**The Reminiscences of George W. Holdridge**

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Transcribed by Kenneth A. Holdridge 5 Dec 2002

History is made day by day, ands each one of us contributes his part consciously or otherwise, but the record would be lost forever were not some more careful than others to preserve it. Therefore it has occurred to me that not only for my descendants, but for my friends, I should put in a compact and unaffected form, this little sketch of my life and thus perhaps encourage others to do likewise. In this way we could very soon have at hand a true history of the times and events of our country, bearing an intimate touch of the lives of men of affairs, and even though no startling records were perpetuated they would serve as a mine of information for future reference.

I was born in the town of Catskill, Greene County, New York, October 20, 1847. My father was James Holdridge and my mother Sarah Lane. My father was the son of Isaac Holdridge, and Hannah Pettit, and had two brothers, Amos and Melanthon.

The Holdridge family was of English descent. My father's parents came from Connecticut to the town of Lexington, Greene County, New York, where they lived until 1814, when they moved to the town of Catskill and bought a large tract of land situated at the foot of Round Top Mountain. Part of the tract, is now owned by the Catskill Shale and Brick Company and from it they obtain shale for brick making purposes.

The Pettit family originally came from France and settled on Long Island. Some of the family moved from there to Hurley, Ulster County, New York, and later from Hurley to Lexington in the adjoining county of Greene. Hannah Pettit had two brothers Amos and Hezekiah, who resided in the town of Lexington. Hezekiah Pettit was born March 12, 1779, and died March 28, 1852. He was a preacher, and for about fifty years was pastor of the Baptist Church in Lexington Flats, being widely know as "Elder Pettit" He served most of his time without pay.

My mother's father, Andrew Lane, came from England, and her mother was a Connelly, from Ireland. They settled in Dutchess County. About 1800 they moved from there to the town of Olive in Ulster County. During the Revoltutionary War my grandfather Lane served as private in the Dutchess County Militia, Second Regiment.

My childhood days were spent in different parts of the county, as my father was poor man and moved from place to place as opportunity for work was afforded. These changes rarely added to his income, and having a large family of children, the question boots, shoes, and warm clothing, as the winter approached was a serious one.

What education I received was obtained in country schools in different places where my people lived, before I reached the age of thirteen. After that time I was unable to go to school, as I was considered old enough to work. A few years later while in the United States Navy, I had a chum about my own age named Owen Bumpus. Both of us felt the need for more education, so bought a Davis Arithmetic, and some other school books. We spent as much time studying these as we could, and it really counted for more than all of the schooling previously received.

At the age of thirteen, I left home and came to Catskill. I became an apprentice in a foundry and machine shop of A & B Wiltse, with which firm I was to remain until I was twenty-one. I was to receive fifty dollars per year and board with Mr. Benjamin Wiltse, a good man and a Methodist, who was to look after me, physically and morally.

Shortly after starting to work there, I found that Uncle Ben, as we called him, was a very enthusiastic Odd Fellow. I heard much talk of the goat they all had to ride, and being very eager to add to my worldly wealth, I made application to Uncle Ben, who was the Grand Mogul, for the job of taking care of the goat. He put me off from time to time, with the result that the illustrious goat never was entrusted to my tender care.

At the end of eight months, the few clothes that I had when I came to Catskill were nearly worn out and my wardrobe sadly needed replenishing. I asked Uncle Ben for some money. After long deliberation he gave me four dollars. It then dawned on me that I would not be able to carry out my part of the contract, namely seven years at fifty dollars per year, so I left abruptly with my four dollars, which was all I ever received, for my first eight months work in Catskill. The first thing that an apprentice boy was taught in the Wilste shop was how to run an engine. But there were times when it did not pay to get up steam and then a handjack was used, which had to be turned for hours at a time. Such was my work there. It was a man's work, and I was just a boy thirteen years old. I certainly worked exceedingly hard for my first four dollars.

I worked next for Messrs. John Hardwick and Robert E. Ferrier, who had bought a brickyard – the same one that Mr. Percival Goldin now has. I think that they bought it from a Mr. Ensign. There I ran the engine for three successive seasons, doing my own firing, and each day had to shovel sixteen loads of sand on the pit and temper the same – quite enough for a boy under fourteen years of age to do. For the first season I received a dollar a day and my board, and needless to say, I felt I would have money to spare. I was very anxious to learn the mason's trade. Therefore, during these three years, in the early spring and in the fall after brick making was finished, I worked for William H. Finch, who was a mason by trade and a builder on a small scale.

Meanwhile the months passed uneventfully until the winter of 1864 – 1865. I was then boarding with Mrs. Abeel, who kept a boarding house over what was then Charles Abeel's store, in West Catskill. She was the mother of two boys who had enlisted in the Navy at the beginning of the Civil War. Their time having expired they came home, but decided to re-enlist. I had all of a boy's enthusiasm to fight in my country's cause, but lacked nearly a year of the requisite age, which was eighteen. However I started to New

York City on a night boat, and wonderful to relate by the time I arrived there the next morning, several months had been added to my age, so I enlisted in the United States Navy for two years.

At first we were sent aboard the old frigate "Vermont", upon which at this time there were about five or six thousand men. She and the North Carolina were used as guard ships, and as vessels were fitted out for the war their crews were drafted from the guard ships. It was the 19th day of January 1865, when I boarded the "Vermont". It was cold and the first night I had no hammock in which to sleep, so I walked the deck all night. The following they served out to us our hammocks and bedding and we were more comfortable.

I was soon after drafted for a vessel named the "Shenango", commanded by George H Morris. Previously he had been Lieutenant of the "Cumberland" and was in command of her, owing to the Captain's absence, when she was sunk by the rebel ram "Merrimac", in Hampton Roads. We were at once started for the South. In going around Cape Hatteras we ran into a very severe storm, and as this was our maiden voyage, we were not good sailors, so it was hard work for our officers to get enough men to work the ship. The night was very dark, the cold intense, and the waves washed over our decks. I had a little experience then, which I would not care to repeat.

Our ship was equipped with one eleven inch gun, being about the largest made at the time, which was placed amidship and could be trained on either side as occasion required. She also carried smaller guns mounted on carriages placed along the sides of the deck and in different parts of the ship. These wee not stationary, and in case of rough weather had to be well secured. During the storm, the pitching and rolling of the ship caused them to work in their lashings until they had become dangerous, and needed to be re-lashed. This was by no means was an easy task, with the deck two or three feet under water, and the men were only persuaded to it by the officer's revolvers. I remember starting toward one of the guns, when a huge wave swept me off of my feet, and I slid into the vessel's rail, or bulwarks, the height of which is from five to six feet. But before I could get hold of anything, the next lurch of the ship carried me to the opposite side where I managed to regain my footing and quickly scampered to shelter under the hurricane deck, where I stayed out of sight of the officers. I wished very heartily then, that I were back in good old Catskill. The sea had lost all its attraction for me. However when the storm was over, I forgot the danger and was ready for new adventures.

The "Shenango" was called a double-ender; that is, could go either way, and was built for river work, for the Guerillas were causing trouble with masked batteries along the rivers and swamps. It was hard for the Army to get into these places, so we were sent from river to river in and about this section to shell out the Guerillas. Guerilla warefare was carried out extensively in the South the last year of the war. The so-called Guerillas were bands of Confederate soldiers who had left the regular Army and were causing considerable trouble by engaging in foraging expeditions, destroying property belonging to those known to be in sympathy with the Union, and even taking life in many instances. Their batteries were stationed in secluded places along the riverbanks, from which they

would fire upon any vessels going up and down the rivers. If successful, they would appropriate the cargo. They were greatly feared by the people living in those sections of the South and our ship on its return trip from trying to clear the country of these bands would invariably bring back a number of terror stricken refugees.

We arrived in Charleston Harbor February 18, 1865, the morning following its evacuation by the Rebels. Our vessel was the first one to go up through the harbor. We had torpedo nettings running from booms that wee placed in the bow, and on each side of the vessel to protect it by brushing aside the torpedoes in case we should run near any. It is enough to say that we were not blown up. We found the city of Charleston on fire. This conflagration was supposed to have been started before the retirement of the rebel troops, in their attempt to destroy all buildings stored with cotton. We were sent ashore to help save the city, but the portion along the wharves or river front was nearly all destroyed before the flames were under control.

The twenty-second of February we were transferred to a transport and sent to Mount Pleasant, a small place opposite Fort Sumter, - about fifteen miles across the bay. The principal reason for this transfer was that it had been reported that some Guerillas were coming to burn the little village. We stayed there a day and a night, but found no trouble, so returned to our own ship the "Shenango"

We were then ordered up the Cooper River where we captured the "Olivia", a sloop loaded with cotton. After a prize crew was sent aboard, she was taken to Philadelphia and sold.

Our next trip was up the Savannah River. We spent one Sunday at Fort Pulaski, and then went on to Georgetown, where we made our headquarters while in that vicinity, making trips up the Black River, the Wacamau River and the Big and Little Pedee Rivers. As we came down the Black River, two or three hundred Guerilla Cavalry, were waiting for us, prepared to give us a warm reception. They were stationed on a high, heavily wooded piece of ground, and as we were not looking for trouble, because we thought that we had cleared the section of them on our up-trip, they surprised us with a heavy fire from their carbines. Therefore we were not at the guns, and it took us some time to get their range. Meanwhile they fired another volley or two and then galloped away before we could return the compliment. While they were gone we went ashore and discovered a large amount of provisions in their camp including hams, bacon, etc., to which we very generously helped ourselves. Our loss in this encounter was one man killed, and two or three wounded. We returned to Georgetown, where we lay an anchor for some time.

Later we were ordered to Port Royal, Hilton Head, South Carolina, and were still there on April 14, 1865, when President Lincoln was shot in Ford's Theater by John Wilkes Booth. I was one of the gunners' squad, which fired the so-called "minute guns." These guns were fired at half hour intervals from sunrise to sunset on the day of the funeral as a token of respect for the martyed president. We remained at Port Royal until after the capture of Jefferson Davis, which occurred May 10, 1865, at a place near Irwinville, Georgia. He was brought to Port Royal by way of Savannah and put aboard the "Clyde",

a small transport, and the "Tuscarora" and the "Shenango", were sent as convoys to take him prisoner to Fortress Monroe. The convoys were deemed necessary, as there were two or three rebel gunboats in the vicinity and it was thought that an attempt might be made to rescue him. From Fortress Monroe, the "Shenango" proceeded to Philadelphia dry dock, in accordance with orders received before leaving Port Royal, as she was pretty badly damaged.

While we were in Philadelphia Navy Yard all of us were striving hard to obtain a furlough home. After a time I succeeded in getting one for ten days, and with a shipmate, James O'Brien, I started for dear old Catskill. We took the train in Philadelphia in a place called Kensington Depot. Soon after leaving, the conductor came to us and asked if we had a shipmate on board. We did not know of any, but we went into the next car with him and found an old man-of –wars-man who had served on one of the monitors. His time had expired and he had just been discharged , and paid a large amount of prize money in addition to his wages. His pockets were full of greenbacks, which he was trying very hard to exchange for booze at every stop we made – quite like an old sailor. We took charge of him and put his money, amounting to nearly three thousand dollars, in his sailor handkerchief, which by the way is a piece of black silk about a yard square. This we tied around his waist under his shirt. When we arrived in New York City we took him down to the Fall River boat, bought his ticket and state room, showed him where his money was, and after helping him count it, left him to go to his dear ones, who lived near Boston. I then said good-by to my shipmate, who lived in New York City, and proceeded alone to Catskill. At the time of my enlistment, all the money that I possessed, I had left with John Hardwick, a dear good friend of mine. I stopped to see him and to get part of my money and then started for the wilds of Ulster County, where my people were then living on the west branch of the Neversink River. I could journey by stage from Kingston to a place called Claryville, but from there had to walk over what is called "Wild Cat Hill", seven good miles to my home. AS my family was large, the cupboard was not at all times overstocked, so while in Claryville I bought half a lamb. I h ad to carry it over the "Wild Cat", but proved very acceptable to the home folk. Even now I can see myself tramping through the dense woods, dressed in a full rigged sailor suit, with the lamb swung over my shoulder. Whenever I passed the home of a native, which was not often, the entire family would come out and look me over. With the sailor uniform, and my singular burden I was quite a show for them.

One little incident, which had occurred at the end of that furlough, comes to my mind very vividly. But before relating it, I think it might be advisable to offer a word of explanation in reference to the currency of that time. For a short at the beginning of the Civil War, postage stamps were used for fractional currency. They were followed by shinplasters, that being the popular name given to the issues of paper currency by the national government during the war, and were for amounts from ten to fifty cents. The greenbacks, so called because of the lettering and devices were printed on the backs with green ink, were issued for the larger amounts of money. During the war and for some time after it two dollars and a half in greenbacks to buy a gold dollar. When I left home to rejoin my ship, all of my younger brothers accompanied me as far as Claryville, from which place I went by stage to Kingston. After buying some little token for each of my

sisters and brothers, I had left of my worldly wealth one ten-dollar greenback, which I had to have changed to pay my travelling expenses. At that time we had both the greenback, and shinplaster above mentioned. I received shinplasters ion exchange for the ten-spot. As soon as I got on the road and begin to use my change, I found, much to my dismay, that I had been "salted" with ten dollars in counterfeit shinplasters. As that was all of the money that I had and I was obliged to get back to Philadelphia Navy Yard, I told my story and trusted to luck to be believed. Either my face or my uniform carried me along from place to place and eventually I arrived safely on board the good old ship "Shenango".

Before the repairs to the "Shenango" were completed, a revolution started on the Island of Haiti, in the West Indies. I was among the number drafted to go on the "Bienville" and afterwards transferred to the gunboat "Kansas" under orders to proceed to the scene of the disturbance. The "Kansas" carried four, nine inch guns, four howitzers on the quarterdeck, a "Long Tom" on the forecastle deck and one eleven inch gun amidship, which could be trained on either the port or starboard side. We immediately set out for Cape Haiti and kept on the job until the revolution was settled by the English government's taking and shooting the leaders after the "The Wasp", a small English gunboat, had been sunk by running on a rock near shore, on the Cape Haiti side of the harbor.

We then cruised around the West Indies for some time, arriving at Cape Haiti, August 14, 1865. We left for the Island of St. Thomas, October 2, 1865, reached there the fifth and remained until the twelfth, when we started for Guadaloupe and made that port the fifteenth. We stayed there until the nineteenth, when we moved on to Barbadoes, where we coaled ship, and replenished our water tanks. On the twenty-eighth we left for the Island of St. Lucia, to the westward, and arrived November second. On the fifteenth we hoisted anchor and followed the north coast of South America to Para, Brazil. We arrived there the eighteenth. Leaving on the twenty-seventh, we continued down the northern and eastern coast of Brazil and made Pernambuco on the thirteenth. The same day we left for Bahia, about 450 miles farther south, and arrived December second. From Bahia we went on to Rio de Janeiro, about 800 miles to the south, and made that port December eighth. We remained until the tenth of January, 1866, when we started out to look for the wreck of the "Brooklyn", which was erroneously reported to us as lost. We sighted the Abrobock Islands on the thirteenth, left the next day, and anchored in St. Catherine Harbor the seventeenth. On the twenty-seventh we set out for Montevideo for Stanley Harbor, Falkland Islands.

The trip took just one month and proved an eventful one. Very rough weather almost always prevails in the vicinity of this little group of islands, which is the last near Cape Horn. No exception was made in our favor and we had the misfortune to get into a very severe storm, which lasted three days and three nights. We ran before it about thirty-six hours, by which time the waves came so rapidly and so high that we were breaking over the stern of the ship, and to save her we had to put her about, head on to the waves. This decision was reached after the officers concluded that the ship could not live much longer running before the storm. But in putting her about there was grave danger, for if one of

the huge waves struck her broadside while going about she would be more than likely to go to the bottom. Still as it was our only chance, they tried it. It was a very dark night. All hands were on deck ready to do the little that could be done. As the ship came about, the waves, which were running mountain high, swept over her and carried overboard everything that was not lashed to the decks. The few sails we had set to steady her were all blown away, and we had just our bare masts left. The men and officers saved themselves by climbing in and clinging to the rigging and rattlins. We laid head on for about thirty-six hours longer, when the fury of the storm began to abate. Needless to say, the change made us very happy, for aside from the suspense we had not been able to get our meals or sleep during all of this time.

This storm reminds me of something that may be regarded either as coincidence or as proof in support of the old sailors' belief that no good comes from harming an albatross. Just before the storm overtook us we noticed large numbers of these birds flying over the ocean. Some of the sailors thought it would be great sport to catch some of them, so they threw out hooks and lines baited with pork rinds, and white rags, letting them trail some distance behind the ship. The specie of albatross found in that section was the so-called wandering albatross, which is the largest sea bird known, having a spread of wings of about twelve feet. It is noted for its power of flight, sailing for hours, and in any direction with reference to the wind, without visible movement of their wings. It occasionally follows vessels for days at a time, on the lookout for any refuse that may be thrown overboard, since it does not dive and all its food is gathered from the surface of the sea. The bird is mostly white with dark markings on the upper parts, flesh colored feet, with a yellow bill. Because it almost the only visible inhabitant of the wastes of the southern oceans, sailors usually regard it with a superstitious affection. The albatross literally lives, eats and sleeps on the waves, as it goes to land only to breed. It is a very voracious bird, so it was not long before we saw a number of them swooping down and grabbing the bait, whereupon the sailors would haul them aboard. They had caught three, which were lying on the deck, before the officers discovered what they were doing. They immediately ordered the men to throw the albatross overboard. Owing to the great spread of their wings they were practically helpless on the deck as they require the waves or a height from which to start their flight. The sailors complied with the letter of the order, but before doing so they tied the three together by their legs. This I do not believe they would have done had they stopped to think what the result would be. The albatross could not fly unless they could spread their wings, and they were tied too closely to admit of that. But even if it had been possible all three would have been obliged to fly at the same instant and in the same direction. Consequently, being deprived of the full use of their wings, the only thing that they could do was to float upon the waves. After the storm was over and the ocean fairly calm, again we noticed something white afloat. Supposing that it was part of a shipwreck occasioned by the storm, we lowered a boat to investigate. As we drew nearer, much to our surprise, we found it to be our three albatross, still tied together but alive, in spite of the fact that they had drifted hundreds of miles in the storm. They were cut apart and the old sailors said: "I told you so; it is always bad luck to harm an albatross." During the remainder of the trip we had no more storms. This incident accords well with the story "The Ancient Mariner", but as I said before, you may explain it upon either theory you choose.

But our joy because of the passing of the storm was of short duration, for we discovered that he coal in our bunkers had become ignited from spontaneous combustion or some unknown cause. The coal bunkers were next to the magazines, where all of our powder, shot, and shell were kept, and having no way of telling how long the coal had been burning, or in just which part of the bunkers it was, it is unnecessary to say that we were pretty well frightened. We immediately manned the pumps and flooded the bunkers as fast as we could, but it was slow and uncertain work. When the water first reached the coal it seemed to burn all the more fiercely, until it was entirely flooded. After awhile the fire apparently was out and we were congratulating ourselves that at last we could have some sleep and our regular meals, when it again broke out and we had another fight for life for a day and a night, at the end of which time we succeeded in again flooding the bunkers and finally extinguished the fire.

On this same voyage we saw a great many whales and passed a number of whaling vessels whose crews were catching the whales, cutting them up and trying out the oil.

The Falkland Islands, to which we were bound, are owned and kept by England as a coaling station for ships to stop and coal up before going around the horn. Some of the old pensioned soldiers and sailors live there with their families, and are well cared for by the government. The climate is very different from that of Greene County. It is very cold and the seasons are reversed, when we have summer they have winter. Stanley Harbor abounded in wild geese and ducks, which were so tame we had no trouble to get all that we needed for our ship's crew. We also caught many black bass, which were very plentiful there. Often they would weigh from forty to sixty pounds. Needless tosay while in this port we lived like Nabobs – much different from the way we usually fared.

The rations that we used to get in the Navy during the Civil War were neither varied nor bountiful, yet we seemed to thrive upon them and remained well. For breakfast we were given hardtack and very poor coffee without either milk or sugar. For our dinners on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, we had pork and bean soup. On Tuesdays and Fridays we received canned meat, or in sailor parlance, "soup and bully", because the meat was generally pretty ripe when we got it. For dinner on Thursdays and Sundays we had salt beef, or as sailors called it "salt horse." For supper we always had hardtack and a beverage called tea, by courtesy, with pickles added two or three times a week as kind of a luxury. The daily allowance per man was one pound of such food exclusive of fourteen ounces of hardtack. Often when on shore leave we would chip in, as we termed it, and buy a few things to help out, such as condensed milk, sardines, etc. Before leaving Rio de Janeiro, I remember my chum and I bought fifty pounds of Indian meal to make into what we called "mush," to eat on our way home. But before we had been at sea very long, it became damp and the first thing we knew worms had gotten into it, and they were great big fat fellows too. We had about six thousand miles to go in a sailing vessel, with no prospect of getting anything else to take the place of our meal, so we did not feel like throwing it away. Whenever we wanted to make mush we would take a small pan and sieve the meal through our fingers until we got rid if the worms, and then we proceeded to cook it. If we were fortunate enough to get a little molasses to eat on it we certainly

thought we had a feast. We did not waste a bit of that meal, and it was all gone before we arrived home. We had a similar experience on our trip to the Falkland Islands. We had used up our hardtack so had to lay in a store of pilot biscuits. Before long the worms had appropriated them as a place of abode and we found it somewhat more difficult to pick them out of the biscuits. But we did accomplish it by first roasting them in the ships galley.

The pleasure of our sojourn in Stanley Harbor, which continued from about the twenty first of March until the fifth of April 1866, was marred by only one event. One of our crew was taken ill and died. We were obliged to bury him in a little churchyard on shore, during a severe thunderstorm; and it seemed sad indeed to leave him among strangers several thousand miles away from his home and loved ones.

The nineteenth day of April, 1866, we were back in Montevideo. May twenty fourth we started up the Rio de la Plata and anchored in Buenos Ayres the thirtieth, where we stayed until the tenth of July, when we proceeded up the river to Colonia, stopping there until the twelfth, and returned to Montevideo the sixteenth. On August eighth we went to Maldonado. We left there the fourteenth of September for Buenos Ayres with some divers to raise the wreck of the American steamer "Oriental," which had been sunk by running on her own anchor in a very severe gale. Leaving Buenos Ayres September eighteenth, we made Montevideo the twentieth. October twelfth we started again for Buenos Ayres, arrived the following day and lay there until December fourteenth. Then we again hoisted anchor and went back to Colonia, where we practiced target shooting, but had to return to Montevideo on the sixteenth because we heard that a bark had run ashore on what is known as the English Banks. We tried to get her off and we succeeded in time to spend our Christmas in Montevideo, getting back there December the twenty first.

While the "Kansas" lay at anchor in the Rio de la Plata I came very near loosing all my savings. At this time they had abolished serving out grog and gave us its equivalent in money, which amounted to five dollars for three months. We also received liberty money. That is, whenever the officers gave the men permission to go ashore, if requested, money would be advanced from their allowance, at the rate of a sovereign for twenty four hours shore leave or two sovereigns for double that time. And there was ration money. Each mess comprised about twenty men, and the cook of the mess was given in addition to his rations their value in money, which, as I recollect, was about fifteen dollars a month. I had been berth deck cook for about two years and had accumulated of grog money, liberty money, and ration money, something like three or four hundred dollars in English sovereigns and Brazilian milreis, that being the money in use in Brazil and South America at that time. It perhaps is not necessary to state that the average sailor did not save his money, except from port to port. But as I had a mother, father, brothers and sisters, I felt I ought to save every cent I possibly could. So I had a canvas belt made, with false pockets in it, that would buckle around my waist under all of my clothes, which as a matter of fact, were not very numerous. All my worldly wealth was in this belt. When I did not wear it, I would change it from place to place among my belongings, for we had many men on board who would rob or even murder in order to

obtain money. Therefore, it was almost as difficult to keep one's money as to save it. The mattress used with the hammock furnished to each man had a covering quite like a pillow case, one end was sewed up and the other left open, a string being fastened to each side of the open end with which to tie it together. One day when I hid my money belt in my hammock between the mattress and the covering, the order was given to air hammocks. This we had to do about once a month, but we never knew just when. Upon receiving the order we wee allowed but a very few minutes in which to get our hammocks out of the netting where they were stored during the day, open them, and throw them over the lines which were usually run from the fore yardarm to the main yardarm. On this particular occasion I did not remember about my money belt until the line was being hoisted. It is unnecessary to say at that time it made a vast difference to me in which end of the mattress covering my money happened to be. The Rio de la Plata was very wide at that point and also very rough, so our ship was rolling badly and I could just imagine my gold and silver dropping into the old ocean, lost to me forever. The lines were always left up until near night, so throughout the day every chance I got I watched as near as I could the place on the line where my hammock was. When the order was given to lower the lines I was right on the job, and after feeling and finding that I still had my money belt, I certainly felt very much relieved and happy. This same money afterwards was used to purchase land and build a home for my parents.

After Christmas our ship the "Kansas," was scheduled to go to the southern coast of Africa, so those whose time had expired were transferred to the man-of-war "Brooklyn," which was already in harbor. We were to be sent home on the first homeward bound vessel that belonged to the United States Navy. This chanced to be a full rigged sailing ship named the "Onward." She was used as a store ship and had been cruising around the Pacific Ocean, delivering stores to different ships, also picking up their invalids. Early in February we were sent aboard this ship and a few of us had to work her home. This was not an easy job as most of us had previously been on vessels that depended largely on steam, with sails as an extra to carry them along. But as we were going home we were willing to work hard, for each mile had brought us that much nearer.

We left Montevideo February 7, 1867, and upon our arrival in Rio de Janeiro were given twenty-four hours liberty, to go ashore. We left there March second and shortly thereafter discovered that the largest water tank on the ship had sprung a leak and was empty. We were at once put on short allowance, half a pint a day to each man. We were near the Equator and the temperature was very high, so it was a decided hardship. On a sailing vessel we surely appreciated the value of water because sometimes we had to lie for days without enough wind to fill our sails and a sailing vessel without the wind is helpless is as helpless as an infant without its mother. It took us fifteen days to make the port of Pernambuco, where we could replenish our water tanks, but as soon as we were near enough our officers signalled to send their our water lighters. Suffice it to say, that water certainly tasted good. We filled our water tanks on the seventeenth, and left on the twentieth. On the twenty-fourth we crossed the equator and arrived in the Brooklyn Navy Yard April 13, 1867. Then we were sent aboard the old "Vermont," on which I had started two years and three months before, were paid off and discharged.

I at once started to see my dear mother and the home folk who had been waiting for me many days. Once again, after two long years, I came marching up the same Neversink Valley, this time with a man-of-warsman uniform, a sailor's clothes bag and a hammock. I surely felt myself quite the hero. My mother had been watching and waiting for many long months, telling all her friends for miles around that she was expecting me, so when I did come marching in the welcome I received from the good kind people made me feel it was worth while having undergone some hardships. Those good friends and neighbors got up parties and I was the hero on every occasion. As I left before they knew me too well, I still have a warm welcome whenever I go over there, and this I try to do at least once each year.

After spending a short time home visiting, I bought fifty acres of land right in the forest in the wilds of Ulster County, had a part of it cleared, had lumber sawed, and erected a house for my parents, brothers and sisters. I think that his was the first house in this valley along the west branch of the Neversink that had a brick chimney and plastered rooms, as the buildings of that time were either log or what were called slab houses. Because I had brought brick and plastering materials all the way from the City of Kingston, I was thought to be a wealthy man, but the truth of the matter was that when I had paid for the land and completed the house and a log barn, I was "broke" and had to start all over again.

That first winter I was home, I bought a team and went over in the wilds of Ulster and Sullivan Counties to haul bark from the woods to the tanneries, which at that time were doing a large business in that section of the country. My experience in teaming, however, began and ended in that winter, for it was not a successful venture. In those days many of the trees cut down were left in the woods, only the bark being taken. Then anyone had the right to saw the trees so left into logs. The hemlock logs were hauled to what we called shingle shops and were split and shaved into shingles. I hired two or three men for this work. Then I drew the shingles to different sections of the country and sold them. This business also proved a failure. I had started out with a team, harness, wagon, and about two hundred dollars. When I went out of the valley in early spring I had left just the horse I rode. It was a lesson well learned and well paid for.

During that same winter of 1868-1869, I took the time from trying to earn an honest dollar to go deer hunting two or three times. Fifty years ago deer were very plentiful. I started out one Friday morning with my dog and one of the men who was making shingles for me, Benjamin Hallenbeck. It was then the custom to use dogs to run the deer from cover. WE went over the mountain to a place called Beaver Kill, where there were plenty of spruce and balsam trees, which made it a good wintering place for the deer. The snow was deep, with the crust heavy enough to hold a man with snow shoes on, but as we were novices we found walking on them very tiresome, to say the least. The deer however, would break through when running and therefore would soon become exhausted. The first day we succeeded in getting a fine doe just about dark. WE made a shelter for ourselves out of the spruce and balsam boughs and built a fire, over which we roasted for our supper some steak cut from its hindquarters. Although it was very cold we spent the night in the woods. The next morning we started out again. I had an old

and uncertain gun and the very first time I got a shot, the nipple on which the cap was placed blew out, rendering the gun useless. We knew from the barking of the dog that we were near our game so we moved along as fast as we could, when the straps on my companion's snowshoes gave way and he had to stop to repair them. I went on alone trying as best I could to follow the dog. After walking for some time I surmised from the dog's continuous barking that the deer had come to a stop. Finally I saw him resting on top of a high bank on the opposite side of the Beaver Kill, which at that point for the greater part of the year is merely a small brook. Fearing the deer might escape before my companion could rejoin me, I crossed the stream very cautiously on an old hemlock log, and as my gun was useless, I pulled a knot from the log for a weapon of defense and offense. By the time I reached the other side I was pretty tired and after I climbed the bank with my snowshoes, I was much more so. The dog was still barking and waiting for help. As soon as I came within range I cried out, "Sic him!" That was all the encouragement needed. I was then near enough to get my hemlock knot in play and while the deer, which was a very large buck, was almost stamping the life out of the dog, I rapped him good and hard with my primitive though effective weapon, all the time continuing to yell, "Sic him!" At the first the rap I gave the deer he wheeled from his attack on the dog and struck me with his forefeet. Over I went in the deep snow, the deer still pounding me with his feet. I tried as best I could to protect my face and kept calling the dog, when the deer, evidently thinking it a good time to escape, made a leap for the stream but landed on the bank instead and sank in the snow at least half way up his sides. I did not want to loose him after all my trouble so I made as good speed as I could, which was not much, tumbled and rolled down the bank, and before the deer could get on his feet, I jumped on his back, and grabbed him around the neck. It then dawned on me that if he ever got me under his feet again, it would be the end of me, as I did not have much strength left. So before he could struggle to his feet, I made a supreme effort and succeeded in drawing from my pocket my old dull jack knife and cut his throat. By the time he stopped floundering, I too was exhausted.

This hunt resulted in our killing four deer. The next problem was to get them home. We had to drag them one at a time, up the mountains and through the valleys, for that section stretches out in mountains and valleys, one after the other. The crust on the east side of the mountains would usually hold one, so whenever we reached the top, we would each sit on one deer, using him as a sled, and tow the second one. We would go sliding down to the next valley at a great rate, the only trouble being to steer clear of the trees, but then we would have a long pull through the valley, and up the next mountain. We eventually reached home with the four deer, and the neighbors as well as the home folk had venison for a long time.

The following spring before I left home, I had many enjoyable fishing trips. At that time fishing was free in our valley and the streams were full of brook trout. Many a time have I fished in the west branch of the Neversink and in Biscuit Brook, which empties into it, and never went home empty handed. No elaborate fishing tackle was needed, but with a pole cut along the stream, a common line, and a few worms, one could catch a string of speckled beauties at almost any time. But when I could not spare the time to go fishing myself I could usually find the proverbial small barefoot boy, wearing a hickory

shirt and a pair of blue overalls, which more often than not were held up with one suspender, who would gladly exchange his catch for e ten or twenty five cent piece. For so small a sum one could gain the reputation of being a great fisherman. Now, after fifty years, those streams are well stocked but are owned by two or three parties and are protected by creek watchers. Fortunately, I have a good friend who owns about seven miles of the main stream and very kindly gives myself, and my friends the privilege to fish there. So every summer I try to spend at least one or two weeks in the old valley and catch all the fish I want.

But the wild pigeons have gone with the passing of the years. Every spring it was a beautiful but no unusual sight to see these birds flocking to our valley in such numbers as to sometimes darken the heavens. In a strip of wood at least a mile long and about a third of a mile wide the pigeons would build their nests and rear their young. I saw them come in the spring of 1868, just before I left home, and that is the last time they ever came. They have now disappeared altogether and no one is able to tell what has become of them.

Later that spring I came to Catskill and started to work for Messrs. L.S. & William Smith at the masons trade. In 1870 having worked for them for about two years, I started in business as a contractor and builder with a man named William Ruland. Our first job was the erection of the brick engine house for what was Hose Company No. 4, but now is Osborne Hose Company No. 2. The building stood on Bridge Street just above what was then the Oyster Bay House. It was torn down to make room for the present Court House. During the eleven years of our business relations we erected a large number of buildings and also made brick for three years on what is now the upper Washburn yard.

In 1881, we dissolved partnership and I continued the building business alone. Among the many structures I have since erected are: In Palenville, The Memorial School; in Catskill, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, the Y.M.C.A. building, the Armory, the two new school buildings-one on Thompson Street (Irving School), and the other in West Catskill (Grandview School)- the parochial residence and St. Patrick's Academy for the Catholic Church, the Public Library, the No.1 and the No. 5 Engine house, also numerous other buildings.

From the time I came here, a country boy thirteen years of age, with all of my wordly goods tied up in a bandanna handkerchief, and with a "God Bless you" from my dear old mother, I have always found Catskillians good people among whom to live, always ready to help anyone who tried to help himself.

On January 4, 1871, I was married to Hannah M. Dederick, daughter of Jacob H. Dederick and Caroline Overbaugh. Mrs. Holdridge died April 7, 1905. WE had five children, three boys and two girls. The oldest child Frank, died at the age of thirteen. Our next oldest son, Harry, was run over and killed by the cars January 16, 1910. He had married Anna May Richardson, September 6, 1905, and they had one son, George Frederick. Three of our children are living: Walter H., Florence and May. July 6, 1904, Walter H., married Adeline Craigie, of Catskill, and he is practicing medicine in New

York City. They have one son, Walter Henry Jr. October 11, 1911, Florence married Frank H. Cooke. They are now living in Catskill, and have one child, Marie Holdridge. May is still at the old home.

On July 1, 1908, I was married to Marie Burger, daughter of Arnold Burger and Elizabeth Slater.

I was a member of the Catskill Fire Department from 1871 to 1888, belonging to Protection Engine Company No. 1, which was in West Catskill, now Wiley Hose Company. I was elected Chief for one or two years. At that time we had the old hand engines, the men having to man the brakes on each side of the machine. After working a short time we were always ready and very anxious for the coffee and sandwiches, which the good people would provide for us. No. 1 Engine was the banner engine and in trials we usually came off the victors. After the installation of our water works, this engine was sold to the village of Cairo, where it is still in use.

On the Democratic ticket I was elected Collector of the Town of Catskill for a term of two years, 1872-1873. I also served the Village of Catskill as Trustee for a three year term, 1894-1896, holding the office of President of the Board the last year of my term. In 1897, I was elected Sheriff of Greene County for a term of three years, 1891-1900.

I was elected a Trustee of the Methodist Episcopal Church of this village September 26, 1892, and am still serving in the same capacity in this year of our Lord nineteen hundred and fifteen.

I have omitted from my reminiscences many incidents, which might be of interest to others, but I wished more particularly to relate in detail only that which would show the customs and conditions of the life of fifty years ago and which differed greatly from the life of today. The country now has developed to such an extent that it will be impossible for anyone to be afforded any of the experiences I have enumerated. Modern civilization has advanced to such a degree, that the same hardships cannot exist. We sometimes regret that the old time pleasures have gone as well. But with each generation comes the duties and pleasures best suited to conditions of the present, and much is to be learned through the experiences recorded in the history of the past.