

An Armchair Trip Through South Edwards of Yesteryear

Talk given in 1976 at Edwards Historical Association - by LaVerne H. Freeman

In reading the various histories of Edwards we find that the first settler of South Edwards was Job Winslow who moved his family there from Potsdam in 1824. He built a sawmill and then, the next year, a gristmill, to utilize the water power available.



Winslow Cemetery, on top of the high hill behind Alfred and Barbara Fenton's house.

The Winslows are buried in a small private cemetery near the road to the power plant. Mrs. Job Winslow, Ruth Dunbar Winslow, who died 3 Jan 1835, age 53, has a poem on her stone which reads - "Here lies Ruth beneath the sod, Her body here Her soul with God."

If we were in the village of Edwards, and planning to travel to South Edwards, let's first visualize the choice of routes available to reach South Edwards - or "Shawville" - the heart of South Edwards community, as we might have walked or gone by horse and "rig".

The first route, from about where the Town Hall stands would have been along Creek St.(now Maple Ave.), past William Cleland's and Thomas Todd's - we'd say past Maurice Goodale's and Bill Wolfe's, so on along through Creek or Barraford area. When we arrived at Sand Hill we'd have to make a right hand bend in the road where we could go up the hill to a plateau and on into the settlement or alternately we could, more or less follow the Oswegatchie River on an old road.

This old road isn't used, and hasn't been for as long as I can remember, but some of the people who lived on it were a number of Pratt families, and Albert Austin, who was a great grandfather of Earl Lumley.

Albert Austin's parents, John Austin and Sally Whitford Austin had migrated north from Rhode Island through Herkimer Co. Sally Austin's parents, Pasco and Amy Whitford came, too, and the two men invested \$7,000 in mills in South Edwards. These were the mills started by Job Winslow. \$7,000 must have represented an immense investment for the era of 1840, and a short Whitford history says "the property was squandered in lawsuits."

Another family on this road was that of Charles and Laura Wiley. It was a large family, as was the nature of the time, and included twins - Luzetta and Lauretta. This household operated a family business important to the community, since they had a cooper shop. A cooper made useful wooden barrels, casks, butter churns, and the like, all necessary articles in every household. Eleanor Austin mentioned to me recently of poking through the foundations of the shop and finding remains of articles having been made there.

Some of the Shaws also lived on this road - nearly behind where the present South Edwards cemetery is. Not very far beyond their house we would pass the schoolhouse and come to the Shawville settlement.

Had we gone up the hill back by Albert Austin's we would see Joseph Havens' place. He was also an early settler of the area, coming in 1829 when he was 16 years old, with two older men named Guiles. This must have been John Guiles and Reuben Guiles, Jr. He later married Julia Lillie and they established their home in an old log house already on the land he had purchased. The Havens story says they lived in the old log house until the new house was done in 1850 and moved into that. But then it goes on to say that in 1849, Joseph and two friends went west overland to California, and returned in 1850 via Panama. When he arrived home, he found his family moved into the house on the other side of the road! Apparently Julia had kept busy while he was gone! She had four children to watch after, too.

Joseph Havens lived somewhere near where Scozzafava's hunting camp house is, or in that particular house, so then going along the road we'd pass the homes of the Guiles'. Reuben Guiles, a tanner and currier, married a daughter of another prominent family of South Edwards, Hannah Shaw, who was the first teacher of South Edwards.

There are two schoolhouses standing in the South Edwards area but used for other purposes. One is at Pond Settlement, now a house, and the other is the Community Center at Shawville itself. My mother went to Pond Settlement school for a while when she was small, and an incident I recall her telling concerned two boys who also attended the same school. "One boy, George Fenton, grabbed another boy, John Wood (Sr.) by the hair and twisted him around and around. When the teacher appeared and asked what was the matter that John was crying, George said, 'I don't know, I jes' teched him and he commenced ta bawl.'" Perhaps that was why John was bald!

I don't know how many school buildings there were in Shawville before the present one, but apparently, there were others, presumably the one room type. Old maps show a school in about the same place since 1858 anyway. Lloyd Austin loaned me a register of South Edwards school for the year 1899-1900 - and which he plans to give to the Edwards Museum sometime. Allie Cory was the teacher (She was later Mrs. Grant Freeman). It listed the families with children attending school, attendance and marks of the pupils. School was run in three sessions through the year. The teacher was paid - \$84 - Sept 11 to Dec 5 \$84 - Dec 11 to March 6 \$63 - Apr 23 to June 22 making a total of \$231 for the school year.

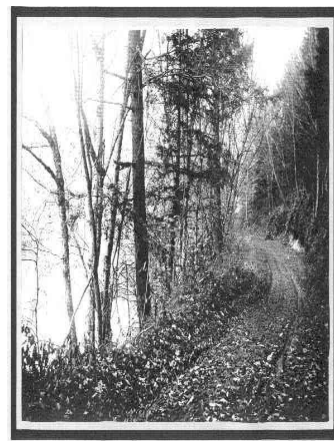
The register also spells out the Important School Laws, one of which was the provision of water closets, or privies. There were "to be at least two in number, entirely separate from each other, separate means of access and approaches separated by a substantial close fence not less than seven feet in height."

Some of the children who attended school that year that we know were - Rollin and Earl Brown, George Javall (Lester's father), Earl and May Whitford, Harrison Lumley, Stanton Webb, Chan Goodberry, Verda Davis (later French), Fanny Stewart (later Bevins).

Another route to South Edwards available in bygone days was along present route 58 until the turn to Ralph Perry's in Barraford - or Creek District. At one time there was a road to South Edwards past Willis Soper's and past where his brother, Bruce Soper, used to live. From the maps, it appears that only a few people ever lived in the area - James Cleland, Jr. (then his son, Harvey Cleland in same place), and John Root, at one time, Joseph Havens and then his son, Hiram, "Hime"Havens. That brings us right back to Scozzafava's place.

An alternate route to South Edwards from the village followed the opposite side of the river - our present day River Road. Across from where Pat Mullaney used to live, a turn to the left would take the traveler past Daniel Cotton's farm. The swift water of the river by this place is still called "Cotton Rapids". This road came into South Edwards between where Shirley Weir and David Jones live. Should one travel straight along the river road and arrive at the part of South Edwards known as Pond Settlement, one of the businesses noted in 1858 near the Gates family place is a "shoe shop" but who was the cobbler?

Before going back into Shawville, I'd like to mention the Lumley family who homesteaded next to the Pond Settlement school. They weren't very early settlers, but as far as I know, their descendants are the only residents of Edwards who have an immigrant ancestor born at Antigua, St. John's Island, British West Indies. John Lumley, Sr. the immigrant, who was born there, was a cooper the same as Charles Wiley, but he made his living by farming, in South Edwards.



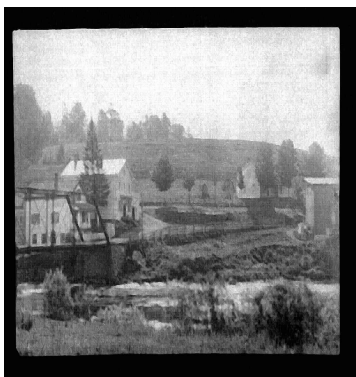
Cotton Road, picture taken by Albert Shaw late October 1905.

I have a newsclipping ca. the 1890's of an incident involving one of the sons of John and Sarah Morrow Lumley. "South Edwards, Feb 16 - Four young men from this place started to skate home after dark last Tuesday from Edwards, where

they attended town meeting. They were Milo Wood, Leon Scott, Stanton Webb, and Frank Lumley. They had gone about one half mile when the one with a lantern fell and broke the globe and the two youngest said, "Wait and we will go back to the village and get a globe." It was very dark and there was a hole where ice had been cut near the village. Lumley was ahead and skated into the water and as Webb was right behind him he went into the hole, too. The boys screamed for help and the other two heard them and immediately started back.

As Scott neared the hole he struck a boomstick and was also thrown headlong into the water, whereas, Wood fell backward on the ice when he struck the stick. Wood crept out as far as he could and caught Scott and dragged him onto firm ice. Then Scott took hold of Wood's feet and pushed him out as far as he could. Wood then grabbed Webb. Again the human chain was formed and with Wood yelling to the other two to hold tight they were able to rescue young Lumley. Lumley had been in the water so long that he was almost exhausted and his companions had to carry him to the village where the entire party were cared for at Maybee's Hotel for the night. In due time they recovered from the effects of their thrilling experience."

Heading toward the village section we would pass a house across from the road going to the power plant. A terrible tragedy happened here. It was during the winter and a young mother needed to go to the neighbor's for something, and not wanting to take her baby out in the cold, she tied her in the high chair and left her next to the cookstove. When the mother returned she discovered that the baby had tipped the highchair over onto the stove and had burned to death. The shock of what had happened to her child was too much for the mother and the next day she took Paris Green, a poison, which killed her. I don't know what became of the husband and father.



Main St., South Edwards (no date). House in center of picture is owned by Alfred and Barbara Fenton. Other buildings no longer there.

Back to the settlement at Shawville we would find quite a thriving community with its church, post office, and businesses, as well as the school.

A copy of an Old Home Day program of South Edwards describes the religious organization as beginning in 1827 under Elder Isaac Bannister. As in other places they first held meetings in the schoolhouse.

South Edwards had a Post Office from 1828 to around 1915. Judge Fine was instrumental in getting their Post Office during the administration of John Q. Adams. The St. Lawrence Co. histories say John C. Haile was the first postmaster, but official Post Office records say Thomas Haile was the first. The last postmaster was William Hall in 1915.

There were general stores in South Edwards - John Lumley, Jr. had one, which he later sold to Whittiers, and Alexander Whitford and VanOrnums had one in Pond Settlement area.

Ira Hammond was the shoemaker, and at one time, the postmaster. Hammond was a Justice of Peace for a long period - even officiating at the wedding of one of his daughters. His house was the one where Shirley Weir lives now.

There were a number of industries making employment, but they didn't exist all at the same time, however. South Edwards had a sawmill and a gristmill from the beginning, as already mentioned. It also had a shingle mill. A descendant of a Sarah Root who married a Ferguson of South Edwards, told me this summer that she helped her father carry bundles of shingles at this mill when she was just a girl. Charles Hosmer, Jr. ran the shingle mill and was also carpenter and joiner. He lived just across the bridge in the house that burned when John Hendricks lived there. (That house was the Post Office once, too).

Blacksmiths were much in demand and the Wood family had two who followed that trade - a John Wood and a Silas Wood. In addition, Silas Wood was a gunsmith.

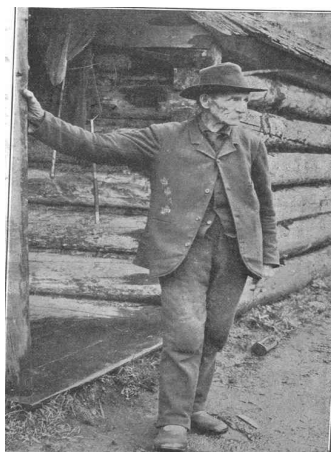
A tavern is shown on the map and the histories say a Mr. Woodbury built a hotel and ran a store. Also Herman Parmalee ran a hotel and with his wife, took in children needing a place to live, making them the forerunners of today's foster parents.

One of the early industries, started by Ingraham Winslow, was a carding mill and clothiery - it being a factory where fibers (probably wool in this case) were smoothed with wire brushes so they were ready for spinning and they also made

the cloth at the mill. Apparently it didn't last very long because by 1877 (Everts History) it was defunct, machinery removed and the building destroyed by fire.

In 1871, Dickinson and Lawrence from Bangor, NY. (potato country) built and began operation of a mill for the manufacture of potato starch. The annual consumption of potatoes was over 30,000 bushels! It is mentioned that the growing of potatoes was more prevalent in Edwards than the surrounding area, probably because of the factory. Also I recently read an article of the "Potato King of Pitcairn" - Henry Clay Pearson. He raised "the mostest, the biggest, and the bestest" potatoes, and maybe he sold his surplus to the South Edwards factory. This business ran about 10 years, but did you know that parts of this factory are still in use? Billy French used stone from the ruins of this building to make a beautiful fireplace in his new house off the River Road on Rice Road.

On what we call the Power Plant Road was a pulp mill in later South Edwards history. It was in operation and burned, then was rebuilt in 1900. The mill was later converted to be used for the power plant.



Cornelius Carter
1816 - 1905

Material goods were not so readily available in the middle 1800's and cash wasn't used as regularly as today. The census gives the real and personal values of the heads of the household and South Edwards people generally were about average, varying from \$150-\$1500 with a median of about \$500. I think it is noteworthy that it was the miller, Almeron Thomas, at age 38 years, who had more valuable real estate than the rest of the community (unless the census is wrong) with a worth of \$20,000; well above anyone else.

Cornelius Carter is probably the South Edwards resident whose name is remembered most, because he was so active in public life - teacher, Justice of Peace, town supervisor, and poet. Our local library has a copy of his book of poems if anyone is interested in reading his works.

Charlie Whittier, long time resident of South Edwards who now lives in Carthage, gave me a number of small items on South Edwards and wrote a letter to Eleanor Austin (to give to me) on what he remembered. This is available in a folder to peruse.