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Romulus Revisited

Extracts From the Diary of
Henry McLafferty, Jr. 1856-1857

Romulus is a rural town midway between the two largest Finger Lakes, Cayuga and Seneca. It was among the townships of New York's Military Tract which received their classical names in 1790, when the state's Land Board prepared the division of the tract to reward Revolutionary veterans with gifts of land.¹

Few veterans made direct use of their land grants, but many nevertheless did eventually settle in the area, including a large number from other states. Among them were veterans of the famed Sullivan expedition of 1779. Several New Jersey and Pennsylvania regiments helped make up General Sullivan's forces, which were ordered to destroy the fields, orchards, and towns of the western Iroquois. The army passed through the land separating Cayuga and Seneca Lakes, pausing at Kendaia ("Apple Town"), a prosperous settlement.² The Kendaia orchards were destroyed, but the Iroquois name would later cling to a crossroads and a Baptist Church in northwestern Romulus.

Among the members of Sullivan's Army who destroyed the original Kendaia might have been Henry McLafferty, a

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private in the Third New Jersey Regiment.³ McLafferty was a youthful Ulsterman who emigrated to New Jersey in 1772. After working out an indenture in a south Jersey salt marsh and tannery, and after serving two enlistments in the war, he married his employer's daughter.⁴ Not long after the organization of the Town of Romulus in 1794, McLafferty and his family joined the tide of migrants to western New York.⁵ McLafferty purchased land in central Romulus which he and his descendants farmed. Later McLaffertys purchased additional nearby land and the area near Romulus Centre Post Office came to be known as the "McLafferty district."⁶ McLafferty was an active participant in the affairs of the First (Kendaia) Baptist Church of Romulus and was ordained a minister. His younger kinsman, Barna S. McLafferty, likewise became a minister of the Baptist faith.

McLafferty was typical of those who formed the bulk of Seneca County's settlers: a mixture of Scotch-Irish, New England Yankees, and Holland Dutch and English from eastern New York and New Jersey.⁷ Like McLafferty, they struck firm roots in the arable Finger Lakes country. Seneca County proved especially suitable for raising numerous crops. The surface, composed of a gravelly and clayey loam, rolls gently or is moderately hilly, and drains gently toward either lake.⁸ The suitability of the land for farming is reflected in the early population statistics for Romulus. There were 1,025 persons in the town in 1800 and 2,766 in 1810. After the state census of 1825, when the town's population reached a peak of 4,127, there was no further growth, but a slight decline.⁹ Most of its land had been divided into moderate family holdings like the McLaffertys'.¹⁰

The Henry McLafferty who was the first of his name to farm in Romulus fathered seven children who died in infancy.¹¹ One child who lived to maturity was given the name Henry. He in turn named a son Henry who was about 36 years old in 1856. Henry McLafferty III (or "Henry McLafferty, Jr.," as he styled himself) was the author of the diary submitted here.¹²

Of the second Henry McLafferty nothing is known beyond the sparse genealogical facts. A little knowledge of the life of the third has survived through the hints contained in his diary. That his health was threatened, probably by a severe epileptic disorder, is made plain in several journal entries. According to an inscription in the Baptist Church burying ground at Kendaia, he died in 1859. He lived the life of the farm, but was active as a real estate agent and speculator, as a surveyor, as accountant (for the nearby postmaster Martin, whose family preserved the diary), and even as clock repairer. In 1850 the census enumerator had listed his occupation as "merchant." He was unmarried.

The McLafferty diary seems a tantalizing fragment, as indeed it may be; the manuscript is a modest journal book filled with dated entries from cover to cover, but unsigned.¹³ The style of the beginning and ending entries strongly confirms the idea that a single volume of many has survived.

Like the journal of Nathaniel K. Fairbank published here earlier [*Rochester History*, 40 (July 1978) No. 3] the McLafferty diary is a small window looking on the daily life of the 1850s. It is offered in part to illustrate the differences and similarities in the lives of two men of that period, one in the city, the other in the outskirts of the Genesee Country. Of course, Fairbank and McLafferty cannot be considered scientifically representative of either the Rochesterian or the countryman.

Perhaps the most instructive portions of the McLafferty diary consist of Henry's accounts of visits made and visitors received; of itinerant relatives; of letters received and sent; of journeys by sled and horseback which are undertaken with little hesitation (sometimes with bad results). His commentary helps dispel the image of isolation which might attach to farm life in pre-Civil War New York. In this connection it should be pointed out that rail service across the top of Seneca County, via the Rochester & Auburn, was available in 1841. There was steamboat service on the lakes in McLafferty's time, but the Geneva, Ithaca, & Sayre (later Lehigh

Valley) Railroad through Seneca County was not built until 1873.¹⁴

McLafferty was a faithful *diarist*, but to avoid repetition, several of his daily entries are entirely omitted here. Weather is a preoccupation of the countryman, and McLafferty a keen observer, but there can be a sufficient number of remarks along the lines of "*January 8* This has been a colder day than yesterday and the snow flies to boot." Limitation of space has also required the editing of repetitious or inconsequential descriptions of business, travel, and social affairs.

J.W.B.

The Diary

November 25, 1856 It is with no small degree of regret that I have to state, that I have spent a miserable day—in consequence of the injury resulting from the fall from my horse which occurred yesterday on my way from Romulus. I fear that the injury received will prove a serious one. Mother, Frances & Absalom have just returned from Geneva, where they arrived this forenoon at 10½ o'clock. They had some rain on their way home. Absalom reports that he saw A Fleming Fathers former agent for the renting of his house & lot—and Mr. Been the present Agent. Mr. Fleming had not collected the balance (\$5½) due from Mrs. Parsons and Mr. Been said the Tenant now occupying the house had been in about seven weeks, at one dollar per week, but had paid but \$2— The balance he must pay—Mr. Been Says—or he must leave the premises—Been paid Absalom no money. I shall not be able to sleep much to night.

November 26th Yesterday the atmosphere was almost like summer & to-day it has been but a little cooler though it rained some last night, clearing up this morning with the wind in the north west. I have been so stiff & sore today from the injuries received on the 24th inst. as to be unable to do anything, not even to wait upon myself as usual. I fear my ribs have been fractured & that I shall not be able to get about as I desire to in a good long while.

November 27th Under ordinary circumstances I should have been able to enjoy well the past day as Genl T. J. Folwell & Lady have spent much of it in making Father & folks a visit, but, I have been unable to enjoy good company even, for the reason that I have suffered more pain & soreness than I have any day since receiving the injury of Monday, by falling from my horse. Rev'd Mr. Webber,¹⁵ the Baptist minister of this congregation preaches at our school house to-night but I am unable to attend. The past fall has been dry and we now have a prospect of the commencement of winter without sufficient rain to supply the many dry wells in the Country.

November 28th Have had an other day of suffering, & pain from the injury done my side on the 24th but to-night, I have the good fortune to be able to say that it is not so painful as it has been. J. Carrell was here today, bound as a juror—though strongly hoping that he would draw clear—for Romulus Centre, on a case between G. Swarthout, & J.W. Smith; two old combatants for whom few, perhaps, have much sympathy.

November 29th Last night, the snow commenced falling & it has continued during the day. The snow is now 5 or 6 inches deep but the majority hope that it will thaw off & thus supply the dry wells with water. Received a letter from Eldridge & Hubbard with the Receipt of the Register of Deeds for Macomb Co Mich. showing that the Sheriffs Deed to me, for the house & lot sold on the 22nd Inst. under the Goets [Goetz?] Mortgage, had been deposited in his office. Have not suffered so much to-day, from the hurt of my ribs and shoulder. . . .

November 30th Have spent nearly the entire day in the house, but have not enjoyed the spectacle presented to the eye, in looking out at the window, that of the surface covered with snow about 5 inches in depth and no sleigh riding to correspond. . . .

December 1 Today, for the first in the past week I made out from home. Father & I went together driving my colt for the second time, and at the same time the first that he was ever driven to a sled. The sleiding now on the tapis¹⁶ is the first we

had and poor in the bargain. We first rode to Brother Joels, put on 10 Bushels Buckwheat & after dinner Absalom & I drove to Ovid for the purpose, mainly, to get the grain we obtained of Joel to mill. We did not get home until dusk & the exposure & abstinence from eating during the entire day has had the effect of making me feel unwell. Mr. Bennett, Miss Parker & Miss Sackett are here tonight singing as a source of amusement. I have been trying to help but I cant do it to night & must not make any further effort.

December 2 . . . Forgot to mention yesterday that I received a letter from Mess Eldridge & Hubbard. Mt. Clemens Mich. Brother Simeon also received one from N.J. informing us that Uncle Simeon Dunn recently left his residence (in N.J.) for Ohio, with the design of returning via. this place, and will probably be here at some time within the subsequent two weeks. Our winter term of school for this District (No 7) commenced yesterday. Miss Caroline Parker is our Teacher.

December 4 The past has been a colder day than we have had since winter began its threatenings. I am still quite unwell but ventured out to the District school house this evening to hear Mr. Webber, the Baptist Minister preach. The sermon was affecting. The text "How long halt ye between two opinions."

December 5 Rode to Romulusville this morning & again this evening. During the intermediate time I rode with Absalom & Frances to Ovid. The sledding is tolerable good. Learned to day of Mr. Steele & W M Stone, for the first, & to my regret, that the Shff., with an execution against A. B Groom of about a thousand dollars, was yesterday unable to find property in Grooms possession on which to levy. But a few days since I bought of Gilb't Van Duyn a note against Groom of \$100 feeling fully persuaded that he was responsible. So goes the world.

December 7 This has been to me anything but a pleasantly spent Sabbath day, having had 2 or 3 slight attacks of the kind to which I am subject, & this evening, feeling too unwell to attend prayer meeting. To night, while all except Father &

myself were absent to meeting, Father has been giving a history of his Father, Mother, Brothers & others of Grand-fathers family

December 8 Have had a close winter day. I have spent it doing chores & helping occasionally to saw wood. Seba Depue came this morning fastened down his machinery for sawing wood and commenced operating with six horses & seven hands at about 9 o'clock. The pile of wood to be sawed contained about 10 cords & before sundown they had succeeded in sawing it twice through and piling it promiscuously in the wood house. This job being done saves me the trouble of preparing wood, as I have been in the practice of doing, except the splitting, which is comparatively trifling.

December 9 Have had a lovely day and all at home have been able to enjoy it pretty well except Father— He was taken this morning immediately after he got out of bed, with severe constipation of the bowels, combined—apparently—with a pain in the urinary organs. The pain in the lower extremity of the bowels was alarmingly severe, and did not abate, except at short intervals, until 2 o'clock P.M. Dr. Dorchester was sent for and came at about 10 o'clock A.M. He prescribed powders & ether, but they did not give relief as soon as appeared to be essential and during the spasmodic attacks of severe pain I prevailed on Father to take two tepid injections of soft water of about a pint each

December 10 For the first time I, to day rode my colt to Romulusville in order to get him shod for the first time and preparitory to a drive to Brother G's with Absalom tomorrow. Wrote a letter to Eldridge & Hubbard, Mount Clemens Macomb Co. Mich. enclosing \$5—as a compensation for their services rendered in buying for me a piece of real estate (a house & lot) in New Baltimore Macomb Co. . . . Father is much better to day than he was yesterday though unable to be out of doors as usual. The sledding is still good.

December 11 This evening I find myself at my Brother Gershoms in Catharine, Schuyler Co., but the cost of exposure to

get here has been much greater than I anticipated as it has rained nearly the entire day and the sledding on the last fourth of the route (length 33 miles) got to be poor. . . .

December 12 The weather this morning was such as to make the prospect for sledding in the after part of the day poor, and we made arrangements to start for home but, when we got as far as Odessa—2 miles—finding the roads slippery, we concluded to have our colts sharp shod behind and being unable to get the job done until 2 o'clock Gershom induced us to remain over night and risk the event of sledding to get home on to-morrow.

December 13 This morning at about 7 o'clock we (Ann, Absalom & Self) left Brother Gershoms residence with a pretty good prospect of finding tolerable sleighing during our sojourn homeward, but our expectations were not realised for, when we arrived at a point one mile east of Lodi the track became bare, and but little snow could be seen, even in the fields. We arrived in Ovid a little before sundown. . . .

December 14 The past has been a blustering rainy Sabbath day & one that I have not enjoyed. Have written a letter to Gershom informing him of our fortune in getting home from his place yesterday & c. I was desirous of attending prayer meeting this evening, but did not feel well enough to be out on so unpleasant an evening.

December 15 The past has been a cold day. Our good sleighing has left & I have consequently been obliged to remain at home. . . . We have a Tin Peddler, over night with us, his residence is about 8 miles from Glen Haven, on the east shore of the Skaneateles Lake and he is acquainted with Dr. Jackson.

December 16 This morning hitched colt to the cutter designing to go to Ovid on runners but got no farther than the school house before I found the sleighing too poor for pleasure or profit & drove back home. Joel—who had just driven up—and Father helped me hitch to the buggy, in as much as my colt had never before been driven single, and I then drove

to Ovid. . . . This morning at 4 o'clock, our good neighbor and friend, Mrs. Tunison, died & will be buried to-morrow. Her disease was of an ulcerous character, the locality on the neck and before she died it was thought the sore had eaten through to her lungs.

December 18 Have had what all readily acknowledged not only but, unhesitatingly declared to be a cold day. The amount of what I have done over and above what I am accustomed to doing has been to assist Father in killing a blk year old heifer, of a little over 80 lbs to the quarter, and run back and fore from barn to house a good many times to warm my fingers and toes.

December 19 Have been to Romulusville & to the Centre P.O., rode in buggy behind my colt which has been driven but once before single and he did not behave himself so well as I thought I had a right to expect.

December 24 This is Christmas eve—but after so cold a day as the past and so little occurring that is new or curious, I have nothing of importance to note.

December 25 This has been rather a cold but at the same time a pleasant Christmas day. I have spent a large percentage of it in writing a letter to Rebecca at South Bend in where she is engaged teaching in the Academy of that place.

December 26 All I have done to-day has been to call on I A Bunn who is sick with a schrofulus disease of the head—and repair his clock and go to the P.O. and drop a letter for Rebecca. Frances received a letter from Barna S. McLafferty who is now teaching as principal of an Academy at South Bend Indiana.

December 29 To-day the weather is again cool & the roads are most splendid for wheeled vehicles, being frozen hard and covered with ice or nearly so. This evening I called to see our neighbor, I. A. Bunn who has been confined to his house for three or four weeks past with a disease in the head of a scrofulous character.

December 30 This, like many other days, during winter, I have been wearing away the time as best I could at home, though the business of killings hogs has been an extra inducement for me to stay at home. Father had but two hogs to kill but it has been an all day job, notwithstanding, with John C. & Simeon McL. to help. The weight of the two was 875 lbs one weighing 411 and the other 464. I lost a dish of oysters by betting with J.C. that the heaviest would weigh 60 pounds more than the other. Never made anything yet by gambling and I guess I had better abandon the business.

January 3, 1857 . . . Tonight I have attended the annual meeting of our school district at which the subject of building a new school house was talked up—indeed the Trustees were requested to call a special meeting on the evening of Wednesday the 14th inst.—Have been at Martins, during the past day, making out his Post Office returns.

January 4 Nothing of unusual importance has to day taken place. I had, at about 10 o'clock this forenoon, one of my usual attacks and do not, consequently feel as well as usual. The usual Sunday evening meeting was held this evening but, on account of the snow that has recently fallen and the roads not being broken, there were less present than usual.

January 6 Have had an excessively cold day. This much I am convinced of to the fullest extent though I have been in the house a good part of the time.

January 10 Have been to Romulusville for the purpose of getting my horse shod, seeing Esq Jos Wickoff & etc. Instead of having my horse shod I was induced to have his hind shoes pulled off and let his hoofs grow out, in order that he might be so shod as to effectually prevent his interfering. The shoes taken off were new & I left them at the shop in charge of Hinkley.

January 12 This has been a pleasant day compared with what we have had during the past week but having taken cold & the roads being some drifted, I have thought best to remain at home, & beside the usual every day employ, to repair the clock. But whether I have succeeded is questionable.

January 13 Have been rather unwell to day and have thought best to remain at home, notwithstanding the day has been pleasant & the sleighing good. The Rev Mr. Webber's Donation visit takes place this afternoon & evening, but I do not feel well enough to attend. Absalom & Frances & Miss Parker have gone. They started at about 5 o'clock this evening. Mr. Keeler the Tin Pedler is stoping with us over night.

January 14 It is now nearly nine o'clock in the evening & I have just returned from an especial School district meeting held for the purpose of deciding the question of building a new school house. On the question there were 30 votes cast of which 17 were against and 13 for, thus setting the question at rest for the present.

January 16 Rode to Ovid & back, and beside this I have done little else than my every day tinkering. The sledding is good and there is now a good deal of life and stir on public roads & in villages.

January 17 The snow is flying at a merry rate but this is only an inducement for the Lads and Lasses of courage to enjoy the sledding by riding out to an evening party. We have as guests tonight a load of such daring youngsters, as fear no threatenings of the elements.

January 18 This, evidently, has been the coldest day we have had during the present winter. I heard at the prayr meeting, held at the school house this evening that the thermometer this morning stood at 24 degrees below Zero.

January 21 Hitched up this morning & drove to Romulusville, with no essential business except to do a little more towards breaking my colt. Found the roads not so badly drifted as I anticipated. . . . On my return home I called on I A Bunn who is very sick.

January 22 Called on our neighbor—Mr. Bunn & found him dangerously ill.

January 23 This morning our neighbor Bunn, Isaac A departed this life. He survived the point at which his friends

first regarded his situation dangerous, but a few hours. His disease was a schrofulous difficulty at the head. This evening we have company. The party consists of F Whiting & Wife. C Swarthout 2nd & Wife, J. Carrell & Wife, Miss Martha Carrell. Miss Coryell—a sister of Mrs. C Swarthout—and Miss Moriah Doremus. In getting here they had some difficulty on account of the snow drifts.

January 24 The weather to day having moderated I ventured out as far as Ovid but in my route to & from I neither saw nor learned anything new or strange.

January 30 This morning the promise was favorable for a pleasant day and I hitched to the cutter & drove first to Esqr Ludlums & then to Geneva, where I arrived at about half past 2 o'clock P.M. Called on A Fleming who gave me directions in reference to where I might find John E. Bean Esqr—Atty. & Counselor at law—who has the agency for renting Fathers house & lot in that place. . . . Mr. Bean recommends an outlay of \$50—by way of repairing in order to make it desirable by a responsible Tenant and I was more than half inclined to the same opinion. Mr. Bean resides exactly opposite Fathers house on the S side of the street in a small framed house & his office is on Maine Street a little N of the Franklin Hotel and on the same side of the street. He says that soon after he took charge of the said house, for Father, he succeeded in getting a tenant who moved in and remained until some time in December last when he turned them out of door for the reason he could collect no rent of him.

January 31 The threatening aspect of the weather during the fore part of the day induced me to remain at home. No news has been flying.

February 1 It is now 9 o'clock in the evening and I have just returned from a Sunday evening prayr meeting. I did not enjoy the meeting however, from the fact that I have recently taken a pretty bad cold and my head aches rather severely. George Swarthout escorted the girls—Miss Caroline Parker and Frances—from meeting and while I write is entertaining the

family with various subjects of importance such for instance as the case now pending on Justices Court between Nancy Swarthout Plff. against her Brother Coe for services rendered as his housekeeper during his widowerhood, & c & c.

February 2 . . . Wrote a letter for Father and directed to Dr. H. James No 19 Grand St Jersey City, enclosing 4 postage stamps for which he proposes, by his advertisement in the "Day Book" a paper printed in New York City—to forward a receipt for the cure of consumption.

February 3 Stephen Ludlum called to-day and instead of paying his note of \$150, as I had a right to expect—he made me promise to wait with him 30 days more, he pledging himself to arrange in that time and in case of a failure, to confess judgment for the amount of the claim. Went to Ovid this afternoon with other of the neighbors to assist in the burial of a young child of Mr Fays who died last night verry suddenly.

February 5 Started to go to see brother Joel this morning, but meeting him on his way to call on Brother Simeon, concluded to go to Ovid & get my harness repaired which was broken by getting my horse into a snowbank at the time of meeting Joel, a misfortune that I much regreted for the reason that my colt is spirited and does not easily forget an occurrence of the kind.

February 6 The past has been a summer day-almost-and the good sledding has left us. Mud is the substitute. To night I find myself entirely alone, the balance of the household being out on a visit, a part at Hiram S. Miller & a part at Mr Hinkley's. Col J R Stone who is now an Agent for the introduction & sale of a new series of text books in our Common schools called on me to day. He met the Trustees & c of the district at 3 P.M.

February 7 This has been much like the past 3 or 4 days, warm and the roads have become quite muddy. J D Coe called to day & paid Father the amount—\$214—of S Gurnee's note endorsed by him & payable at the Seneca Co Bank. The note being at the Bank Father gave a receipt showing that the note is paid. I am not very well to-day & the reason probably is that I have

been too steadily engaged at the desk, in mental exercise.

February 9 This has been rather a dull day for me from the fact that I have not been so well as usual. I was imprudent in chopping too much at one time. The weather has become cold again & the roads are rough & hubby.¹⁷ I want to do some riding but the weather is stormy the roads are rough and Father is quite unwell which together tend to keep me at home. This evening Mr & Mrs Sackett are making Father a call.

February 10 This morning the wind was south but it changed & the snow has been flying like fury during the most of the time. Jumped astride my horse at about noon & started for Romulusville, but before I got there I regretted the outset for the wind blew a hurricane & my horse not shod for the hubby & slipry roads I was obliged to ride at such a pace as to almost freeze me.

February 11 Have had a bitter cold day and I have enjoyed it as well as I could by remaining at home & doing chores. Father is quite unwell & has been unable to get out to assist in taking care of the stock for several days. The Doctor—Dorchester—came the other day & ordered a blister plaster placed over his lungs which has made him worse. At least so I am disposed to think.

February 12 Last evening in compliance with an invitation from our good neighbor Mr Sackett I went there for the purpose, with other invited guests, of making a social evening visit. There were quite a number out—say sixteen—and we did not leave until after 12 o'clock and I do not feel any better to-day in consequence though I cant regret making the visit. The weather has been more mild to-day than it was yesterday.

February 13 Nothing of importance to note except that J. D. Coe was here this morning and informed us that Revd Morris Barton died at 7 o'clock this morning of apoplexy.

February 14 Got on to my Colt this forenoon & rode to Romulus where I was detained until 4 P.M. On my return my colt became frightened rared up & fell over backwards with me but did not happen to hurt me badly. I again got on to

him but before I had rode far I felt the approach of one of my attacks and got off my horse & he got away from me. The attack I had was rather severe & Daniel Church brought me home in a waggon. Amherst Giddings brought my horse home. This attack was no doubt induced by the over excitement and exertion at the time my colt threw himself. I feel quite unwell to-night.

February 17 This has been almost a summer day. Was out as far as Romulusville on horseback and found the roads muddy enough. To-night we have a German peddler stopping over night with us. His name is Peter Moses, or David Moses I forget which his sir name is Moses & that is the peculiarity that induced me to note his name here. Noticed to day in two instances trimers at work pruning grape vines. The weather is remarkably warm.

February 19 This morning after some hesitation in consequence of the threatening aspect of the weather I got on to my horse and wallowed through the mud to J D Fentons for the purpose of making some arrangement with his sons Edward and Jonas to plough & plant or sow the parcel of land that has come into my possession by foreclosure of mortgage given by Sam'l Bainbridge. The rain prevented me from going over the premises as I desired until late and I was consequently obliged to get home after dark. The roads are excessively bad the snow on the mud being just right in quantity and quality to make a horse ball up badly.

February 22 Have had rather a pleasant Sabbath day so far as the atmosphere and all else, except the roads, have to do with making a pleasant day. Father to day received a letter from Uncle Philemon in which he states his intention to go to Ohio for the purpose of receiving from Aunt Ann. . . one half of the *estate* of Uncle Absalom. He states further that one of the Appraisers informs him that the whole Estate amounts to about 18 thousand dollars. But before going to see Aunt Ann & the Administrators, in order to arrange the business properly he

is desirous of a power of attorney from all the legal heirs to the estate, belonging to or being members of Fathers family.

February 24 A warm and pleasant day. On horseback is the only practible way to ride in the present state of the roads. Mailed a letter to Uncle Philemon Dunn—enclosing a copy of a power of Attorney . . . Mailed a letter to Rebecca at South Bend Ia. enclosing the above mentioned power of Attorney, asking her to sign and return. Had one of my usual attacks during the day & this evening had another and a much more severe one than I have had, perhaps in a year.

February 25 Have not been as well as usual to-day & have consequently remained at home. Had two attacks of my old disease though not as severe as that had last evening. Blue Birds sang this morning. Last Sunday I was imprudent enough to cut my hair & whiskers shorter than I have been in the habit of wearing them, and the result I fear, has been the severe cold I now suffer from.

February 26 Last evening the atmosphere took a most radical change and instead of mud & Blue Birds that yesterday might be seen, we have hard roads, snow squalls, and chilly backs.

March 1 . . . Yesterday—Saturday—I was at Romulus where I saw 2 or 3 Republicans who informed me that the Party would meet in caucus on Friday next for the purpose of making a Ticket to be supported at the town election to be held on the following Tuesday—and I promised them that I would endeavor to put up notices to that effect as soon as tomorrow.

March 2 The snow which fell yesterday and last night has been flying merrily all day, so that the prospect of a run of sleighing is rather dull. It is now winter out right, making a contrast, with the weather during the major part of last week, that is really remarkable. I do not feel as well as usual as I have not yet recovered from my illness of last week. I would like to ride but the character of my health and the weather combined prevent. Absalom went to Ovid to day with some

clover seed. The large kind of seed is said to be bringing there, \$8—and the small \$7— He got for his, however, but \$7.75 it being considered not first quality.

March 6 Last night the snow fell 4 or 6 inches and to day the weather had been cold as January & the sleighing pretty good. Attended the Caucus'es of the Republicans and also of the Democrats at Romulus Center Two tickets were made. Peter J Van Vleet was nominated by the Democrats for Supervisor and Garret Doremus by the Republicans.

March 8 Yesterday the weather was conceded by all to be most excessively cold for the season. Whatever might have been my interests or prejudices in reference to it I was forced, by actual experience and exposure in riding to Seneca Falls and back, to acknowledge that it was too cold for me at least. To-day the Sun has been shining pleasantly but the air is cold and the sleighing good notwithstanding. The moon shines beautifully on the snow covered surface this evening and I have attended the Sunday evening prayr meeting.

March 10 The past has been a pleasant day for Town Election and I have been absent during most of the time attending said Election. The number of votes polled was 276 and the officers elected were as follows to-witt. Those marked with a * are of the Know Nothing nominations, and the balance are Professed Democrats

		Majority
*Joseph F Harris	Supervisor	11
*Hiram K Miller	Town Clerk	156
*Hiram K Miller	J.P. 3 years	57
Oliver Hallock	Do. 4 Do.	
John Kinne	Assessor	10
John D VanHorn	Com. Highways	5
Jared Van Vleet	Insp. of Election	12
Hugh Chapman	Do Do	9
*Cornelius S Saskett	Do Do	Appointed
Peter Depue	Overseer of Poor	9
A. C Giddings	Collector &C	15

In the cases of Constables there were three ties. . . .

March 11 . . . After dinner I drove to Romulusville for the sake of riding more than any thing else. Took a letter out of the P.O. for Father from Barna S.— He dates his letter at Freeport Ill. where he & his better half are stopping with their Father during a vacation in their school at South Bend Indiana.

March 12 At about 9 o'clock this morning as I was about making preparations to ride down to Dr. Folwell's to ascertain whether he had concluded to buy at \$35 per acre the lot of land I own near him and to make an arrangement with Erastus Benjamin or Mr Corryell to work up some Elm & Oak timber, in case I did not sell, I was attacked with my spasmodic difficulty and fell in such a manner as to seriously injure one side of my head, near the temple and left eye and have been obliged to remain at home during the day. The pain for a few hours was severe. . . .

March 14 The weather this morning was so pleasant that I was induced to go to Joels vendue notwithstanding my face was badly swollen and my eye quite black as the result of the accident of day before yesterday, but to night my face being worse than when I left this morning, I am almost sorry I did not remain at home. This evening the roads are muddy, and a prospect of storm. I feel bad enough to night.

March 18 Spring weather continued & to night notwithstanding the mud & rain I attended meeting at the school house. Revd Mr Jiles of Ovid was present in pursuance of his appointment and preached a sermon, which, like many others, convinced me of my obligations to seek my God & Savior, and I reluctantly declared, in a public manner, I believed God existed and that it was the duty of all to conform to his commands or righteous law. Further than this, I asked an interest in the prayr's of Christians, that I might enjoy to a greater extent the riches of his forgiving grace.

March 19 To day has been an out an out cold winter day. The rain storm that commenced yesterday turned into snow at about 10 o'clock A.M. and now—(9 o'clock) still con-

tinues. Revd. Mr. Jiles the M.E. Clergyman of Ovid called on me this morning and offered while present and after conversation on the subject of religion, a very feeling prayr for all collectively and especially for my Father & Self. I was a good deal effected by his appeal and hope it may be of service in encouraging me to love and serve my God. Yesterday morning a man was found lying dead along the road and in the field side, within 10 or 12 rods of Benjm Warne's residence which is a little distance south of the Ashery east one mile, of Romulusville. From what facts have been eliceted he has lain there for the past three weeks.

March 20 This has been something nearer a sap day as the sun for the major part of the time has been shining. During a part of the day Simeon & Mary E. Have been here (at Fathers visiting). Day before yesterday Brother Gershoms son, James, came down from Catharine with a pair of Oxen that Gershom had purchased for Father at \$120—in his neighborhood. The cattle are large but poor enough—To-day James returned via. Seneca Lake Steamer & R.R. to Havana, from which place he will probably have to walk. Tapped seven sugar maples this P.M. which, with those before tapped, make fourteen.

March 21 To day but little has ocured worthy of note. The roads are as bad as they well can be, as I learned to my hearts content by riding pony to Romulusville and Romulus Center. Received a letter from J Harris—[of] Sheldrake, asking me to come and look at the village—or landing with a view to surveying and plotting the same in case a bargain could be struck or the price of doing the job could be agreed upon. But my health will not permit me to undertake a job of the kind & I shall therefore have to reply declining the application. To-night Mr. Wickishimer, the German Jewelry Pedler, and an other Pedler are with us, designing to remain with us over' till Monday.

March 22 An other pleasant Sabbath has passed and it is now 9 o'clock. The evening is dark and muddy & I have just returned from our neighborhood prayr meeting. After several solicitations that all who felt it their duty to declare them-

selves believers in Christ our Lord would not hesitate to do so I was constrained to say a word by way of adding my testimony to His goodness and mercy

March 23 Although the rain fell in torrents early this morning the sun came out before ten o'clock & we have had a Spring day. Have been busy helping to make some maple molasses, from the sap gathered during the past two days the product of 14 trees Father & I tapped the other day. We succeeded in making over a gallon

March 27 . . . Helped to sow timothy and clover seed before I left home this morning

March 29 Has been rather a pleasant Sabbath day. & the mud has dried up some. Sap has been running for the last 36 hours pretty lively, so that I gathered today from 14 trees 10 large pails. Have just returned from prayr meeting. There were but few out. On my way to meeting and on my return also I called to see our sick neighbor—Mr. Fay—who has been suffering severely for a few days past with inflammation of the urinary organs. His life is by some almost dispaired of—He is a sick man.

March 31 This morning being a pleasant one I took my instruments and went to C Bainbridge's and run out a dividing line between his own, and a parcel of land that now belongs to me. It was something more of a job than I anticipated and we—Father & I—did not get home until after four o'clock Post Meridian. To-night Anderson Stout is stoping with us, thus giving us an opportunity to see him walk on his wooden, or false leg, that he has recently been getting. I am almost on the sick list.

April 2 Have had a severe cold day, the roads are rough & frozen, and the aspect is more like that of winter. Attended neighborhood prayr meeting and was constrained to take part in the services. Our neighbor Wm Fay who has been sick for a few days so that his friends thought him dangerously so, is thought to be better.

April 4 This evening is a pleasant one, and the peopers are attracting some notice. There has nothing occured to day with me of material consequence. Wrote a line to Cyrus Bainbridge & droped it at Romulus giving him the survey of the piece of land he proposes to deed to me for a similar number of acres adjoining. While at Romulus J G King dunned me for a note I gave S Ludlum a few days since, and for which I left the money with Swan at Romulus in compliance with my agreement with Ludlum.

April 9 This morning at about 9 o'clock I went to Martins, in compliance with his request sent by his son, and made out his Post Office returns,—when I had finished this job, which was at about 3 o'clock P.M. I rode to Ovid through the mud nearly Knee deep and have now (8 o'clock) but just got home & eaten my supper. Supper is a new thing for me as I have not been in the habit of eating more than two meals per day for the last three years until within a few days last past, and now I have thought to try the three meal system as an experiment. . . .

April 10 Having been riding on horseback nearly all day I feel rather tired this evening. My business out was to see two or three persons who have disappointed me in reference to the payment of some money. . . .

April 12 Have had a stormy Sabbath day & I have spent the whole of it except the necessary time for doing the usual choring, at my desk. . . .

April 14 Soon after 12 o'clock M to-day I got on to my horse & rode as far as Cyrus Bainbridges first and afterward—with Bainbridge called on his Brother Samuel—who yesterday received rather a serious injury of the head by falling of a limb while in the wood—and then upon Dr. Folwell. My object in going to see these men was—principally to ascertain whether I should sell a piece of land in that neighborhood to Dr Folwell. . . .

April 15 The past day has not been a disagreeable one to me though it has been cold with 2 or 3 snow squalls occuring by the way of spicing. To-night the air is freezing &—as the say-

ing is—the ducks will have eaten up the mud before morning. I have been setting at my desk during a large percentage of the day, making some mathematical calculations. . . .

April 16 This morning when I found the ground frozen & the air cold I reluctantly hitched to the buggy packed my surveying tools and started to fill my engagement, the other day made with Edwd Van Vleet & G W Freligh—to do a small job of surveying. I succeeded in finishing the work, though it has been a cold day, with frequent snow squalls—and I had one of the attacks to which I am subject while at Sam'l C Grove's & before going out on to the field to work. . . .

April 17 During the past day I have been rendering what little service I was able in assisting Father in the garden, and notwithstanding it snowed some during the time, we succeeded to tolerably well in making preparations to sow. While the snow was falling, we were encouraged to continue our labors only in consequence of our past observation and experience proving that we should have warmer weather before August next. . . .

April 20 This morning I woke up and—as I expected when I last night went to bed—it was snowing & the surface white. The storm has increased in severity during the entire day and to night remarkable as it may appear, the snow is nearly two feet on the level with no reasonable prospect of an abatement before morning. The storm has kept me and every body else—I guess—at home, and the prospect of getting far from home very soon is dull. Hay as well as all the other varieties of feed has already become scarce & this storm is an indication of a continuation of cold weather up to a later period in the spring than usual, consequently more than the usual quantity of feed will be necessary.

April 21 The snow storm that commenced yesterday morning or—I might say night before last abated this morning, and although the snow has been wasting during the entire day, yet it is still eighteen or twenty inches deep. Col. J R Stone, who has been storm stayed at J D Coe's since the 19th called

on me at about 10 o'clock and remained until 3 P.M. when he started to see Jos Johnson, with the intention of returning to Coe's this evening and of going home to-morrow While here Col. Stone wrote a letter to Mrs Henry Simpson at West-Avon Livingston Co. informing her that I own a piece of land adjoining hers in this town, which would be desirable to her, in case she would like to enlarge her farm of 50 acres, and which can be bought for about 32 dollars per acre. He advised her to write to me soon if she would like to buy.

April 24 Again the shades of night has approached and the surface still presents the appearance of winter being covered with snow. The sun has been shining pretty brightly during the past day and the snow has been diminished in consequence, but the air has been cool. My business during the most of the time has been assisting about the barn—in doing the various little essential items of choring and making an ox yoke.

April 25 Have had a hard ride through the mud to Ovid & back—today, with Absalom in the carry-all. Had no very important business but was detained all day or nearly so in order to get a small job of ironing an ox yoke done. Resolved while in Ovid, and after becoming impatient, that I would not get a job of blacksmithing done in that place again very soon unless necessity drove me to it. Some of the late snow is still to be seen though the major part of the surface is bare.

April 27 Nothing new or important has occurred to-day but I must write something and I shall therefore have to speak of the common place occurrences. I was called on by Wm Martin and Wm McDuffee both of whom were in want of money but I could not relieve.

April 28 The past has been rather a pleasant Spring day & the mud has been rapidly drying up. Snakes have been seen, for the first to day. I ought to have stated before this, that the experiment of eating three times per day—which I commenced on the first of this month—has thus far been attended with no symptoms which tend to induce the adoption of my old custom of taking my meals but twice per day, but, on the con-

trary, I feel encouraged to continue the said experiment, adopting a rigid graham diet and restricting myself also in respect to quantity so as to eat during 24 hours no more than I formerly did.

April 29 Have had a favourable day for business & I have been at home during the entire day helping to make a board fence from the waggon house to the road. Two or three men have called this afternoon to buy corn for feed and Absalom sold to one of them at 5 shillings and to the others at six shillings per bushel. Feed of all kinds is scarce and corn is the cheapest feed that can be found. Oats are worth 4 [?] Hay 18 dollars per ton, the truth is there is no hay to be found. Frances came home this P.M. for the first time in three weeks past, she has been teaching a short term of select school for a few of the inhabitants . . . in the extreme north east section of school district number six & has just closed.

May 1 . . . Our folks commenced ploughing yesterday, for the first since the snow, of about ten days since, fell. At this time there has been very little ploughing done in the country. The strong blustering wind from the south continues & I will permit it to sing me to sleep pretty soon.

May 4 In compliance with my promise I jumped onto my horse this morning and rode to Mr Jas Carrells for the purpose of getting up an article of agreement between him and the two Bearer boys—George W. & Wm A. to whom Mr Carrell has sold a parcel of land of thirty four & 1/3 acres, the same that John formerly occupied. He sells at 50 dollars per acre . . .

May 5 This morning I designed to start for Ovid pretty soon after breakfast but the rain prevented, so that I did not start until after one P.M. I stayed but a short time and got back before 5 P.M. The roads have not been able to do but very little ploughing, indeed many have not yet been able to do any.

May 6 . . . Was called on by Nelson Van Tuyl who wished me to survey and map a parcel of 160 acres of land owned by

Mrs Blake formerly Dolly Hunt & Daughter of Jo's Hunt—of New York City. The Husband of Mrs. Blake is a merchant in New York and writes to Mr. Van Tuyl requesting him to get the land surveyed and mapped at his expense. The object is to sell the land. Have had another cloudy day though we hope from the indications that the weather will be more favourable here after than it has been for farmers to do up their spring seeding, as nothing has yet been done in that line of business.

May 7 The past day had been a pleasant and spring like day, the first that we have had in a good long while, though to night it rains again. This morning I rode over to Joels—Joel has recently moved into a small frame house at Romulus Center belonging to Martin—for the purpose of repairing his clock. When I had finished the job I again got on to my colt and started for home, but when I had got nearly there I commenced fighting with my horse for his misconduct and was attacked with one of my usual attacks, fell from my horse, and he got away from me. Fortunately I am not injured, though the chances were against me. Mrs. Lyman, an old woman resideing in Fathers house cared for me after I had fallen else it might have been worse for me, as I fell, or was forced by the horse, into the ditch. After this occurrence in order to sober my horse I got onto him rode about 5 miles and succeeded in making him comply to my wishes to as great an extent as I could wish.

May 8 This morning hitched colt to Buggy and rode to N.W. Folwells for the purpose of running—or rather to finish the survey of a parcel of 30 acres; recently sold by C Bainbridge to Folwell, and after finishing this job I rode to Romulusville calling on Isaac Van Tuyl and Isaac Van Nostrand on my way and did not get home until nearly night. The occurrence of yesterday I have not yet entirely recovered from and consequently have not enjoyed myself so well as usual to-day though it has been remarkable pleasant. . . .

May 10 The past has been rather a cool like Sabbath and to night I find myself complaining with the toothache, a com-

plaint with which I have not been afflicted in two or three years. The pain suffered has prevented me from attending prayr meeting as I was want this evening.

May 12 To night I have nothing essentially new to note, that has occured during the past day but I must say something I suppose and I will therefore mention the circumstances of finding ice this morning on getting up, half an inch thick, and the fact of helping Father plant a small patch of potatoes—the first thing of the kind that has been done on the premises this spring.

May 13 Soon after breakfast this morning I hitched colt to buggy took Father in with me, as a chain bearer, and drove to Isaac Van Tuyls, surveyed a parcel of 160 acres of land on Lot, No. 67 now owned By Mrs. Blake of New York City—formerly Dolly Hunt, Jr.

May 14 . . . I am not very well today in consequence of doing rather too much yesterday & at the same time indulging in eating, while from home, food of a character that I am not in the habit of doing.

May 15 The past day has been cloudy and for the most part rainy also & I have spent it pretty nearly all in making map of a parcel of land the other day surveyed and the necessary calculations of areas. I have done my usual choreing however and also done a pretty good job at splitting wood under the wood house Miss Sarah Kinne who is teaching our District School is stoping over night with us. Frances is at home to night. This I mention because she is at home so small a percentage of her time. But enough!

May 18 Have had a pleasant day, after the severe freeze of last night. Our folks sowed their Barley to-day—the first thing of the kind they have done this spring. Brother Joel has been ploughing for Absalom—who works the premises on shares—and will be with us over night. He expects to go west soon on an exploring tour. Simeon also expects to go west on similar business on or about the first of the next month. *Simeon* received a letter from Rebecca yesterday which—contrary to

our expectation, informs that she is teaching a select school at a village twelve miles from South Bend Ia. where she has been engaged as teacher in the Academy, with B S McL—as principal, during the past year.

May 20 . . . While at R to-day I met Esqr. Bean of Geneva—the Gent who is acting as Fathers agent for the renting of a House & lot owned by him in that place. Bean says that he has now a Dutchman as a Tenant who has occupied for 4 or 5 weeks.

May 21 The past has been a beautiful day & I have spent it at home. No news worth recording.

May 22 The most extraordinary occurrence of to day has been that of going to Ovid and having Reynolds extract two teeth—an operation that was any thing but pleasant. Father was with me—his business was that of obtaining a grist from the mill.

May 23 Hitched in the colt this morning and rode to Waterloo where I arrived at about 10 o'clock, dropped a note at the Bank for collection done some other errands and returned via the old Manning Tavern. Instead of turning east at said old tavern as usual I drove on due South to E Bainbridges who resides near the Baptist Church of Romulus, for the purpose of handing him a draft and survey of his farm, recently made, and then drove home via Romulusville. The roads hard rough and dry. Saw a few farmers (2 or 3 only) planting corn, and occasionally a fruit tree in bloom, for the first this spring. Corn is worth in Waterloo to day 89½ cents. Bought a small piece of beef & had to pay 12½ cents per pound.

Notes

1. Charles Maar, "Origin of the Classical Place Names of Central New York," *New York State Historical Association Quarterly Journal*, 7 (July 1926), 155-167. Maar supposes the names may have been the idea of Deputy Secretary of State Robert Harpur, or of Governor George Clinton, who headed the Land Board.
2. Many of the journals kept by members of Sullivan's army make some mention of Kendaia. Cf. several officers' journals in George S. Conover, comp., *Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan Against the Six Nations . . .* (Auburn, 1887).
3. Albert Hazen Wright, *The Sullivan Expedition of 1779; Regimental Rosters of Men* (New York Historical Source Studies: Studies in History No. 34, 1965). Although McLafferty was a member of the Third N. J. Regiment in 1778-79, his name fails to appear in Wright's compilation of those who joined the Sullivan campaign. Over a third of the regiment stayed behind. If not present in the campaign, McLafferty might have learned of Kendaia and the Finger Lakes country from returning comrades.
4. The few details of the first Henry McLafferty's early life were recorded from family tradition in a Memorial Day article written for the 150th anniversary of his death. Unidentified newspaper clipping dated 1964, Seneca Falls Historical Society.
5. Centennial Executive Committee, *Centennial Celebration of the Official Organization of the Town of Romulus, Seneca County, New York* (Geneva, 1894), pp. 27-28.
6. "Address" by Rev. I. Fargo in *History of the First Baptist Church of Romulus* (Geneva, 1895), p. 41. The McLafferty holdings in central Romulus were located west of present day Route 96 and within the eastern boundaries of the Seneca Army Ordnance Depot. Beach Nichols, *Atlas of Seneca County, New York . . .* (Philadelphia, 1874).
7. Seneca Falls Historical Society, *Centennial Anniversary of Seneca County and Auxiliary Papers*, 2nd Annual, 1904, p. 7.
8. John H. French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York . . .* (Syracuse, 1860), p. 616.
9. *Centennial . . . of Romulus*, p. 67.
10. In the 1850 United States Census enumeration the Henry McLafferty farm is valued at \$7,200, a typical appraisal in Romulus. The average farm value in the nation that year was about \$4,000. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945*. (Washington, D.C., 1949), p. 95.
11. Semi-legible tombstone inscriptions in the First Baptist (Kendaia) Church burying ground, now located inside the Seneca Army Ordnance Depot. In 1974, a visitor was required to arrange for military escort to visit this site.
12. The author's identity is established through genealogical clues found in the diary, in tombstone inscriptions, and in the first names of the household of which he was a part. The 1850 enumeration for family 1391 in Romulus contains Henry McLafferty, 61, farmer; Rachael, 48; Henry Jr., 29, merchant; Rebecca, 20, teacher; Absalom, 15, laborer; and Frances, 11.
13. The diary was presented to the City Historian's Office by Mrs. Henry (Anita) Jaeckel of Galveston, Texas, in 1974. Her late Uncle, LeRoy Martin of Rochester, who had the diary in his possession, was a native of Ovid. According to another niece, Mrs. William (Anna) Beinke of Rochester, the anonymous diarist was a "distant relative" of LeRoy Martin. It seems likely that the McLaffertys and the Martins, their near neighbors, were allied by marriage in the nineteenth century.
14. *Centennial . . . of Seneca County . . .*, p. 11.
15. The Rev. J. S. Webber was pastor at Romulus from 1855 until 1858. He ended his career at Auburn. *History of the First Baptist Church . . .*, p. 33. Webber's pastorate followed a period of local revivalism.
16. "on the tapis": under consideration.
17. "hubby," i.e. hubby: rough and uneven.