

"My" Nephew, William Talmadge Stone

by Lynne Belluscio

Many years ago, when Rochester (and LeRoy) celebrated its Sesquicentennial, the Landmark Society of Western New York offered a "first person" glimpse of the Orringh Stone family that settled on the East side of the Genesee River, at what is now the Stone-Tolan Museum on East Avenue. I played Orringh Stone's wife, Betsy. Visitors entered the house and met some of the earliest settlers of Rochester.

I was busy cooking dinner over the open hearth in the kitchen because Hamlet Scratom and his family had just arrived, wet and weary from their trek from Connecticut. Hamlet's wife was bringing in all the wet bedding to spread out near the fire to dry, and my husband and Hamlet were having a drink in the tavern and talking about the impending problems with the British on the frontier near Niagara, (that would eventually erupt in war.)

The year was 1812 and the Scratoms would move further west and live in the shanty built by Orringh's brother Enos Stone, near the Genesee River. The conversations that night in 1812 were about traveling to the frontier, the idea of building a bridge over the Genesee River and the vicissitudes of living on the frontier.

We talked about the conditions in Canandaigua and Ge-

neva, where settlers bought nails and window glass - - and where Enos Stone would purchase a slave. (Slavery was still legal in New York until 1827.) So it was a surprise to discover, as Emma DeLooze and I sorted through the Elinor Townsend collection of the Keeney family papers, that Enos Stone's grandson ("my" great nephew) taught at the old Stone School on West Main Road in LeRoy. Calvin Keeney (inventor of the stringless bean) attended the Stone School and on an undated newspaper clipping noted that William Talmadge Stone was his teacher.

In our school clipping file I found an article from June 1924, that Calvin had received a letter from his old teacher and although Mr. Stone was 85 years old on January 5th, he was well and active. "He writes with a beautiful hand but is also adept at producing pen and ink sketches." William Stone's father, James, who is con-

sidered the first child born on the site of Rochester, had moved west and cleared land on what is now known as Stone Road in Greece. William was born on the family farm on January 5th, 1839. I have not discovered yet why William came to LeRoy, but after teaching for a while, he returned to the family farm and continued farming.

William Stone's son, Walter King Stone was a well-known artist and illustrator and an assistant professor of art at the College of Architecture at Cornell University. In the Elinor Townsend collection is a small postcard illustrated and written by William Stone to his former student Calvin Keeney in 1924. The former teacher and a few of his pupils were invited to Calvin Keeney's birthday on February 6 (year unknown). They all posed on the front steps of the Keeney home on West Main Street.



The Stone School House 2 miles west of Le Roy Village, copied from a photo presented to Mr. C.N. Keeney by Perey Decker, August 16, 1927.



Art of William Stone.



Stone School House Reunion - left to right - Calvin Noyes Keeney host on February 6th - his birthday. John Parsons Samson, guest; William Talmadge Stone, teacher; Miss Libbie Lyman, pupil.

It was written of William Stone that "his memory of Rochester covers changes which include the operation of the first horse-cars and the advent of the gasoline motor bus. He can recall an early Rochester in which skyscrapers were undreamed of and streets were dimly lighted by oil lamps. But his mind is not of the type that dwells in the past and he is much more interested in the possibilities of the next ten years in invention and development than he is in recalling what is already an accomplished fact." "My nephew" William Stone died in 1930 at the age of 91.