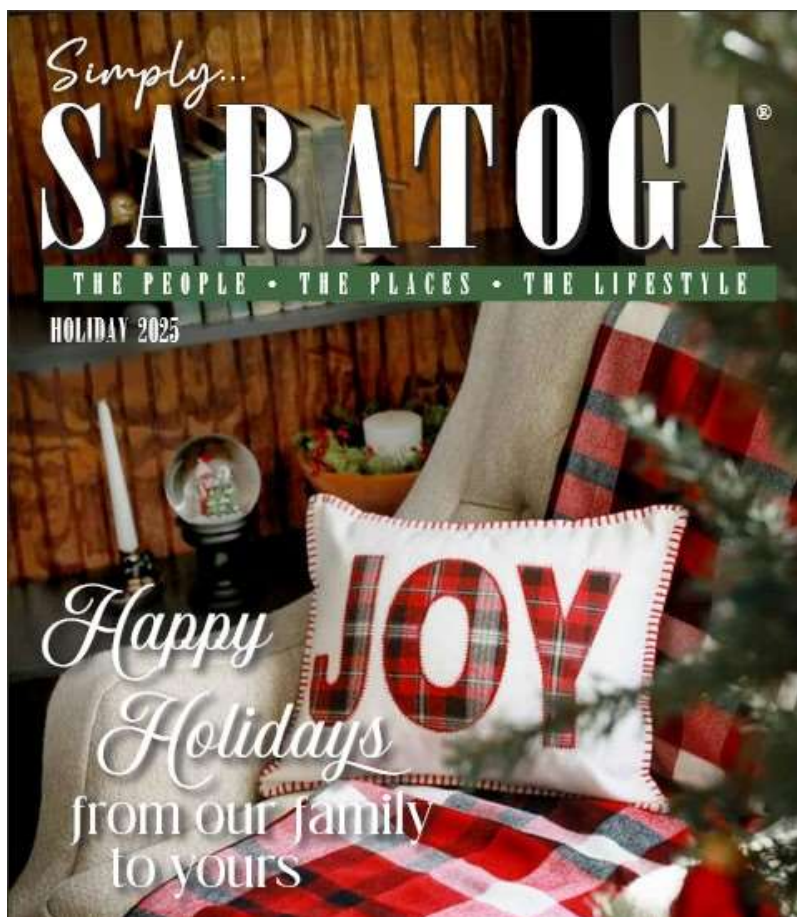




HISTORY | NEW SERIES

All Aboard FOR THE ADIRONDACKS!

Every year, millions visit New York State's Adirondack Park, encompassing a mountainous region larger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Glacier and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks combined. In the 19th century, Saratoga Springs was a launching gateway for those seeking adventure in the vast wilderness before it became "The Park." A century and a half later, the "Health, History and Horses City" continues to be a springboard for travelers forging north. The accounts of the 19th century men and women who ventured into The Adirondacks and made its mountains, lakes, streams and glens a magnet for "wilderness experiences" merge into an absorbing story reflecting our American spirit of opportunistic pursuits, both recreational and financial, often in symbiosis.



Photo courtesy of the George S. Bolster Collection, Saratoga Springs History Museum.



Ed Collins

Ed Collins (Eamon Ó'Coileáin) writes about these adventurers and the pivotal role Saratoga Springs played in unlocking The Adirondacks. He highlights ruthless financier Thomas Durant who established railroad connections from "The Spa Village" into The Adirondacks in the 1870s, ushering in the era of "The Great Camps" and their wealthy owners who, by extension of their "gilded coat tails," fostered a long line of entrepreneurs luring people to the mountains. By the turn of that century into the 20th, people along the northeastern seaboard were "vacating their city residences in summers" to pursue "Adirondack adventures," creating our modern American practice of

"summer vacations." In chronicling this interesting slice of Saratoga Springs history, Collins reveals the role the Irish played in establishing Saratoga Springs as a horse racing and cultural mecca and in laying the 19th century foundations for today's escapes into the modern-day Adirondack Park. Durant's life plays out to its final chapter in The Adirondacks, reminiscent of Orson Welles' great cinematic achievement *Citizen Kane*.

Collins first traveled into The Adirondacks in the mid-1950s. He and his wife, Jean, live in their Adirondack cabin retreat, crafted from native lumber, high on a mountain near Thirteenth Lake that inspires his research and writings and where he enjoys photographing landscapes. Several of his photos are included in an engrossing *All Aboard for the Adirondacks* historical narrative that recounts a by-gone era.

Collins' many other works include: observations on the legacies of those who ventured early on into The Adirondacks in *Adirondack*; a personal reflection of surviving a life-threatening health crisis,

inspiring others to re-examine their own lives; a narrative about the importance of avocational pursuits in senior years; an account of his personally surpassing 40,000 miles of daily walking (far more than Forest Gump!); a travel chronicle during the early covid pandemic months; and articles about Irish history and Irish cultural contributions in America. As well, he has published poetry and photography - a recent magazine cover features his autumn photo of a forever-wild Adirondack Lake.

In the spirit of his good read *All Aboard for the Adirondacks*, the writer's current focus is a biographical account of a 20th century descendent of North America's First People who lived a long life "off 'a the land" in The Adirondacks, never "tethered to things, property or residence." At the same time, he's working on a long tale about connections made between two people whose chance Adirondack encounter led to a life's repair and renewal. As with *All Aboard for the Adirondacks*, his works live and breathe The Adirondacks. He can be contacted via the USPS, North River, N.Y. 📧

All Aboard FOR
THE ADIRONDACKS!

OF SARATOGA SPRINGS, THOMAS DURANT,
RAILROADS, THE GREAT CAMPS AND THE IRISH

A SARATOGA STORY TOLD IN THE GRAND IRISH SEANCHAI STORYTELLING TRADITION | PART 1

WRITTEN BY **EAMON Ó'COILEÁIN (ED COLLINS)**



*Dr. Thomas Clark Durant by Mathew Brady.
Photo courtesy of The National Archives.*

Dr. Thomas Clark Durant, 19th century tycoon, wore so many mantles in life: a physician, although one who never practiced medicine; college professor; businessman; prairie wheat trader; dubious financier and money broker; land speculator who was a force for building the first bridge across the Mississippi River; northern profiteer during The Civil War as a smuggler of southern cotton; stock manipulator and swindler – a central figure in the notorious Crédit Mobilier scheme that triggered *The New York Sun* front-page headlining “King of Frauds” exposé; scandalous vice-president of the Union Pacific Railroad that joined the Central Pacific Railroad at Promontory Summit, Utah, in 1869 to create The Transcontinental Railroad, and in his later years, arguably the man who opened up the Adirondack Mountains to “vacationers” and “The Great Camps.” It’s his Adirondack business ventures that should capture the interest not only of present-day Saratogians, but importantly of those of us who can boast proudly of Irish heritage and the role the Irish played in delivering “The Adirondack Experience” to visitors of our great Adirondack Park. Make no mistake, Thomas Durant was not of Irish heritage, but he profited greatly from the Irish and their entrepreneurship, ingenuity, hard work, commitment to family values, muscle and sweat.

By 1840, two different railroad passenger services linked New York's Capital Region of Schenectady-Albany-Troy, and thus all the Great Northeast, to Saratoga Springs, creating a bustling society gathering place for thousands as a health destination for its mineral springs on the edges of the gentle southern slopes of the Adirondack mountainous landscape. And it was here in what later would become today's City of "Health, History and Horses" that the traditional Irish love of horse racing served as a critical catalyst in developing a gateway into the Adirondacks, leading to a surge of travelers deep into the mountainous region and thus a burst in economic recreational activity that survives, in great measure, today.

Adirondack Company's Rail Road
Time table, 1870.
Image courtesy of the Jon Patton Collection.

Irishman John Morrissey. Photo courtesy of Brady-Handy Photograph Collection, Library of Congress. Prints and Photographs Division



Classic Adirondack Backboard
Photo courtesy of the Adirondack Experience

Irishman John Morrissey, born in County Tipperary, Ireland, came to Saratoga in 1861 on one of those trains and opened a gambling house on what was then Matilda Street (Woodlawn Avenue today). He became good friends with many moneyed families, including Cornelius Vanderbilt - the patriarch of the very familiar Saratoga Springs and Adirondack name. In 1863, Morrissey expanded his business enterprises by purchasing 125 acres of land and building a grandstand, giving birth to the "Saratoga Race Course." It is thought to be the oldest organized sporting venue still operating in America! With his gaming house and standard-bred race track combined with the village's train terminus running from New York City up through the Hudson Valley and the state's Capital Region, Morrissey helped make Saratoga Springs a stopover attraction and major gateway for the wealthy seeking to go farther into the Adirondacks. Railroad magnate Thomas Durant, of English descent, took note of this Irishman's entrepreneurial spirit in luring wealth to Saratoga, and, like the coal that powered Durant's Union Pacific locomotives, it fueled an idea for increasing his wealth.

ADIRONDACK COMPANY'S RAIL ROAD

No. 13. TIME TABLE No. 13.

Winter Schedule

Monday, October 3d, 1870.

Trains Going West.					Trains Going East.				
Trains	Run	Stop	Time	Time	Trains	Run	Stop	Time	Time
Dayton	1:15 P.M.				Dayton			8:45	
Albany	2:00	Albany	2:00	2:00	Albany		Albany	9:00	9:00
Adirondack	2:15	Adirondack	2:15	2:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	9:15	9:15
Dayton	2:30	Dayton	2:30	2:30	Dayton		Dayton	9:30	9:30
Albany	2:45	Albany	2:45	2:45	Albany		Albany	9:45	9:45
Adirondack	3:00	Adirondack	3:00	3:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	10:00	10:00
Dayton	3:15	Dayton	3:15	3:15	Dayton		Dayton	10:15	10:15
Albany	3:30	Albany	3:30	3:30	Albany		Albany	10:30	10:30
Adirondack	3:45	Adirondack	3:45	3:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	10:45	10:45
Dayton	4:00	Dayton	4:00	4:00	Dayton		Dayton	11:00	11:00
Albany	4:15	Albany	4:15	4:15	Albany		Albany	11:15	11:15
Adirondack	4:30	Adirondack	4:30	4:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	11:30	11:30
Dayton	4:45	Dayton	4:45	4:45	Dayton		Dayton	11:45	11:45
Albany	5:00	Albany	5:00	5:00	Albany		Albany	12:00	12:00
Adirondack	5:15	Adirondack	5:15	5:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	12:15	12:15
Dayton	5:30	Dayton	5:30	5:30	Dayton		Dayton	12:30	12:30
Albany	5:45	Albany	5:45	5:45	Albany		Albany	12:45	12:45
Adirondack	6:00	Adirondack	6:00	6:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	1:00	1:00
Dayton	6:15	Dayton	6:15	6:15	Dayton		Dayton	1:15	1:15
Albany	6:30	Albany	6:30	6:30	Albany		Albany	1:30	1:30
Adirondack	6:45	Adirondack	6:45	6:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	1:45	1:45
Dayton	7:00	Dayton	7:00	7:00	Dayton		Dayton	2:00	2:00
Albany	7:15	Albany	7:15	7:15	Albany		Albany	2:15	2:15
Adirondack	7:30	Adirondack	7:30	7:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	2:30	2:30
Dayton	7:45	Dayton	7:45	7:45	Dayton		Dayton	2:45	2:45
Albany	8:00	Albany	8:00	8:00	Albany		Albany	3:00	3:00
Adirondack	8:15	Adirondack	8:15	8:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	3:15	3:15
Dayton	8:30	Dayton	8:30	8:30	Dayton		Dayton	3:30	3:30
Albany	8:45	Albany	8:45	8:45	Albany		Albany	3:45	3:45
Adirondack	9:00	Adirondack	9:00	9:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	4:00	4:00
Dayton	9:15	Dayton	9:15	9:15	Dayton		Dayton	4:15	4:15
Albany	9:30	Albany	9:30	9:30	Albany		Albany	4:30	4:30
Adirondack	9:45	Adirondack	9:45	9:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	4:45	4:45
Dayton	10:00	Dayton	10:00	10:00	Dayton		Dayton	5:00	5:00
Albany	10:15	Albany	10:15	10:15	Albany		Albany	5:15	5:15
Adirondack	10:30	Adirondack	10:30	10:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	5:30	5:30
Dayton	10:45	Dayton	10:45	10:45	Dayton		Dayton	5:45	5:45
Albany	11:00	Albany	11:00	11:00	Albany		Albany	6:00	6:00
Adirondack	11:15	Adirondack	11:15	11:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	6:15	6:15
Dayton	11:30	Dayton	11:30	11:30	Dayton		Dayton	6:30	6:30
Albany	11:45	Albany	11:45	11:45	Albany		Albany	6:45	6:45
Adirondack	12:00	Adirondack	12:00	12:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	7:00	7:00
Dayton	12:15	Dayton	12:15	12:15	Dayton		Dayton	7:15	7:15
Albany	12:30	Albany	12:30	12:30	Albany		Albany	7:30	7:30
Adirondack	12:45	Adirondack	12:45	12:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	7:45	7:45
Dayton	1:00	Dayton	1:00	1:00	Dayton		Dayton	8:00	8:00
Albany	1:15	Albany	1:15	1:15	Albany		Albany	8:15	8:15
Adirondack	1:30	Adirondack	1:30	1:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	8:30	8:30
Dayton	1:45	Dayton	1:45	1:45	Dayton		Dayton	8:45	8:45
Albany	2:00	Albany	2:00	2:00	Albany		Albany	9:00	9:00
Adirondack	2:15	Adirondack	2:15	2:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	9:15	9:15
Dayton	2:30	Dayton	2:30	2:30	Dayton		Dayton	9:30	9:30
Albany	2:45	Albany	2:45	2:45	Albany		Albany	9:45	9:45
Adirondack	3:00	Adirondack	3:00	3:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	10:00	10:00
Dayton	3:15	Dayton	3:15	3:15	Dayton		Dayton	10:15	10:15
Albany	3:30	Albany	3:30	3:30	Albany		Albany	10:30	10:30
Adirondack	3:45	Adirondack	3:45	3:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	10:45	10:45
Dayton	4:00	Dayton	4:00	4:00	Dayton		Dayton	11:00	11:00
Albany	4:15	Albany	4:15	4:15	Albany		Albany	11:15	11:15
Adirondack	4:30	Adirondack	4:30	4:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	11:30	11:30
Dayton	4:45	Dayton	4:45	4:45	Dayton		Dayton	11:45	11:45
Albany	5:00	Albany	5:00	5:00	Albany		Albany	12:00	12:00
Adirondack	5:15	Adirondack	5:15	5:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	12:15	12:15
Dayton	5:30	Dayton	5:30	5:30	Dayton		Dayton	12:30	12:30
Albany	5:45	Albany	5:45	5:45	Albany		Albany	12:45	12:45
Adirondack	6:00	Adirondack	6:00	6:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	1:00	1:00
Dayton	6:15	Dayton	6:15	6:15	Dayton		Dayton	1:15	1:15
Albany	6:30	Albany	6:30	6:30	Albany		Albany	1:30	1:30
Adirondack	6:45	Adirondack	6:45	6:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	1:45	1:45
Dayton	7:00	Dayton	7:00	7:00	Dayton		Dayton	2:00	2:00
Albany	7:15	Albany	7:15	7:15	Albany		Albany	2:15	2:15
Adirondack	7:30	Adirondack	7:30	7:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	2:30	2:30
Dayton	7:45	Dayton	7:45	7:45	Dayton		Dayton	2:45	2:45
Albany	8:00	Albany	8:00	8:00	Albany		Albany	3:00	3:00
Adirondack	8:15	Adirondack	8:15	8:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	3:15	3:15
Dayton	8:30	Dayton	8:30	8:30	Dayton		Dayton	3:30	3:30
Albany	8:45	Albany	8:45	8:45	Albany		Albany	3:45	3:45
Adirondack	9:00	Adirondack	9:00	9:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	4:00	4:00
Dayton	9:15	Dayton	9:15	9:15	Dayton		Dayton	4:15	4:15
Albany	9:30	Albany	9:30	9:30	Albany		Albany	4:30	4:30
Adirondack	9:45	Adirondack	9:45	9:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	4:45	4:45
Dayton	10:00	Dayton	10:00	10:00	Dayton		Dayton	5:00	5:00
Albany	10:15	Albany	10:15	10:15	Albany		Albany	5:15	5:15
Adirondack	10:30	Adirondack	10:30	10:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	5:30	5:30
Dayton	10:45	Dayton	10:45	10:45	Dayton		Dayton	5:45	5:45
Albany	11:00	Albany	11:00	11:00	Albany		Albany	6:00	6:00
Adirondack	11:15	Adirondack	11:15	11:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	6:15	6:15
Dayton	11:30	Dayton	11:30	11:30	Dayton		Dayton	6:30	6:30
Albany	11:45	Albany	11:45	11:45	Albany		Albany	6:45	6:45
Adirondack	12:00	Adirondack	12:00	12:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	7:00	7:00
Dayton	12:15	Dayton	12:15	12:15	Dayton		Dayton	7:15	7:15
Albany	12:30	Albany	12:30	12:30	Albany		Albany	7:30	7:30
Adirondack	12:45	Adirondack	12:45	12:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	7:45	7:45
Dayton	1:00	Dayton	1:00	1:00	Dayton		Dayton	8:00	8:00
Albany	1:15	Albany	1:15	1:15	Albany		Albany	8:15	8:15
Adirondack	1:30	Adirondack	1:30	1:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	8:30	8:30
Dayton	1:45	Dayton	1:45	1:45	Dayton		Dayton	8:45	8:45
Albany	2:00	Albany	2:00	2:00	Albany		Albany	9:00	9:00
Adirondack	2:15	Adirondack	2:15	2:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	9:15	9:15
Dayton	2:30	Dayton	2:30	2:30	Dayton		Dayton	9:30	9:30
Albany	2:45	Albany	2:45	2:45	Albany		Albany	9:45	9:45
Adirondack	3:00	Adirondack	3:00	3:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	10:00	10:00
Dayton	3:15	Dayton	3:15	3:15	Dayton		Dayton	10:15	10:15
Albany	3:30	Albany	3:30	3:30	Albany		Albany	10:30	10:30
Adirondack	3:45	Adirondack	3:45	3:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	10:45	10:45
Dayton	4:00	Dayton	4:00	4:00	Dayton		Dayton	11:00	11:00
Albany	4:15	Albany	4:15	4:15	Albany		Albany	11:15	11:15
Adirondack	4:30	Adirondack	4:30	4:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	11:30	11:30
Dayton	4:45	Dayton	4:45	4:45	Dayton		Dayton	11:45	11:45
Albany	5:00	Albany	5:00	5:00	Albany		Albany	12:00	12:00
Adirondack	5:15	Adirondack	5:15	5:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	12:15	12:15
Dayton	5:30	Dayton	5:30	5:30	Dayton		Dayton	12:30	12:30
Albany	5:45	Albany	5:45	5:45	Albany		Albany	12:45	12:45
Adirondack	6:00	Adirondack	6:00	6:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	1:00	1:00
Dayton	6:15	Dayton	6:15	6:15	Dayton		Dayton	1:15	1:15
Albany	6:30	Albany	6:30	6:30	Albany		Albany	1:30	1:30
Adirondack	6:45	Adirondack	6:45	6:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	1:45	1:45
Dayton	7:00	Dayton	7:00	7:00	Dayton		Dayton	2:00	2:00
Albany	7:15	Albany	7:15	7:15	Albany		Albany	2:15	2:15
Adirondack	7:30	Adirondack	7:30	7:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	2:30	2:30
Dayton	7:45	Dayton	7:45	7:45	Dayton		Dayton	2:45	2:45
Albany	8:00	Albany	8:00	8:00	Albany		Albany	3:00	3:00
Adirondack	8:15	Adirondack	8:15	8:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	3:15	3:15
Dayton	8:30	Dayton	8:30	8:30	Dayton		Dayton	3:30	3:30
Albany	8:45	Albany	8:45	8:45	Albany		Albany	3:45	3:45
Adirondack	9:00	Adirondack	9:00	9:00	Adirondack		Adirondack	4:00	4:00
Dayton	9:15	Dayton	9:15	9:15	Dayton		Dayton	4:15	4:15
Albany	9:30	Albany	9:30	9:30	Albany		Albany	4:30	4:30
Adirondack	9:45	Adirondack	9:45	9:45	Adirondack		Adirondack	4:45	4:45
Dayton	10:00	Dayton	10:00	10:00	Dayton		Dayton	5:00	5:00
Albany	10:15	Albany	10:15	10:15	Albany		Albany	5:15	5:15
Adirondack	10:30	Adirondack	10:30	10:30	Adirondack		Adirondack	5:30	5:30
Dayton	10:45	Dayton	10:45	10:45	Dayton		Dayton	5:45	5:45
Albany	11:00	Albany	11:00	11:00	Albany		Albany	6:00	6:00
Adirondack	11:15	Adirondack	11:15	11:15	Adirondack		Adirondack	6:15	6:15
Dayton	11:30	Dayton	11:30	11:30	Dayton		Dayton	6:30	6:30
Albany	11:4								



Horses, wagons, buckboards, carriages, stagecoaches, ox carts and the like were the main modes of traveling into the Adirondacks for most of the 19th century. Dr. Durant, during his early involvement in the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, was also at that time eyeing the Adirondacks for its investment potential in mining and logging. He eventually purchased over half a million acres in the mountainous region. Realizing the lure of Irishman Morrissey's social attractions in Saratoga and its train hub, he had thoughts of using the bustling village as a key link for constructing new railroad tracks into the Adirondacks and perhaps all the way to the border with Canada.

Thomas Durant turned his full attention to pursuing wealth in the Adirondacks after essentially being forced out of the Union Pacific Railroad in early 1869 for siphoning enormous funds from it into his own personal accounts through what was known as the *Crédit Mobilier* scandal. Fresh from that dishonorable removal, Durant wasted little time in building the first railroad into New York's northern wilderness region, the Adirondack Company Rail Road (later to become the Adirondack Railroad). Durant employed Irish hands and backs to help clear land and lay tracks from Saratoga Springs first to The Glen in the Town of Johnsburg in 1869.

and then to North Creek in 1871, a total rail run of 60 iron-track miles. Ironically, Durant's tracks in The Glen ran near the Adirondack birthplace of celebrated photographer Mathew Brady, son of Irish immigrants Andrew and Julia Brady. Mathew Brady grew up to study under famed portrait artist William Page in Saratoga Springs, be acclaimed the greatest photo-historian of the 19th century and credited as the "Father of Photojournalism," and photographed Durant for posterity. The Adirondack Company Rail Road initiated daily routes to The Glen and then to North Creek, providing a farther launching point for recreation into the Adirondacks and boosting the hospitality trade that developed to accommodate those seeking the "Adirondack Experience."

And the headquarters for the
Adirondack Company Rail Road?

Why, Saratoga Springs of course! The building at 117 Grand Avenue continued to operate as a railroad building throughout much of the 20th century until the 1960s when it became a family residence. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places thanks to the tireless efforts of the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation. Today it is a commercial property. The Foundation invites us all to "...stop at the intersection of Franklin Street, Grand Avenue, and Congress Street, imagine it is 1890 and a locomotive has just pulled up along the side of the building and what it must have been like to look out the large arched windows in anticipation of an exciting journey north to the Adirondacks."

Read *Simply Saratoga SPRING*, due out in March for more of this great tale! 📖



Original Adirondack Company Rail Road Headquarters, 117 Grand Ave., Saratoga Springs, circa 1927. Photo courtesy of the George S. Bolster Collection, Saratoga Springs History Museum.

All Aboard FOR THE ADIRONDACKS!

OF SARATOGA SPRINGS, THOMAS DURANT, RAILROADS, THE GREAT CAMPS AND THE IRISH

A SARATOGA STORY TOLD IN THE GRAND IRISH SEANCHAI STORYTELLING TRADITION | PART 2

WRITTEN BY EAMON O'COILEÁIN (ED COLLINS)

Imagine a journey into the wilderness just as Thomas Durant had envisioned ticketholders doing back in the day as they paid to step onto his train in Saratoga for an "Adirondack Experience."

But the ever-ambitious and wealth-ravenous Durant was not done. After completion of his 60 miles of tracks from Saratoga Springs, he purchased "The Gables" mansion in North Creek along the Hudson River and took up residence there, lavishly furnishing it. He became one of the most notable citizens north of Saratoga and heard of a local man, a Mr. Holland, who had built a handsome hotel deep in the forests to welcome people into the Adirondacks for "sport, recreation and relaxation." John Holland, born in Ireland, was working in a North Creek general store where he listened to stories from lumberjacks about a beautiful wilderness lake deep in the Adirondacks. Over two years, Irishman Holland hired help who toiled hauling building materials across a rough winter lumbering road, then wilderness paths and frozen waters to build a hotel on the lake. He changed



Thomas Durant's beloved "The Gables" Grandiose Mansion, North Creek, by Seneca Ray Stoddard. Photo courtesy of the Adirondack Experience.

the lake's name from the somewhat unappealing "Tallow Lake" to the more inviting "Blue Mountain Lake" for a nearby summit and, more importantly, for publicity purposes, capitalizing on what he called the peak's "blue hue." After Holland opened his rustic log Blue Mountain Lake House, according to Alfred Donaldson's *A History of the Adirondacks*, "People fairly rushed in from the start." Durant, the relentless speculator, learned of Holland's success and enviously eyed the commercial potential of Holland's hotel and the

hospitality potential of the Adirondacks. With thoughts of making money dancing in his head, he enlisted his son, William West Durant, to help establish a stagecoach line on an almost 40-mile hard-packed road they built from Durant's Adirondack Company Rail Road North Creek terminus to deliver travelers to Holland's Lake House coming from Saratoga Springs and beyond on his railroad. Holland's original Blue Mountain venture, later transformed into a grand hotel, welcomed thousands of guests until it burned to the ground in 1904, never to be rebuilt.

The greatly expanded Holland Lake House, by Seneca Ray Stoddard. Photo courtesy of the Long Lake Archives.

William West Durant at Great Camp Pine Knot, by Seneca Ray Stoddard. Photo courtesy of the Adirondack Experience.



In "six degrees of separation from... well, you know from whom," it can be said that Saratoga Springs opened the door to "The Era of the Great Camps." As a result of the Durants' interest in connecting the wealth in, and coming to, Saratoga to Irishman John Holland's Blue Mountain Lake House through their rail line to North Creek and then their new road, Durant and his son, William West, built Camp Pine Knot, their own retreat near Blue Mountain, on Raquette Lake, launching the architectural "Great Camp Rustic Style" of expansive lodging compounds that were designed to blend into the wilderness. At their Great Camp Pine Knot, the Durants, energetic son and aging father, together entertained wealthy friends who traveled by rail through Saratoga Springs and onto North Creek and then on Durant's stagecoach line into the Adirondack wilderness. Opportunistic father and son used the gatherings to solicit financial interest in building Great Camps like their Pine Knot retreat to help create high-class destination sanctuaries for "Wilderness Experiences." Indeed William would later replicate the "Great Camp" style by building Great Camps Uncas and Sagamore. All three camps would eventually be purchased by wealthy "Gilded Notables," Collis P. Huntington, J.P. Morgan and Alfred Vanderbilt, respectively. The "Age of the Great Camps" was born!



On the far more modest slopes, creases and lakes of the Adirondacks, John Holland and a number of other Irish entrepreneurs offered "Céad míle fáilte!" - "A Hundred Thousand Welcomes!" - to wilderness adventurers in the grand Irish spirit of "oigideacht" - the "Gaeilge" (Irish language) for "hospitality," the Celtic cultural tradition of "welcoming" travelers, which actually was required of the Irish as written into their ancient Celtic Brehon Law. These Irish innkeepers inspired a keen pace for hostelry commerce and, consequently, promoted road and railroad building in the Adirondacks. As the "Wilderness Experience" began taking off in the years following Durant's Saratoga-to-North Creek line, Irish muscle helped build roads and short lines of track among villages and towns within the Adirondacks. Dr. Durant would die without realizing his dream of expanding his railroad through the majestic mountains all the way to the Canadian border and Montreal. In fact, no railroad would traverse the region entirely until 1892 when the final spike was driven of William Seward Webb's *St. Lawrence and Adirondack Railroad*. Hundreds of Irishmen were recorded on Webb's employment logbooks among the many immigrants recruited to clear terrain and lay tracks for the 191 miles of that railroad in a grueling 18 months of hard labor.

In the late 19th century, news of Adirondack adventures and the railroad, road, and hotel building activities in the mountains reached the affluent in eastern cities. Great numbers of well-to-do city dwellers began "vacating" their homes in the heat of summer to enjoy the "Adirondack Experience" of the cool mountains and, by serendipity, created the very American notion of "summer vacation" that lives to this day. These Adirondack vacationers initially took advantage of trains from New York City with scores of stops to pick up wealthy city-dwellers along the way to Saratoga Springs and then on Durant's Adirondack Company Rail Road to North Creek, although new routes were opened eventually from other directions. Just as the earlier Irishman John Holland had at Blue Mountain Lake, scores of Irish eyes saw opportunity in these wealthy visitors and hung out their own "Fáilte" - "Welcome" - signs.

Read *Simply Saratoga H&G*, due out in May for more of this great tale! 📖



Fáilte Sign. Photo by Ed Collins

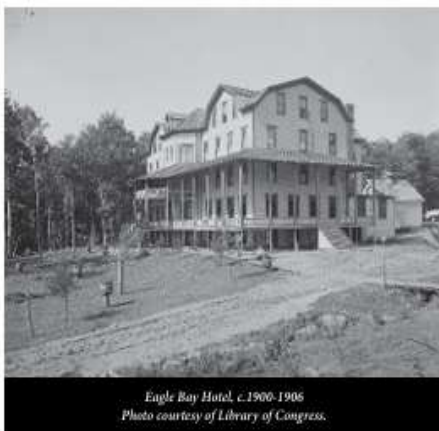
All Aboard FOR THE ADIRONDACKS!

OF SARATOGA SPRINGS, THOMAS DURANT, RAILROADS, THE GREAT CAMPS AND THE IRISH

A SARATOGA STORY TOLD IN THE GRAND IRISH SEANCHAI STORYTELLING TRADITION | PART 3
WRITTEN BY EAMON O'COILEÁIN (ED COLLINS)

Brothers Timothy, Eugene and Cornelius Murphy, all born in Ireland, arrived in Chestertown in the 19th century, joining an energetic Irish community. All three brothers engaged in the hospitality "Fáilte" trade, establishing the Murphy Brothers Hotel in Wevertown, the Loon Lake House, the Hotel Atateka, and Murphy's Friend's Lake Inn, the last still welcoming guests today without the Murphy family namesake attached to it. In a memoir of family history, descendant James Murphy commented that so many summer city

boarders came to these hotels that "... they liked to call Friends Lake a body of water surrounded by Murphys." As well, in Saratoga County's neighbor Warren County, Irene and James McVeigh opened McVeigh House at Loon Lake as a boarding dwelling, a wee bit later turning it into a first-class hotel. John Conley was an early investor in the grand Ondawa House in Schroon Lake, later to be purchased and operated by the O'Conner brothers. In the year that Thomas Durant completed his Saratoga to North Creek Adirondack Company Rail Road, 1871, Irishman John McInerney, anticipating the benefits of Durant's Adirondack



Eagle Bay Hotel, c.1900-1906
Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

train line, erected his hotel in North Creek, The American Hotel, attracting north country visitors well into the 20th century. Irish Corkman Patrick Moynehan (yes, the Irish he with an "e") became known as "The Lumber King of the Adirondacks," owning more than 30,000 acres of timberlands and venturing into the hospitality business. He "welcomed" travelers to his Adirondack Hotel on Long Lake, installing another Irishman Patrick McSweeney to manage it. Moynehan, with his brother Dennis, established the Eagle Bay Hotel Company on Fourth

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Lake, and later extended his hotel ownership to include The Adirondack House in North Creek. Charles O'Hara helped attract visitors to The Fulton Chain of lakes by building the Inlet Inn on the channel to Fifth Lake. On Raquette Lake, the Bryeres built the grand hotel Brightside, expanding it to a major resort of cabins and buildings on over 100 acres. Matriarch Mary Bryere, nee Gooley of Irish lineage, was said to be able to "swing an ax and pull a crosscut saw on a par with any man" in helping to build the original hotel log by log.

North Creek Railway Station sign.
Photo by Ed Collins.

Oscar Wilde in his 1882 American Tour
"Lecture Attire." Photo: Napoleon Sarony,
courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



In 1882, celebrated Irish wit, poet and playwright Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde traveled to Saratoga Springs to stage two notable lectures on a year-long American Tour. From Saratoga, he ventured far north into the Adirondacks to rest under the "Fáilte" sign of the Chases' Loon Lake House. The Irish-American Chase family's eventual "hospitality" footprint became so large it had its own general store, post office, one of the first Adirondack golf courses, an elegant train station, three hotels and numerous cottages for more than 800 guests on 4,000 acres, "welcoming" the social elite of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. through Saratoga Springs. Its only current remaining gem, "The Irish House," still "welcomes" guests today.

NORTH CREEK RAILWAY STATION

AT THIS SITE EARLY IN THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 14, 1901
THEODORE ROOSEVELT RECEIVED THE MESSAGE THAT
PRESIDENT MCKINLEY HAD DIED IN BUFFALO AND THAT HE
HAD BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

ERECTED BY THE
JOHNSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

1976



Aiden Lair Lodge

Then, of course, 'tis story of Michael Cronin that is forever etched in Adirondack history. Michael and Lilian Cronin, both descended from Irish immigrants, ran the well-known Adirondack inn and stagecoach stop Aiden Lair. In the pitch-black first hours of September 14, 1901, Mike hitched up his Morgan horses to a surrey and, with a vacationing Vice President Teddy Roosevelt, who the previous day was hiking Mt. Marcy, dashed in record "Midnight Ride" time through a tempest on rain-slicked Adirondack rutted earthen roads to Durant's original North Creek train station to a waiting Adirondack Railroad, the rechristened offspring of Durant's original Adirondack Company Rail Road, where "T. R." learned he was now president: President William McKinley lay dead in Buffalo from

an assassin's bullet. Michael Cronin's great grandson, also Michael, reveals that, "What Cronin knew, and did not tell Roosevelt, was that by the time T. R. arrived at Aiden Lair, a call had come to Mike Cronin informing him that McKinley had died, that T. R. was now President, and that Cronin damn well better be careful with his passenger." A special Adirondack Railroad train had been dispatched from Saratoga Springs to North Creek on the late Thomas Durant's original tracks to take Roosevelt back to Saratoga where he transferred to a line to Albany and from there for a journey to Buffalo where McKinley lay deceased and T. R. was sworn in as the 26th President.

Read *Simply Saratoga Summer*, due out in June for more of this great tale! 📖

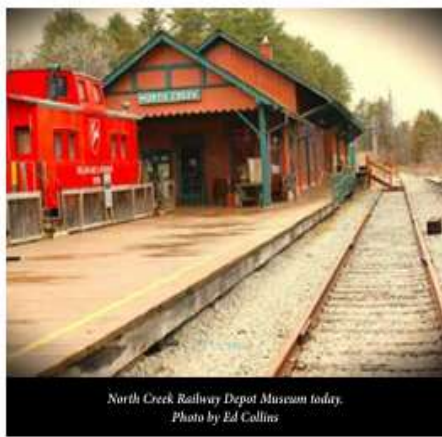
All Aboard FOR THE ADIRONDACKS!

OF SARATOGA SPRINGS, THOMAS DURANT, RAILROADS, THE GREAT CAMPS AND THE IRISH

A SARATOGA STORY TOLD IN THE GRAND IRISH SEANCHAI STORYTELLING TRADITION | PART 4

WRITTEN BY EAMON Ó'COILEÁIN (ED COLLINS)

As more elegant hotels and resorts were being built in the Adirondacks in the late 19th century, more and more wealthy Americans summured there. But, as we know, there is wealth, and then there are the "glittering elites." The Irish have a saying, "Cut your coat according to your cloth." These "Gilded Americans" traveled to Saratoga and then into the Adirondacks, indeed cutting their own coats according to their luxurious batts of cloth: they lived the "Great Camp" lifestyles. The "Great Camp Magnates,"



North Creek Railway Depot Museum today.
Photo by Ed Collins

Collinses saved enough from their years of service to the Vanderbilts to earn their own "Failte" sign - they purchased The Duryea Camp on Blue Mountain Lake and renamed it The Hedges; still welcoming guests under different management after more than 100 years.

With railroads, roads, lodging and resorts being built, and the advent of the automobile in the early decades of the 20th century, the Adirondacks were attracting more and more "vacationers" who "motored" their way into the mountains rather than travel by trains that all started with Thomas

Durant's Adirondack Company Rail Road leaving from Saratoga Springs. The Irish played an important role in promoting our state's great mountains, valleys, lakes and streams for everyone to enjoy. In 1871, Irish immigrants John and Mary Cunningham started a family on a farm near Chestertown. Son Patrick James "P. J." Cunningham grew up to become an Adirondack Fire Warden and then one of the first Adirondack District Forest Rangers, working the woodlands until retiring his ranger boots in 1940 at age 69. While serving as a forestry Fire Warden, P. J. established Cunningham's General Store in North Creek in 1909.

P.J. Cunningham being thanked for 50 years of Forestry Service. Photo courtesy of The North Creek Railway Depot Museum, donated by the Lussu Family.

Vintage "Snow Train" Poster. Photo courtesy of The North Creek Railway Depot Museum.

COME...on
The Season's
FIRST
WINTER SPORTS
SNOW TRAIN
to NORTH CREEK
SUNDAY, JANUARY 26
SNOW CONDITIONS PERMITTING

Curiously, P. J. began turning the store's barrel staves into skis and lengths of leather into bindings. True to the old Irish crofter proverb that "you'll never plough a field by turning it over in your head," P. J. turned his ideas into actions selling skis, bindings, poles, and winter gear and thus helped foster the sport of skiing in, and attract winter recreationists to, the Adirondacks. P. J.'s descendants still own and operate the business today as Cunningham's Ski Barn, believed to be the oldest continuously operating ski shop in America. By adding skiing in the winter to canoeing, fishing, hiking, camping and hunting during the warmer seasonal months, the Adirondacks had become a year-round destination.

Today, New York State's Adirondack Park, covering an area larger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Glacier, and Great Smokies National Parks combined, welcomes millions of visitors every year. These days, vacationers traveling into The Park can motor on The Adirondack Northway, a main artery that courses along the shoulders of Saratoga Springs,



Thomas Durant's Adirondack Company Rail Road eventually became the Adirondack Railroad and then the Adirondack Branch of the D&H Railroad in 1902, with the tracks carrying passengers and, at various times, freight cars hauling Adirondack almandine gemets, the world's largest, out of North Creek.

In the 1930s, the rail line was affectionately known as "The Snow Train" carrying thousands of skiers from Saratoga Springs to North Creek and its Ski Bowl, the precursor to Gore Mountain Ski Center, now the largest ski operation in New York State, all as a result of Durant's original vision for opening up the Adirondacks to "Wilderness Experiences." His tracks helped in America's World War II efforts by hauling titanium dioxide out of Tahawus for military purposes. After the war and until 1989, freight trains continued to cart titanium from Tahawus and garnet out of the Adirondacks while intermittent passenger service carried visitors between the city of "Health, History and Horses" and North Creek.

After 1989, Durant's original Adirondack Company Rail Road tracks lay dormant until used as part of the scenic sightseeing Saratoga & North Creek Railway, which ran from 2011 to 2018 when all locomotive rail service again ceased operation. In a welcoming throwback to the 19th century when bicycle peddle power was a popular Saratoga Springs and North Creek mode of getting around locally, Durant's tracks at North Creek are now ridden by vacationers seeking to capture the "Adirondack Experience" by peddling Revolution Rail Company rail bikes out of North Creek along the Hudson River through forest canopies and on trestle tracks over water. The railroad baron's North Creek Train Station still stands today, over 150 years after its opening, as The North Creek Railway Depot Museum.

History perhaps has not been as kind to Durant as his descendants might have liked it to be, based on his many alleged financial transgressions. However, Dr. Thomas Clark Durant's ambitious endeavor to build a gateway rail line from Saratoga Springs into the vast northern wilderness did have a major positive impact, eventually transforming The Adirondack Mountains into a great and memorable "Wilderness Experience" destination for millions.

Read Simply Saratoga Fall, due out in September for more of this great tale! 📖