

# NNHS NEWS LETTER

Northville Northampton Historical Society

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Editor  
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## MARY AND LESLIE SWEET

Owners of the SWEETS SHOE STORE  
on the corner of Bridge and First Street

According to family history, Leslie Sweet was born in 1882 and came to America from Beirut, Syria, now Lebanon, in 1889 when he was 7 years old. He had 3 sisters, and one brother and they settled in Gloversville, NY.

According to the census, in 1904, Leslie at age 22, was operating a fruit store in Gloversville.

Leslie began his first shoe repair shop in Northville somewhere around 1905 in a wooden building on the corner of Bridge and Second Street, where the NBT bank is located today. The wooden structure was moved back and became George Robinson's Bottling Works.



The building as it is today

In 1908 he returned to his country in Lebanon/Syria. He met a young lady, Mary Ouker, and married her. He returned to the USA with his bride in 1910, she was 16 years old when she came to the USA. Mary never returned to her homeland, and never saw her parents again. She was from Ghazir, Lebanon.

Mary arrived at Ellis Island with Leslie's sister and brother-in-law, Peter and Mary Massad. Leslie came through the Boston Port. He was afraid he might not be accepted at Ellis because of an eye problem.

At first, Leslie and Mary spoke Arabic/Lebanese and did not know how to read English, they soon adjusted. They received a newspaper from their native land where they could read news from home, and world news.

Many "old timers" in Northville told that Mary was one of the most beautiful women in the village.

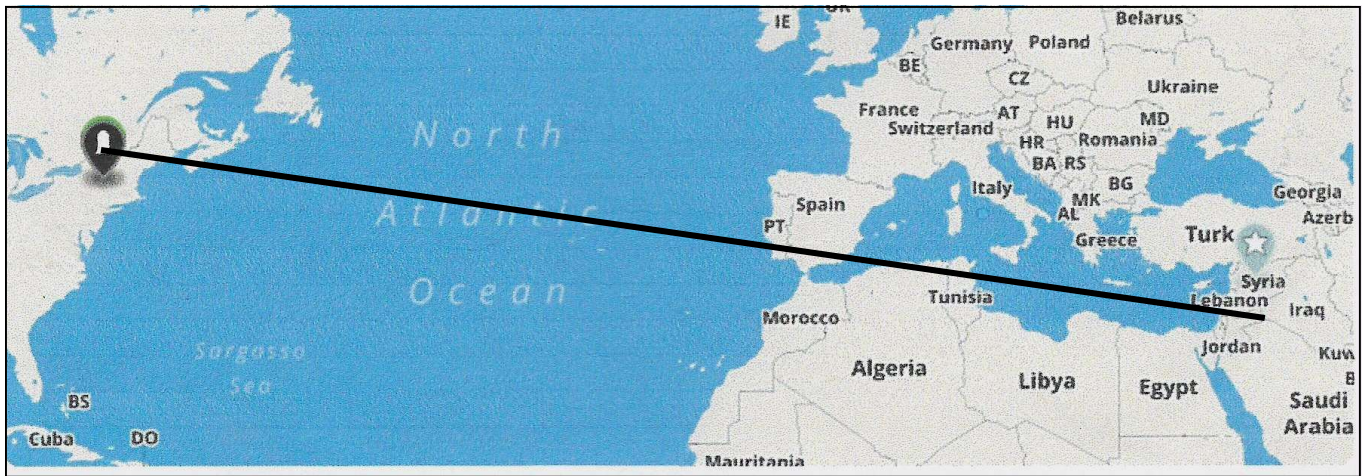


Mary and Leslie at their wedding in 1908



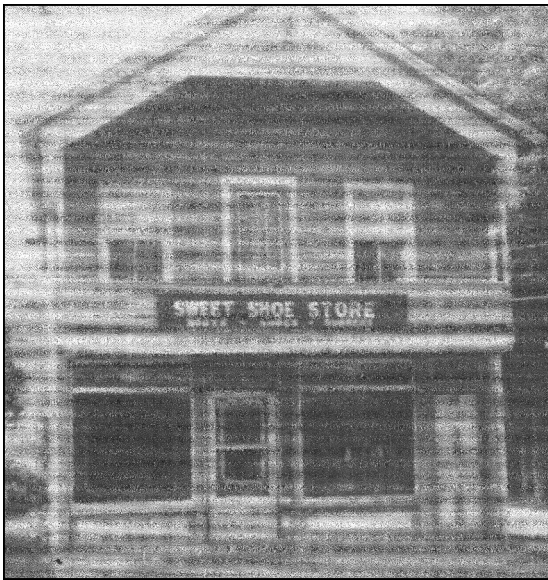
Leslie, Mary and first child, Victoria





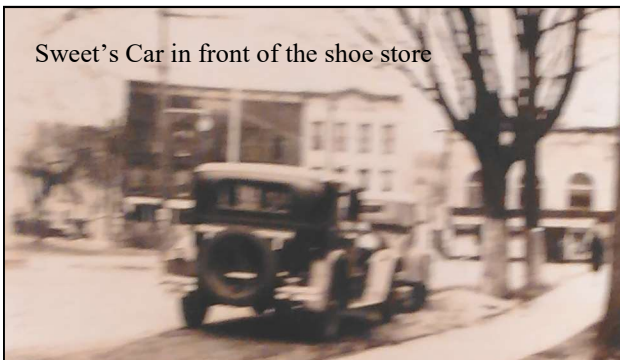
It isn't known where they boarded a ship for New York. The distance from Lebanon to NY is 5,504 miles.

After moving from the south west corner of Bridge and Second Street, they operated their shoe business in the building on the south west corner of Bridge and First Street . (Skip's Car Repair Shop is on that corner now) That building/house was moved back and is now occupied by Bucky Johnson and his family.



In 1918 they bought the building which years before was Chequer and Kested blacksmith shop. Over the years, the building was occupied by numerous businesses, currently occupied by CMK Realtors. Mary and Leslie renovated the upstairs into an apartment. By this time they had 3 daughters.

Mary and Leslie raised 5 daughters, all graduating from Northville High School Victoria, Linda, Josephine, Jeanette, and Mary Jacqueline "Jackie".







Mary and relatives in "Sweets Shoe Store"



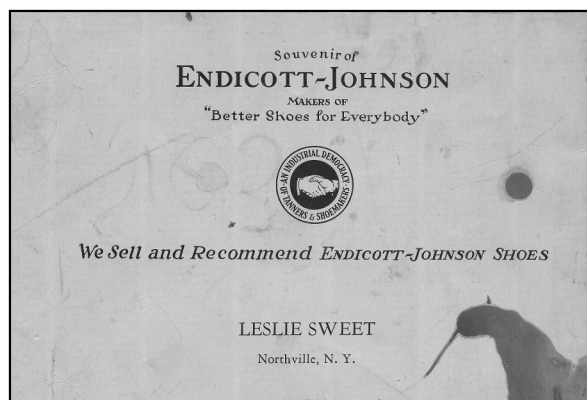
Mary standing by her sewing machine that she used to mend the leather upper parts of shoes.

Leslie repaired the soles of shoes on a large machine, other shoes he repaired by hand.



Leslie died in 1945 at age 63. He was widely known and highly respected businessman of Northville. He died at St. Mary's Hospital in Amsterdam and is buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery, Gloversville, NY.

Mary continued the shoe business until her death in 1973, she was 78.. The store closed in 1974



Their daughter Jackie Sweet Junquera shared some family history with me. She told that her parents sold shoes for men, women, children, "walking babies", men's rubber boots and work shoes. They bought shoes from the Hurd Co., Endicott Johnson, Lane Bros., Keds and others.

Like the typical country store in the late afternoons, a few of the men in the village would gather in the back of the store and visit around the "pot belly" stove

Mary took care of the retailing in the front of the store, ordering from the salesmen, and marking the shoes. Many of us "oldies" remember Mary measuring our little feet and picking out shoes that were "just right" for us. Our parents would send us to the store and they came by later to pay for the shoes.

Occasionally, they would go to Albany and take the night boat to NYC and order boots etc to be shipped to Northville, They returned with Mediterranean delicacies, that couldn't be bought in upstate New York, which brought pleasure to their girls at home

The family living quarters were over the store. Through the years each daughter helped in the store. The Sweet family was one of the first families to attend the new Catholic Church built in 1922.

Jackie said that the Mosher's were very helpful with Leslie applying and receiving his citizenship. Mosher's grocery store was directly across the street from the shoe store.

## “NEW ADIRONDACK PARK HOTEL”

By Patsy Graff Suydam

To some of us who grew up in Northville, and are of a certain age, the Adirondack Inn might still be a vivid memory; especially if our memories included summer employment at “The Inn.” But, in 1890, now over 125 years ago, the dream for an elegant new hotel was a vivid reality as plans were finalized for the proposed hotel’s construction with the Fonda, Johnstown and Gloversville (FJ&G ) Railroad that owned most of the surrounding park land.

According to the *Johnstown Daily Republican*: “The building is to be of spacious dimension, four stories high, of a handsome modern style of architecture, and will be delightfully situated on the grounds west of the railroad. In 1889 FJ&G reported that the total number of rail tickets sold specifically to the Park was 43,510; and trains only stopped at Sacandaga during the summer months. The increasing popularity of the Park would render the hotel investment a safe one for the FJ&G board of directors.

G. M. Seymour of Stillwater, Minnesota, a wealthy manufacturer, would finance the hotel, John E. Seaman & Co. of Johnstown was contracted for the construction, and the hotel was to open in June of 1891

There would be accommodations for about 100 guests and 50 large bedrooms; nearly every one with a window, many with fireplaces. There would be electric lights, hot and cold baths, a barber shop, parlors, reading, billiard and dining rooms. Electric call and return bells in the rooms would connect with a light in the office so that a guest could summon staff. As I recall, that system was still in place when I worked at the inn in the 1950’s.

Northville was at the northern terminus of the FJ&G and had become a business center for an area that could be measured by about seven hundred square miles. One account rhapsodized that with the extension of the FJ&G to Northville, the wilderness around the vicinity of Northville “has been made to blossom like the rose.”

Sacandaga Park had a variety of amusements for residents and day trippers. There were already inns, and 100’s of cottages in the Park and along the banks of the Sacandaga River. These factors, along with the proposed new hotel, would continue to contribute largely to Northville’s business community.

The FJ&G Planned to lay a sewage system in support of the new growth. The sewer system would according to a report in the *Gloversville Daily Leader* of 1890, increase “the chances for health” at this already most healthful resort. The sewers were to connect with the Hotel, and from there through all portions of the park, ending by emptying into the Sacandaga River. Since the River was then a resource for much Park recreation, with swimming and boating, a system emptying sewage from so many sources hardly seems healthy.



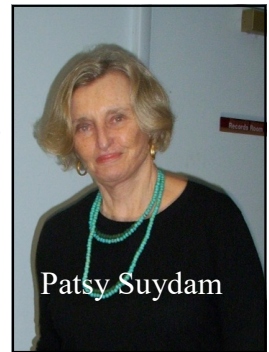
An architect’s rendering of the Sacandaga Park Hotel

Just a few years after the Sacandaga Hotel opening, the Sacandaga Land Company was formed, with William H. Seymour as president. The company had a capitalization of \$20,000, divided into 400 \$50 shares of stock. According to corporation papers, the object of the company would be to “buy, sell, lease and improve the land, quarry and deal in stone, to a general lumber and ice business, and to construct dams and reservoirs for ornamental purposes.”



I remember that Bob Smith and Buzz Heath both worked at the Inn as bell hops. Buzz told me that he was required to go outside on the lawn each day and announce in a loud voice that “tea is being served on the veranda”. For a while he had some trouble feeling comfortable doing that. Shea Lauria worked in the Inn office. Mary Ann Johnson worked in the park. They both walked to work every day from Northville.

I worked in the dining room and one day John Urban, the owner, caught me coming in late from lunch. He called “Trump-like” down the length of the dining room, “Your’re fired.” The next day he hired me back



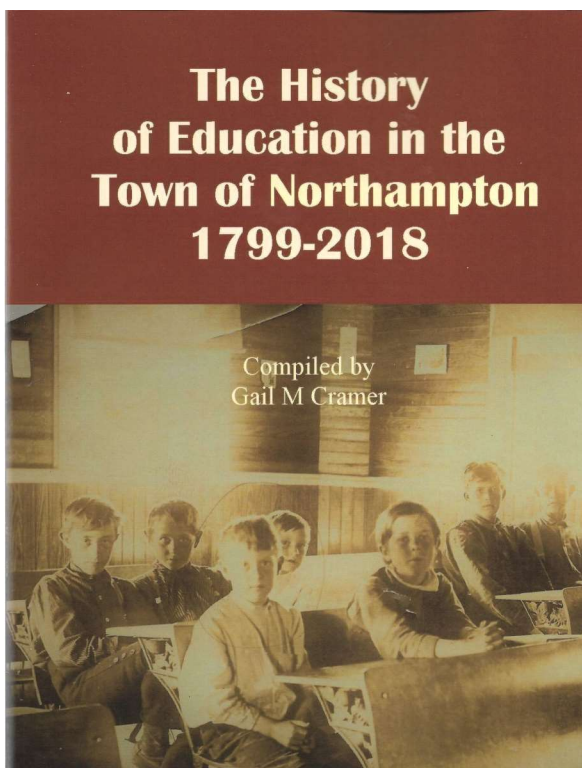
Patsy Suydam



The dining room years before I worked there

I met some interesting guests working in the dining room. There was a couple from Haiti, she was German and he was Haitian. No one wanted to wait on them because they were a mixed couple but I was happy to. I always regretted that I didn’t take them up on it as it would have been a real adventure.

The Adirondack Hotel burned to the ground in 1975; the fire of suspicious origins. It is hard to believe now what a thriving, active place Sacandaga Park once was.



## JUST PUBLISHED

The History of Education in the Town of Northampton 1799-2018  
188 pages and Indexed

Compiled by the  
Town of Northampton Historian

If you would like a book, please email me so I can determine how many to order. They are available at the historians office and town office and possibly some stores in the village.

Soft cover: \$15.00

Hard cover: \$25.00