

[Southworth, Tracy P.]

TRACY P. SOUTHWORTH OF PIONEER FAMILY CANTON LOSES ONE OF ITS MOST LOYAL AND KINDEST CITIZENS The Grandson of the Man Who Originally Surveyed and Named the Town of Canton

Tracy P. Southworth, a veteran of Canton's postal service, and the grandson of one of the original surveyors of this town, died at his home on Park street Thursday morning following an illness which had extended since last August, but which had not confined him to his home until five weeks ago. Funeral services, which were private, were held from the residence Saturday afternoon with his pastor, Rev. Emerson H. Lalone, of the Universalist church officiating. In Evergreen cemetery, within sight of and adjacent to the farm where he was born and where his grandfather, Festus Tracy, staked out the first land taken over in this town, his body will rest.

The honorary bearers at the funeral were: Gaylon G. Griswold, J. Fred Hammond, Benjamin Kip, Williston Manley, Dr. H. H. Tyler, and J. Gilbert Harper. The bearers were: Homer Lidell, Ward J. Hamilton, Earl Mead, Harry Bell, Carl M. Witherbee and Van C. Whittemore.

Of Tracy Southworth many fine things can be said, for he was one of the very best. Devoted to his family[,] the always thoughtful neighbor, a man who lived an honorable and a clean life, he devoted to each and every task he assumed with conscientious and faithful ability. For twenty-six years he served the people of this village and town in the postal service, first as a rural free delivery carrier, then as one of the first village carriers and finally as general clerk at the postoffice, and in each capacity he won the esteem and affection of all with whom he came in contact.

In the matter of conservation of both forest and stream and game therein he had done much in this section, quietly and unostentatiously to be sure, but his was a valuable and lasting contribution which will long be remembered, for he was the devotee of outdoor living in its finest sense.

Tracy Southworth came of original Canton pioneer stock. He was born November 11, 1864, out on the farm on the Pierrepont road where his maternal grandfather, Festus Tracy, had taken up land in 1799, the first land to be taken up in this township. His parents were Henry and Sylvia Tracy Southworth, and from both sides his ancestry is traceable back to the early days in this town. Of this most interesting historical side of his geneology [sic] more will be given later in this article.

Like his brother, Henry, and his four sisters, Mary, Minnie, Mattie and Libby, he grew up on the farm, which was one of the finest in the town and which today is the property of the Kennedy Brothers. On February 27, 1889, he married Miss Nellie M. Mead, at Brick Chapel.

By choice, not desiring to follow farming, they had moved to the village and from 1894 to 1903 Mr. Southworth was the trusted steward of the University buildings. On July 1, 1903, he entered the postal service. The rural free

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delivery routes had been established here on September 1, 1901, Tyler Martin and Floyd Sherwin being the first carriers, Floyd to serve only a short time and then to be succeeded by his father, the late Webster Sherwin. In 1903 three more carriers were added, Tracy Southworth, Robert Johnston and Sumner Whitney.

Those were pioneer days in the service. With their familiar R.P.D. cart and by horses these five men served the rural patrons.

In 1909 Mr. Southworth was transferred from the rural route to village carrier, and the rural patrons expressed their regret upon losing him in a most fitting manner. From 1909 to 1919 he continued as village carrier. Then he became general clerk at the postoffice. Always courteous, understanding and kindly, considerate in all things, and to all people, this community recognized in him a public servant of the finest type, not only dependable but loyal to his every task. In 1929, upon reaching the regular retirement period Mr. Southworth became one of Uncle Sam's honorary postal employees and had since found joy in living, for to him his home and his family were his chief delight. There he read the best literature and was posted on all current topics of the day.

A sportsman in the truest and finest sense, he had for twenty-two years been a member of the Stillwater Club and none of its members obtained more genuine pleasure at the preserve than did he. He had for many years been a director in the Club's management. As a charter member and one of the organizers of the Canton Fish and Game club, he had done much in his quiet way in the interest of conservation through the preservation and propagation of the wild life in field and stream in this section. He was also a member of the Canton Gun Club.

He is survived by his widow, their daughter, Miss Lottie Southworth, who for many years has been a member of the faculty at the New York State School, and his sister, Miss Mattie, who is the only surviving member of Henry Southworth's family.

About the Tracy and Southworth families one finds as interesting local history as in any families now living here. Back in the early days of the county the Rev. Constant Southworth brought his family to Brick Chapel. It was there in 1827 that Henry Southworth was born. When Henry was eight years of age the family moved away, but he remained at Brick Chapel. Those were the days when such things were common, and Henry grew up with the Farwells and Leonards. In later life he married Sylvia Tracy, and here another very interesting phase of Canton history comes into this family story.

Sylvia Tracy Southworth was the daughter of Festus Tracy. To turn back to Canton's history one finds the name of Festus Tracy on the very first page. It was he, with a party of other surveyors, who laid out the original ten towns of this county and later ran the original lines of this town when it was separated

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off from Lisbon. Amos Lay was in charge of that party of surveyors, and in the number were Festus Tracy and his brother, Septimus, both Vermonters.

This was back in 1799 and our county histories state that in the fall of that year Festus Tracy took over a tract of land in this township, the same tract on which later the old Southworth farm stood, a farm which remained in the Tracy and Southworth families a period of 118 years.

Festus Tracy probably did not immediately settle on this land, for as Hough's history states, Daniel Harrington is credited with being the first settler, he having taken over the land and broken ground on what became in later years the fair ground, disposed of this to Stillman Foote in 1800. Mr. Foote is the great grandfather of Mrs. Kenneth O. Bates, whose husband is now a member of the faculty at St. Lawrence University.

But Stillman Foote did not come to Canton until 1800, and Festus Tracy was here in 1799, coming as he did with the other surveyors up the Oswegatchie by boat and thence across through Indian Creek to what was to become Canton.

Thus the daughter of the man who first surveyed this town, and gave to it its present name, married Henry Southworth, the son of one of the first preachers at Brick Chapel which in turn was the first church erected in this county. Following his marriage to Sylvia Tracy, and as was the custom in those days, Henry purchased from the Tracy tract what was to become the Southworth farm, where he lived into a fine old age, and where he and his wife reared their family.

There are many who will recall Henry the father, their son Henry, the late husband of Mrs. Jennie Southworth who with her daughters, Miss Irene and Eva, reside on Crescent street; of the daughters, Mary, who married Edwin Pierce, and Minnie, who married Charles Ainsworth, and Libby, all of whom have passed away, and the remaining daughter, Miss Mattie, known and beloved by many in this community for so long.

Thus have the years written this delightful history of these first families of Canton township, a history of which there is none more absorbing or worthwhile...

From such people Tracy Southworth came. Of this fine history he spoke modestly. To life he gave the best and he was worthy of his people. No better friend ever lived.

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