

NNHS NEWS LETTER

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Editor
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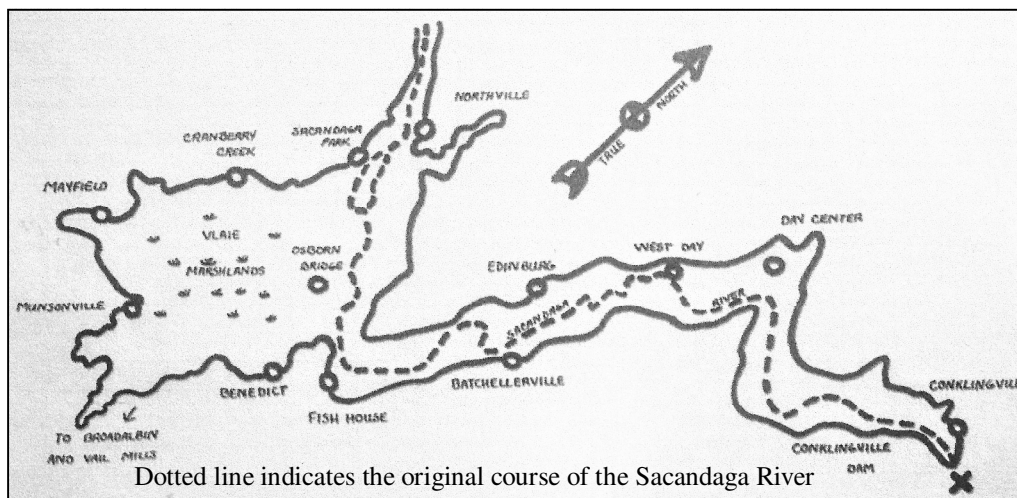


The Sacandaga River Steamboats

By Dave Waite

It's been well over 90 years since the Conklingville Dam was completed and the river that flowed through the Sacandaga Valley became the Great Sacandaga Reservoir. When visitors hear of this river that once ran through the area, they likely visualize it as a small meandering creek passing quietly past the picture-perfect farms and time settlements that dotted its shore. In reality, the river was wide and strong as it made its way past the long-lost communities of Osborn Bridge, Fish House Batchellerville, and West Day. For over twenty miles it flowed through Sacandaga Valley only narrowing when it encountered the Conklingville rapids. As it ran its way through the valley it had the power to carry thousands of logs each spring during the annual river drive to the Hudson River, as well as the depth to allow navigation by the steamboats that are the focus of this story.

In 1848, Albany County native Gurdon Conkling saw the commercial advantages of the Sacandaga Valley and established the Lynwood Tannery along the south shore of the river. This location soon came to be known as Conklingville. Along with numerous tannery buildings, Gurdon also constructed a hotel, stores, homes on both sides of the river.



long, fifteen-foot-wide steamboat came into sight it was greeted by a hearty cheer and the firing of a cannon. A few honored guests, feasting on oysters, fruit, and cake, had ridden downstream from the site at Fish House where the boat had been constructed. Soon additional passengers boarded, and the boat headed toward Edinburgh, where the maiden voyage was concluded.

The Conklingville tannery changed hands in 1863 when it was pur-



Only known photo of the Sacandaga Steamboat

chased by leather merchants Henry Poor and Sons. As part of the sale, they also acquired the steamboat *Whip Poor Will*, the *Colonel* having been destroyed.

At the same time that he was building his tannery, Conkling also built two wood burning paddle-wheel steamers, the *Whip Poor Will* and the *Colonel*, to move lumber and wood, hemlock bark, and other goods to and from his new business interests. The arrival in Batchellerville on October 30, 1848, of the first of the steamboats, was a day of celebration, with a crowd watching the progress of the plume of smoke, as the boat headed down river toward the hamlet. When the seventy-foot-

in 1855 when the steam boiler exploded. In the accident, the captain of the boat, Joseph Greenslete was killed. Don Bowman tells of hearing that the explosion was caused by logs used to fire the boiler that had been filled with gunpowder by disgruntled teamsters, whose teams had once hauled the hemlock bark that the steamboat carried.

Two years after Henry Poor took over the Conklingville tannery he also bought the Croweville tannery on Sand Creek, a tributary of the Sacandaga River in Hadley. With this purchase, the company added another steamboat to the fleet, the *L.E. Wait*. Named after the supervisor of the tannery, Lewis E. Wait, this boat was also used to move the hemlock bark on the Sacandaga River.

The Sacandaga River was an ideal path for the transportation of the tons of hemlock bark that was required for the tanning of raw leather. From May to August the bark was cut and after being allowed to dry, transported to the river from the surrounding forests and left in huge piles along the shore. In autumn the bark was loaded onto the flat bottomed scows and towed by steamboat downstream to the tannery. In reminiscences from those who lived in the valley during these early years, it was recalled that these loads were so immense that they resembled small houses being towed down the river.

Along with bark and supplies for the tannery, the steamboat carried products manufactured in the factories along the river. At Batchellerville, Sherman Batcheller loaded wooden measures, barrel cover, and wooden pegs onto the boats and the King-Snow Wooden Ware Company supplied wooded flour pails and buckets. This merchandise was carried to Hadley where it was shipped by rail and sold across the northeast.

While mostly used for carrying hemlock bark, at times Sacandaga River steamboats were used for carrying passengers. In his memoirs, Ira Gray states that his mother remembered having boat rides in the 1860s on the *Whip Poor Will* piloted by Captain William Ellis Greenslete, older brother Joseph Greenslete mentioned earlier. This is likely a reference to Autumn Sunday School trips where two barges were fastened together, and picnickers were taken upriver from Conklingville for an all-day picnic at a grove near West Day.

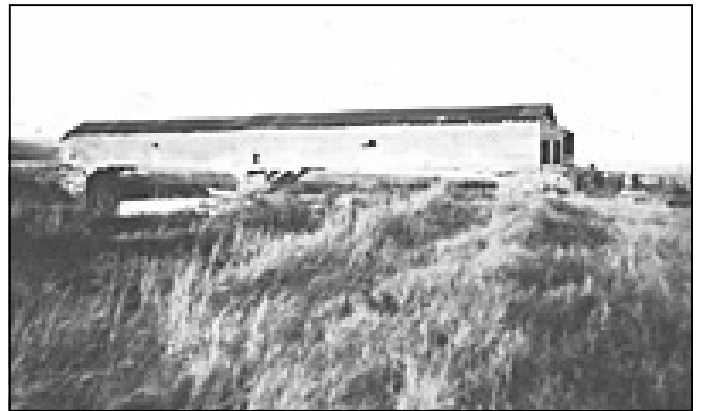
By the early 1880s, Henry Poor and Son were closing their tanneries along the Sacandaga River due to a drastic drop in leather prices and a diminishing supply of hemlock bark in the region. The *Whip Poor Will* made its last trip in 1883, after which the boat was moored for a time at Conklingville and eventually taken apart for scrap. It is said that the steam boiler was removed and used at a sawmill on one of the creeks that fed the river.

The sixty-five-year old Greenslete retired that same year after 35 years running steamboats on the river. Captain William Ellis Greenslete passed away Oct. 21, 1887, in Broadalbin, N.Y. And is buried in the Union Mills Cemetery.

The *L. E. Wait* also operated on the Sacandaga River, until 1883, when it sunk in April of that year. While the passengers and crew all got safely to shore, 1,600 logs on barges bound for the wooden-ware works at Batchellerville were lost.

Research material for this article include Larry Hart's book, Sacandaga Story A Valley of Yesteryear, Village of Northville and Town of Northampton by Gail Cramer and in Days Past by Nancy Morris, as well as a letter from author Don Bowman that was provided by Edinburg Historian Priscilla Edwards, material from Day Historian Dave Davidson and the one line newspaper archive: nyshistoricnewspapers.org. and fulton-search.org

The map of the course of the Sacandaga River is from Larry Hart's *The Sacandaga Story*. The photograph of the steamboat on the Sacandaga River was provided by Edinburg Historian, Priscilla Edwards.



Batchellerville Bridge
prior to the building of the reservoir



Ray Allen's Dry Cleaners
Was located on North Third Street.

The building was torn down and a garage was built next to the house on the corner of Third and Division Streets. There was also room for an addition built on to a small bungalow on the property where the dry cleaners stood.

ARRIVING SOON

Gasoline Filling Stations Northville, NY



The story of Gasoline Filling Stations, through the years, in and around the village of Northville, NY.

Almost 100% of them are gone, as are their owners.

By
Terry Warner

The history of the many gasoline filling stations and repair shops in and around Northville over the years. With many pictures of the people involved and pictures of the stations. Terry has done a fine job in bringing you memories of the past up through 2021

FULTON COUNTY

(See also *Mohawk Valley*, p. 129)

NORTHVILLE—On Sacandaga Reservoir. 2 hotels, \$2 a day up; 3 boarding houses; cottages, \$25-\$40 a week; cabins, \$5 a day; tourist homes. Public beach; public dock; boats for rent, \$1 a day; canoes for rent, \$3 a day; fishing; golf; tennis; horseback riding, \$1 per hour; playground. Hwy 30; NYC RR to Fonda; FJ&G bus; airport. *Floyd Brownell, Rotary Club.*

SACANDAGA PARK—On Sacandaga Reservoir. 10 hotels, \$2 a day up; boarding houses, \$10-\$42 a week; tourist homes; cottages. Bathing; boating; golf; tennis; horseback riding; playgrounds. Summer theater. Hwys 29, 30; NYC RR to Fonda; FJ&G bus; airport, 5 mi. *Floyd Brownell, Rotary Club, Northville.*



Sid Junquera and Joseph Burdette
Restocking the lake
Photo from Leader Herald

Northville Fish and Game Club drained the Northville Little lake in 1957 to eliminate the increasing number of carp and to attempt to provide better stock and fishing conditions for sportsmen.

According to a newspaper article, all the fish were removed. Low water line in the Sacandaga Reservoir enabled the club members to work on the project.

Types of fish removed were: carp, suckers, bullhead, and perch. Two northern pike 36 inches long and 25 lbs and a 35 inch long were moved to the Sacandaga Reservoir.

The lake was restocked the following Spring when the lake was refilled.

At the time, Ora Darling was President of the Fish and Game Club and Ed Horning was Vice President. They worked closely with the New York State Conservation Department to accomplish the project.

Wade left California October 1. Here's Joel loading Wade's memorial stone in his RV before leaving on Wade's journey home. Wade passed through __ states before arriving in his state of NY



WADE ARRIVES HOME

Oct. 16



Rory Crannell, Sue Sedon, Gail Cramer, Joel and Nancy Crannell, Donna Breda and Larry Cramer

Greeting Wade as he arrives at Breda's Barn, where the memorial stone will rest until next Spring when it's placed in the Main Street Cemetery where Wade is buried.