

North Creek

The first logs to be cut in this vicinity, had to be floated down both the 'North Creek' stream and the Hudson River. Enough logs being in sight to ensure several years' operation, these camps assumed a semi permanency. The first wooden buildings were erected as shelters for the workmen and horses probably between 1840 and 1850. These buildings formed the nucleus of what has become the village of North Creek as we now know it.

The logging camp became an 'embryo village' when a tannery was built by Milton Sawyer and Wheeler Mead in 1852. Over the years there were several partnership changes and the tannery itself had to be rebuilt several times. When the supply of trees needed for the industry became scarce in the 1890s, the tannery closed.

The tannery was one factor which attracted Dr. Thomas Durant, promoter of the Union Pacific Railroad, to the area in 1871.

The railroad, along with the garnet mines, broadened the economic base of North Creek. In the 1800s and early 1900s, logging provided a living for men as they took from the forests, logs, pulp, and stove wood. There was also an excelsior mill and bolt/handle mill founded by Dr. Lee Somerville in 1905 which was dismantled in the late 1920s.

A scenic feature of old North Creek created by a succession of dams on the creek for logging and the tannery was the Mill Pond or 'Silver Lake'.

John McInerny erected what is said to be North Creek's first hotel in 1871. Doing business as "The American" in 1872 and located on the site of today's Copperfield Inn, there was also a large barn where guests would be able to keep their horses. When the hotel burned to the ground in 1903 it was rebuilt on the same site in 1920.

The Straight House was built on the site of the present bank about 1876. Railroad workers stayed there as well as lumbermen and others coming to town for supplies. The Straight House caught fire from one of the wood stoves in the winter of 1919 and burned to the ground along with the Methodist parsonage next door to it.

The Adirondack Hotel stood where the Baroudi block was later built, across the street from Swain's Funeral Home and Arbuckle's Barber Shop and was built by Mr. Lyons sometime before 1885. It, too, burned down from a chimney fire in 1916.

South of the Alpine Motel location was Wade's Hotel built in 1923 by Charles S. Wade next to his store. There were a succession of owners and at the time it burned in 1965 it was owned and operated by Pete Farrell.

In 1843 the Baptists began meeting in the North Creek school house located near the railroad

station. For several years the Baptists used the Old Dutch Reformed church building in Wevertown. This had been started in 1822 and was the first church in the Town of Johnsbury. In 1853 the first church built in North Creek was the Baptist church adjacent to the Union Cemetery.

The first Catholic Church, built on the site of the ST. James cemetery, was erected in 1875. This church burned in 1915 and the present church was built soon after.

The North Creek Methodist Episcopal church, now the North Creek United Methodist church, was built in 1879. The exterior remains pretty much the same as it was originally except for the remodeled steeple which had been struck by lightning in the early 1920s.

The building destined to be St. Christopher's Episcopal Mission arrived in North Creek on a flat-car in the dead of winter, January 1948, and was erected by members of the congregation. St. Christopher's is served by the members of Barry House at Brant Lake.

The story goes that in 1910 Frank Hesselback, representing a group of local businessmen, walked into Arbuckle's Barber Shop on Main Street near Swain's Funeral Home and asked if he would be interested in selling his shop. The building was purchased that day and was soon in business as the North Creek National Bank. Within a year, the bank building was moved to a lot just south of Braley & Noxon's hardware store. The bank carried on business there for seventeen years until 1927 when the present building was constructed where Bissells' Garage had burned some years before - across from today's Methodist Church.

Another family business in North Creek began when two neighbors, William H. Noxon and Alfred R. Braley, got together in 1888, and started the hardware store on Main Street in North Creek known as Braley and Noxon. Originally it was located south of its present location at the four corners where Route 28N was extended from the corners to the by-pass. Today's building on the corner of Main Street and Circle Avenue was built in 1895 by these two men. The original building had a flat roof and only a first story porch. Around the turn of the century the owners decided a flat roof was not for this country in the winter, and the four-sided slate roof was added, along with a second-story front porch. The interior of the store was walled with wooden wainscoting.

A millinery shop occupied the front half of the south side of the building in its early history, but as the hardware business grew, it expanded to occupy the entire first floor. Upstairs there was a dentist's office and possibly an attorney's office.

With Mr. Braley's passing around 1930, Mr. Noxon and his son, C. Ernest Noxon, purchased Braley's share. The business continued in this way until William Noxon died in 1937. Ernest Noxon and his sisters, Grace, Ruth, and Mary assumed ownership until 1988, one hundred years from its founding.

The store then was owned and run by the family of William Noxon's granddaughter, Norma Noxon Rawson. She is the daughter of C. Ernest and Elinor Eldridge Noxon. Her husband,

Carroll Rawson, managed the store, while the eldest son, Bill Rawson, orders stock, clerks and does the bookkeeping. Daughter Mary Rawson Cooper also worked there. In Oct 31, 2003, the store was sold to the present owners Richard and Agnes Green from Putney County.

William R. Waddell was well known in the area and one of the leading merchants in North Creek. In 1901 he bought property near the railroad tracks. The buildings housed his horses which were used to pull stagecoaches to Indian Lake and Blue Mountain. He also bought and sold cattle and lambs in conjunction with his slaughterhouse located in back of where the Tri-County Nursing Home is today.

Waddell was also a partner in the Riverside-Schroon Lake stage line. When motor cars and Stanley Steamers came on the market around 1910, he was one of the first to use them on his stage lines and other businesses.

In 1915 the North Creek Electric Company began operations, distributing power generated at a hydroelectric plant three miles northwest of the hamlet. The plant capacity of 200 kilowatts was an average size for generating stations of the area, but the service which depended on a single plant was not reliable. Cost was high and seasonal variations in available water for hydro generation, as in North Creek, meant extremely erratic service. This resulted in the consolidation of several small companies into a large interconnected power system and eventually the Adirondack Power and Light Corporation, a predecessor company to Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation.