

SALT POINTERS WERE VICTORS

MANY FIGHTS WITH FOUR CORNERS BOYS

INCIDENTS OF EARLY DAYS

RELATED BY NELSON P. PHILLIPS, ONE OF THE OLD SETTLERS

FORMERLY A POLICE OFFICER, HE DETAILS A CHASE TO KANKAKEE AFTER HIS MAN –
A METHOD OF SETTling CAUCUS STRIFE BY RESORT OF FORCE OF FISTS

The Sunday Herald, Syracuse, NY, Sunday, February 20, 1898

In the First ward there are probably a half dozen Salt Pointers who remember well the fays when there was a big stretch Of woods separating Salt point from the Four Corners, and still another stretch between there and Onondaga Hollow. Let is [*sic*] be explained that the Four Corners were the crossing of Genesee street with Salina street. There is always a twinkle in the eye when one of the settlers who has passed four score falls into a reminiscent mood and recalls the days of his boyhood. Somebody said that the old people may not be able to tell what happened yesterday or last week, but they always can minutely recollect what happened in '25 when they were young. The other day, last week, a reporter for the Sunday Herald happened to call at No. 1106 Carbon street on Nelson Phillips, whose years number nearly 85, whose memory is excellent and who has lived around Salt Point and the first ward nearly all his years. As he began to look back to the early days his face lighted up and he conversed very entertainingly. This is substantially what he said:

“I recollect the old red mill, where the High school is, well. When I was still very young my brother and I took a baby wagon and we started out with a bushel of corn to get it

ground. I pushed the wagon and he pulled it. When we got to the mill the miller put it in the hopper. He then took a cup and took out some corn. I thought he was stealing it until I learned that that was the way he took his pay, for money wasn't so plenty in those days.

“Over where the M.E. church stood, William Barnes had a lumber yard in the woods. The first year after the church was built they laid down boards (illegible) and the people sat on them until the seats were finally put in. A block from here they had a burying ground, and from it was a solid woods down to the Four corners, with a road cut through. The State road came in where Center street is now and then ran straight down to the Hollow. You know where they had a general training day once a year. People came from all over the county and drilled. One day, when I was still young, we boys saw the men get on their horses and start for the training ground. Then we put after them and followed all the way. While there I saw a fellow killed and it always made me think of a little bantam rooster jumping onto a big one. There was a little fellow, a clerk in a drug store here, and he had some argument with a big fellow. While I was looking at them the little fellow

jumped up and hit him in the head with his fist. The fellow fell right over dead. He was the father of 'Ed' Wright, who used to keep the hotel near the old Central station. Of course the clerk felt very bad over it, but they arrested him and the thing ran along until he was acquitted because it was an accident, don't you see?

"About the times here? Well, my father was a blacksmith, and when I was 3 or 4 years old he built a house that stands yet in Salina street, near the lower end of Kearney's brewery. He had a man named 'Sam' Miller working for him, and I remember going out to call him for breakfast. I could just look onto the table and I went out and said, 'Come in to breakfast. We've got twelve eggs cooked.' We had no sidewalks in those days, only planks thrown down for you to get along as best you could.

RILEY WAS SHARP

"Down by the hoist bridge, up here, there was an old tavern standing. There was an old fellow named Riley, who was sexton of the burying (g)round. He had a large salt block, and in those days six or eight kettles were considered large. One day his kettle cracked and one had to go clear to Onondaga Hollow to get iron to gripe the kettle. Riley was a cute Irishman. He went and got his bar of iron and put it on his shoulder and started back. When he was coming through the woods he heard a wagon coming after him and he kept watch on it, and the men in the wagon watched him. When they got almost up to him he dropped the iron and ran into the woods. They stopped, and thinking that he stole the iron, one started and ran after him. He caught

Riley and brought him back to the wagon. They bound him and tossed him into the wagon and loading the iron in handed him up to the tavern. They went inside and said to the tavern keeper that they had a fellow out there that stole the iron. He came out and seeing that it was old Riley said: 'You better get rid of him as quick as you can.' So they unbound him and told him to get out. But he was sharp and he said: 'You don't tie me up and toss me in like a hog without having to settle.' Then he asked them \$25 and they finally give him \$15, and beside(s), he had the ride and got his iron to the place he wanted it for nothing.

"I remember when the first frame building that they ever put salt in was put up. It was the Federal works, just beyond the place where the hoist bridge is. When they were putting it up I was the only boy there and they had a big pail of New England rum. After every bent was raised they all took a drink and then gave me some. Pretty soon I decided I wanted to go home, but I couldn't walk up that hill to save me, and they had to carry me home. Then I concluded never to drink another drop and I haven't. When the canal was first built it stopped right at the hoist bridge, and all the (illegible) were along the bank. There was a big basin for the boats to turn around in. There wasn't more than four feet of water in it.

"Then we used to test whether the Salt Point or the Four Corners boys were the smartest. Every New Years we used to go down there and have it out. It was a free for all fight, and we were about evenly divided. When it started it never let up until one side was whipped and we always whipped 'em. It

seems as though there was always a kind of strife and that's the way we decided which was the smartest.

MILK PEDDLERS WERE "SCRAPPERS"

"You know when the milk association was first started every night the peddlers used to get out and see which was the best man. There was one little fellow named 'Fred' Rawl, who came in from the country and he could throw them all just as fast as they came along. He has been in the gymnasium and he could take hold with one hand and lift himself so that his chin was up even with his hand.

"The Court House stood about opposite from where Turn Hall is. We used to hold our town meetings there and have our caucuses, and one time when there were two parties a big Irishman wanted to vote and there was so much trouble that they went outside to settle it.

"The Irishman was about 25 years old and big and strapping. There were as many as a half dozen on the ground at a time when he got to work. His arms worked just like pistons and he knocked one with his elbow and another with his fist and both arms were going at once. The Salt Point boys were anxious to get at him and I stood on the Court House steps watching it all. One fellow named (illegible) joined with his brother to get at the Irishman. He couldn't for the Irishman just shoved out his elbow and caught him under the chain and he fell. When I asked him how he liked it, he said: 'Well, I was on the popular side, anyway.' You see there were more knocked down than standing.

EXPERIENCE ON POLICE FORCE

"I was on the police force when there were only eight officers – I was killed twice, at least they said I was. I started out one night to look for a brick-maker who was wanted for some cause. There was another man in the wagon and we drove around until we came by West street and there was a big man, who was drunk, was resisting a saloonkeeper who was trying to put him out. I stopped and went and grabbed the man and was going to put him in the dropped. I was up again and grabbed him and then some women around there began to bite at my hands so that they were sore for more than a year from the poisoning. I told the other man to go get my handcuffs out, but he couldn't put them on and we had to let the man go. I said that we couldn't do that and I went over to the police office and the eight of us, besides the Justice of the Peace started out, I in the lead. When we saw the men I suddenly dropped back and I saw stars, all kinds. They put me on a stretcher and carried me to the doctor's and he bled me and they put ice on my head. When I came to I was wringing wet and bleeding. I pulled through all right in a little more than a month. Then I drove out to Cicero Corners and one man said: 'I'd believe that was Nelson Phillips if he wasn't dead.' I listened and heard what I could and found they thought I was dead.

"I kept track of the man that struck me and bye and bye I learned that he was in Kankakee, Ill. I got a requisition and started out there. I asked the conductor on the train where I could find a Justice of the peace and he told me to follow the Postmaster, as he was the Justice of the Peace. I did, and went

into the office, I found that he was a Pennsylvania Dutchman, and he gave me a warrant all right, and said: 'I'll take you to the house, but I don't want to get mixed up in it.' A Constable went along. You see this man had gone out there and got a job as section foreman and taken along a lot of Salt pointers. We got to the house and I gave one revolver to the Constable and kept another. The Constable went to the door and the man I wanted answered. He told him to go right down to the railroad station as they wanted him in a hurry. He went back to get his clothes and the Constable whispered that the man was loading a rifle. I said: 'Come on,' and we made a break right upstairs and caught him just as he was putting a ball in

the rifle. I put the irons on him and grabbed the rifle. The Salt Pointers were upstairs, as they were boarding with him. He hollered: 'Come down quick; Phillips is here.' They came tumbling down, but I got out with the rifle and the man and they didn't dare to follow. When I got to the tavern I put fetters on my man and we kept him there all night, as there was not lockup in the place. The next morning I left him temporarily in charge of the Constable and went out. When I got back, the Salt Pointers had taken him away from the Constable. I walked up to them and ordered them to step away twenty feet. They didn't want to, but I said: 'I'm boss of this town to-day,' and they had to fall back and I took my man to the city."
