

A PEN PICTURE OF RICHFIELD

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

One of the many ways of advertising in the resort days was by letters or articles posted by visiting staff from other newspapers or visitors to the area who then sent letters to the editor of the local paper. So it was that W. C. H. of the staff of the Philadelphia Press wrote as follows in 1887:

“Aside from its waters, Richfield has many attractions to commend it to the summer tourist. A wide sweep of landscape meets the eye from any one of the elevations surrounding the village. There is nothing striking, nothing bold. Nothing that suggest nature in her Vesuvian moods and pains the senses while it attracts them by its sublimity. But there is a grace and beauty in the sweep of hill and valley, of wood and field, of lake and streamlet, which please while it rests the eye. Much of the neighborhood is yet untouched by that spirit of progress which exhibits itself in Queen Anne cottages and a painfully strained effort to copy city fashions. The comfortable old-fashioned American farm houses still dot the landscape and the green turf of rich cornfields which creep to the very edge of the woodlands, show that the old spirit of thrift and sturdy perseverance still clings to the farmers.

Nature has done much to enrich this region occupying as it does the highest elevation of New York State except the Adirondacks. Here are some of the most beautiful and picturesque of those lakes which have made central New York famous. Not so large as

those lying further west, they are fully as attractive and inviting. There is Lake Canadarago, a placid sheet of clear water, the three little pockets in the hills known as the Three Little Lakes and, chief and most beautiful of all, Lake Otsego, the ‘Glimmerglass’ of the novelist Fenimore Cooper. The latter is reached by tally-ho ride of seven miles, when the puffing, panting little steamer Natty Bumppo takes excursionists through the whole length of the lake to Cooperstown. But better than its drives and sails are the numerous strolls and walks the neighborhood furnishes, where wide stretches of landscape can be taken in, and sunshine and shadow can be watched chasing each other over hillsides brown with stubble or green with aftermath.

Richfield is something of a Mecca for the politicians of New York and the east, just as the Greenbrier White Sulphur Springs in Virginia is to the politicians of the south. A generation ago, central New York was noted for its able lawyers and influential politicians, many of whom rose to prominence in state and nation. Many able and prominent men still have their homes in this region and they annually come over to Richfield to discuss policies, arrange campaigns and exchange reminiscences of by-gone days. The men whose political life is behind them do the last, while those who are still in active duty amuse themselves in other ways.

Richfield is not sensational. Shoddy



has not yet discovered it, or has failed to find here a congenial atmosphere. There is no attempt to stun the senses by a profusion of diamonds and ornaments and no women walk up to the dining room robed as if they were ambitious to compete in the international yacht race. In this respect, Richfield resembles Newport more than it does Saratoga. There are many of that quiet, elegant class of people to be found here that have made Rhode Island’s resort so enviable. We don’t have to groan in spirit at exhibitions of loud, bizarre costumes and wonder when the American nation will have done paying penance to the vulgar demand for display and settle down into ‘common sense’, sincere manners and methods. How many more generations will have to labor and perspire before this end will be attained?”

By definition, common sense is the

basic ability to perceive and judge things which are shared by nearly all people without need for specialized knowledge; it encompasses all knowledge and judgments that are generally accepted and understood by a large group of people regardless of their backgrounds; a gift.

The origin of the term is in the works of Aristotle. It was often seen as a topic in the local MERCURY regarding everything from politics to managing household, proper dress, treatment of ailments and being alert to various scams, all urging everyone to use common sense in their choices.

Gertrude Stein is quoted as saying: “Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense” All generations seem to wonder at various times, where the use of common sense has disappeared to. It is not a gift to ignore.