of the peace A. H. Tibbals for penalty under the Excise Law. It was stubbornly contested for two days. Attorneys O. C. Armstrong and Bradley Wynkoop of Canandaigua, council for the plaintiff, Judge Vanderlip of Dansville and R. H. Wiley, Esq. of Springwater for the defendant. Judgement was rendered against the defendant for the penalty of \$50.00 and the costs of \$18.40. An appeal was taken to the County Court with like results. In the meantime application was made to Hon. Silas Seymour, State Engineer and Surveyor, to determine the said boundary line, which was investigated by him and found to be across a portion of the lake, instead of along the shoreline. Soon after this the "Port House" went up in smoke and thus ended this issue.

Century-Old Canadice Tavern, Where ‘Aunt Sal’ Used to Serve Unsurpassed Meals, Is No More

Mrs. Jay Becker, Correspondent

The Lahey House, as it is known to this generation, one of the oldest landmarks in the Town of Canadice, has recently been razed and removed. The tavern was located about a half mile west of Canadice Corners and was erected over a hundred years ago. Nancy Lahey relates that her father, Patrick, came to this country in 1853, and that the tavern was considered an old building at that time.

The tavern was a large, pretentious looking building with a porch across the front, and with a spacious hall leading through the center of the first floor to the kitchen, with large rooms on each side. The second floor consisted of a large ball room, where many a couple had waltzed and square danced in the decades past.

One of the earliest inhabitants of the tavern was Aunt Sal, as she was familiarly known at that time. The Corners were named in her honor, and occasionally now one is apt to hear it referred to as Aunt Sal’s Corners. She was the wife of Joel Coykendall, a very retiring man.

Aunt Sal was famous far and near for her fine cooking, and the traveler was always glad of the chance to partake of her tasty meals.

Your correspondent has heard her mother tell that in the days of “general training” Aunt Sal served meals to the officers and men, as did the hotel across the road, operated by Henry Ogden. On these occasions there was always a strife between the landladies to see which one could ring the dinner bell first. At this particular time she told her lady helpers that if they would get their meal ready so

they could ring the dinner bell first, she would get each one a new calico dress. Needless to say, Aunt Sal bought the dresses.

During “general training” the Canadice band was also there to do its part. The members of the band at that time: Doc Beam, Dan Beam, John Beam, Bert Beam, Hiram Swan, Ira Briggs, John Lucas, Peter Ross, Neal Good, Birsdey Birch, Jonas Swarts. This band was said to have owned the finest band wagon and uniforms in the county, and took first prizes at tournaments held in Canandaigua and East Bloomfield.

Aunt Sal also had many social gatherings. Mrs. Alta Hoagland has in her possession one of the invitations issued at that time, which reads:

“Social Party - The pleasure of your company is respectfully solicited at Joel Coykendall’s Canadice Hotel on Thursday evening, Jan. 18, 1855. Room managers, W. Treat, R. Wilder, W. Westbrook, H. P. Coykendall. Music by Sutton’s band. Bill \$2.00.

- (Lima Gazette Print).”

Uncle Joel and Aunt Sal had a number of children; one son, Hiram, served in the Civil War, and gave his life at the age of 21 on Mar. 6, 1862, at Cape Gabipdian, Mo. There are three descendants of Aunt Sal and Uncle Joel still living in town: Mrs. Leo Marshall, Burdette Hoppough and Fay Huff. We regret that the vicissitudes of life made it necessary for this old landmark to be demolished. It is hoped, however, that someone will build on this sightly sopt and help fill up the gap which the removal of the old tavern has left.