

People of Importance – The Second Hundred Years

Henry Hudson Barton

Henry Hudson Barton was born in England in 1830 to Daniel and Hannah Barton. He lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where he died March 20, 1905.

In 1878, Henry Hudson Barton, a mineralogist from Philadelphia, successfully processed garnet ore from Gore Mountain into an industrial abrasive. Garnet mining picked up the sagging economic conditions, providing employment and keeping families in the town who otherwise would have left for greener pastures.

Although there are garnets scattered around various locations in the Adirondack region (notably at Humphrey Mountain, near Chimney Mountain, at the Hooper Mine, and Peaked Mountain), the Barton deposit on the backside of Gore Mountain in Johnsbury (the oldest family owned and operated mine in the United States) is one of the world's largest and includes the largest and hardest garnet crystals in the world. The Barton garnet is New York State's Official Gemstone.

Today, Barton Mines owns and operates mining and milling operations on nearby Ruby Mountain and on the coast of Western Australia. The North Creek facility is the world's oldest continuously operating garnet mine, producing material for cutting, specialty lapping and grinding, sandblasting and abrasive coatings. It also yields granite blocks that are sold to manufacturers of countertops and tiles. The building that is now used as the ticket office for the Upper Hudson River Railroad was once used to store garnet awaiting shipment on the Adirondack Railroad and later, the D&H Railroad.

In 2004, Barton's Ruby Mountain quarry was the source of the corner stone for the Freedom tower in New York City.

Frank Hooper

Frank C Hooper was born in Ticonderoga, Essex County, New York, September 4, 1867, the son of William and Jane Ann (Hoskins) Hooper and died December 10, 1954. It is interesting to note that his father was a pioneer in the graphite industry.

Frank Hooper made his way in the world of mining after he graduated from School of Mines at Columbia University, in New York City with a degree in metallurgical engineering in 1890. He worked as an ordinary miner, a mining engineer, an inventor and a mining company official. He started his career mining for gold out in Idaho. He eventually teamed up with his brother George H. Hooper and they organized the North River Garnet Company, successfully using machinery to separate the garnet. The Hooper Mines were first started in the North-East side of Ruby Mountain Range in 1895 by Frank C. Hooper. In 1904, the mills were transferred to a mountain on the East Side of Thirteenth Lake. Operations there were suspended in 1928 after

the supply of garnet became scarce. The North River Garnet Company sold out to the Barton Mines Corporation thus merging the two companies into what has become the largest producer of high-quality garnet in the world. At the beginning of that merger, Frank Hooper served the Barton Mines Corporation as general manager and vice-president.

Mr. Hooper was also active in the Republican State committee and represented Essex County in the NYS Legislature in 1895-96-97 and Warren County in 1918-19. He was a founder of the Home Bureau unit of Warren County and was on the executive board of the Mohican Council of Boy Scouts. He was a well-respected businessman.

Dr. Lee Somerville

Dr. Lee Somerville was born May 1, 1875 in Johnsbury and was the son of Samuel Somerville and Mary Elizabeth Waddell. He died in 1934.

Dr. Lee Somerville graduated from the Troy Conference Academy at Poultney and took up the study of medicine at Albany Medical College. Dr. Somerville started his practice of medicine, and soon married Ona Scanlon of Williamsport. Throughout his career he kept two horses which he reserved for answering calls of the ailing during the cold winter months when snow-bound highways barred the progress of his automobile.

Although he never abandoned his role as a competent and conscientious rural physician, Dr. Somerville soon became known as an unusually successful real estate dealer. At one time, he was one of the largest holders of real estate in and about Johnsbury. Dr. Lee Somerville not only practiced medicine, but was engaged in the lumbering business. He logging roads later became part of the Ski trails during the "Ride up-slide down" period when the ski trains came to town.

Dr. Somerville was a director of the North Creek National Bank and one of the organizers of the Chatiemac Club, a popular sportsmen's rendezvous in Johnsbury. At one time he was chairman of the Warren County republican committee and as a member of the North Creek School board was instrumental in the construction of the new school in North Creek. For many years he served as health officer of North Creek. In 1905 he also built an excelsior mill and bolt/handle mill which employed many men. It was dismantled in the late 1920s.

Breeding of beagle hounds held his interest for many years, and Dr. Somerville was the principal sponsor of the annual beagle trails conducted at North Creek. Some of the best beagles in the eastern part of the country entered these contests. He also was interested in the breeding of trotting horses, and was elected the first president of the driving club organized at Warrensburg. He was always interested in sports and during his college career became a proficient boxer; an ability for which he was known throughout the Adirondack Area. Six feet, three inches in height, he was an imposing ring antagonist.

Dr. Somerville was an active promoter of North Creek and the town of Johnsbury all of his life.

