

Highlighting Town of Croghan History

- * Hamlet of Beaver Falls
- * Hamlet of Belfort
- * Hamlet of Indian River
- * Long Pond
- * Hamlet of Naumburg
- * Village of Croghan
- * Sisterfield, Prussian Settlement, French Settlement, Jerden (Jordon) Falls, Beartown,

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The first Town of Croghan Supervisor was Benjamin R. Ellis.

Beech Ridge Murder

On September 16, 1912 a brutal murder took place on Beech Ridge Road in the Town of Croghan. The victim was Patrick Burns, a farmer, aged 91 years. The death was caused by repeated blows from a sharp instrument, which was later identified as a heavy bolt hammer. A son, William R. Burns, who was a game protector, lived with his father. Another resident of the home was Roy Farrington, a New York City youth, who had been employed at the State dam at Carthage before being employed at the Burns farm.

While the son was at Lowville on business, the murder took place. When William returned home about 7:30 pm Friday evening, he discovered the body of his father. His cries summoned to the house several neighbors, including Jesse Meister, Augustus Zecher, Clarke Barnes, and James Burns, a cousin.

After the discovery of the crime, the district attorney of Lewis county, Perry G. Williams, of Lowville, and Sheriff Stoddard were notified, also Coroner P. H. vonZierolshofen of Croghan. The officials were accompanied by Dr. I. D. Spencer of Croghan and Dr. F. E. Jones of Beaver Falls. The coroner had the two physicians perform an autopsy, which was conducted in the kitchen with the inquest being held in the sitting room. The autopsy showed that there were twelve wounds upon the head of the aged victim, three causing fracture of the skull.

William Burns, aged about 25, testified that Farrington came to work for his father two weeks ago yesterday. Last Friday morning witness found a dollar's worth of postage stamps missing from a bureau in the sitting room, and the drawers ramsacked. Farrington denied that he knew anything about the stamps. He was told by witness that, if he would own up to stealing the stamps, witness would not have him arrested. His father, witness said, then got into an altercation with Farrington, telling the man he would no longer have him on the place and he would have to leave.

Farrington went out to split some wood and his father went out, witness said, and told Farrington he might as well quit, as he could not stay. His father went to pay Farrington 78 cents due him and pulled out a roll of bills containing about \$80. Having no change small enough, his father asked William for some change, and the latter handed Farrington all the change he had, 25 cents. (continued on page 3)

Inside this issue:

Sayings of 1852	2
Four Dwellings at Indian River Mark Site of Teeming Industry Years Ago	2
Pictorial Section	3
Continuation of Beech Ridge Murder	3
From the desk of the Town of Croghan Historian	4

FREE

SAYINGS OF 1852

The source for the following was the March 24, 1852 NORTHERN JOURNAL, which was published in Lowville, New York.

- An empty belly has no ears.
 - Nothing begets confidence sooner than punctuality.
- However little we may have to do, let us do that little well.
- Evil men speak as they wish rather than what they know.
- He that would enjoy the fruit must not gather the flower.
 - Ask thy purse what thou shouldst buy.
- In the flashing of a moment the future becomes present.

Four Dwellings at Indian River Mark Site of Teeming Industry Years Ago

The following was found in JOURNAL AND REPUBLICAN—February 3, 1938:

“A church falling to decay, an abandoned cheese factory, an earlier factory converted to a dwelling and down the stream in a rocky pasture the foundations of the saw mill, recall the days when Indian River had industries and more people than today occupy its four remaining dwellings. Shrunken as this hamlet is, its fate is not to be compared to that of Jerdon Falls four miles north.

There a big tannery teemed with activity years ago. It was a subsidiary of the United States Leather Company, local residents recall about a small village clustered, with hotel, boarding house, store and many houses. Today a single farm house occupies the lands where tannery and village stood, and nearby the district school offers something of the public service available at the Falls.

A journalist look at the hamlet of
Indian River in 1938 and Jerdon
Falls.

Tannery Recalled

The tannery ceased operation a half century ago. A few residents, in middle age, recall it as an abandoned structure, reminding of the Methodist Episcopal church edifice north from this place.

Although Indian River operates mills and dynamos miles below, it hardly would be recognized here by those familiar with the stream at Antwerp, pouring down the Devil's slide at Philadelphia, or churning through electric turbines at Theresa. A good athlete could clear it on a broad jump as it meanders beneath the culvert in this hamlet.

For Indian River lies near the source of its namesake, a mile below the Carthage waterworks and three miles from the springs where the river has its birth.

Because it was deemed too feeble, George Wilcox, who ran the sawmill, used steam power as his main dependence. A penstock led down the incline to furnish power during periods of high water, but for other seasons the engine was used.

Church Thrives

The Catholic church, served from Croghan, thrives, well painted, efficiently maintained and modern with its own electric lighting plant, shared jointly with Erie Grange. Grange Hall and store remain and with the quartet of dwellings to locate Indian River. After the hunting season is over and the last tourist has passed out the Erie road, woodsmen grind their axes and set out for their annual harvest of Christmas trees.

Indian River contributes toward holiday observance with its quota of evergreens, which are like its milk trucked to market.”

PICTORICAL SECTION



The Theodore B. Basselin home in the Village of Croghan. Date unknown. Note the dirt road.



This picture is circa 1915. The Lewis Mansion is to the right. The LeFevre home is to the left.

Continuation of Beech Ridge Murder

His father promised to pay Farrington the balance at Carthage Friday afternoon and the man packed up his belongings and started away, ostensibly for Carthage, going toward the Carthage road.

The roll of bills was missing from the old man's pockets. The murderer evidently went up stairs after committing the crime and also out upon the porch, as there are bloody fingerprints upon the stair door and upon the veranda posts. Sections of the door and a veranda post have been taken by the officers.

On the kitchen floor was found a coil of clothes line. What this was used for by the murderer is conjectural, but it is thought he at first attempted to tie the old man into the chair where he was found. The crime was evidently committed in the sitting room, as a trail of blood led from the above room to the kitchen. Everything indicated that the old man, who had been of powerful physique, had put up a desperate fight for life. He was so badly crippled from infirmities incident to his great age that he walked with crutches. One crutch was found upon the floor and one leaning against the wall of the kitchen.

No one could be found who had seen Farrington in the vicinity of the house after he left in the morning, previous to the departure of the son William for Croghan, but John Shea and H. Warner, farmers, living about one and one-half miles from the Burns place toward Black river, state that about one o'clock Friday afternoon they saw a slightly-built man running through the fields toward the river, carrying what appeared to be a gun wrapped in paper. He hurried his pace when he saw they were watching him, disappearing in the direction of the river. It was found later that a boat belonging to William Meister, moored nearby, was missing, the lock being broken. The boat was found abandoned on the opposite shore about two miles from Castorland. The supposition is that Farrington took either the afternoon or evening train from Castorland. Although diligent search has been made by the officials, no clue of his movements has been secured.

The search continues for Farrington. (to be continued in July)

Source: THE JOURNAL AND REPUBLICAN—September 12, 1912

**The first Town of Croghan Supervisor
was Benjamin R. Ellis.**

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**History is the record of an encounter
between character and
circumstances.—Donald Creighton,
Canadian historian (1902-1979).**

**Town of Croghan was established
April 5, 1841 from the Town of
Watson and Town of Diana.**

The Town of Croghan Historian is appointed each year by the Town Supervisor. The Town Historian is available if you have questions in regard to the town's history. In the Historian's office there are cemetery records, recent obituaries, pictures, files of various subjects on the Town of Croghan. The purpose of the Historian's Office is to record, photograph and maintain a working file on the history of the township. It is here for the public to use. The only stipulations are the Town Historian or Deputy Town Historian access the information and that it does not leave the office. Presently there are no regular office hours but available by appointment.

From the Town of Croghan Historian's Desk

This is our first newsletter from the Town Historian's Office. It is hoped to publish two a year—one in January and the second in July. Presently this free newsletter will be available at the Town of Croghan Municipal office, Route 126, Beaver Falls, New York.

In this newsletter you will find mention of the murder of Patrick Burns, which will be continued in the July 2009 newsletter. Was Roy Farrington captured? Was that his real name? Whatever happened to him? These and other questions will be answered in the next newsletter.

Also included are some sayings that were prevalent at the time of 1852. Even though they may not have originated in the town, they were more than likely spoken. Can you think of other sayings? If you would like to share some, please feel free to do so.

Old newspapers are sources of our history. The article on Indian River was taken from the 1938 JOURNAL AND REPUBLICAN, which gives a birdseye look at the hamlet. Can you identify the four houses mentioned in the article? They are still standing and now new homes are mixed in with the older ones. The store that was mentioned burned.

Future articles will include articles on the happenings in the township along with a short biography of a person who lived in the Town. It may be of a prominent business owner, farmer, logger, housewife, etc. If you have suggestions of who you would like to see, please let us know.

Each newsletter will include a photograph or two of the changes that have occurred. Even in ten years the visible changes can be seen.

If you have any additions, comments or suggestions for future articles, please feel free to call or email. Phone number is (315) 346-6201 or email jsweeney@ridgeviewtel.us.

Enjoy living tomorrow's history today!

Jack and Mary Sweeney
