

Monroe Kinsman (1826-1894)

Monroe Kinsman was an accomplished millwright that lived in the Town of Smithville, Chenango County, NY. He married Lucy A. Brown (1836-1911) and they lived on a farm overlooking Cincinnatus Lake (first farmhouse on left coming up the hill from Route 41). The road was originally called "Kinsman" Rd. but has somehow become "Kingsman Rd." today. Monroe was named for his mother Lucy Monroe, but his name has sometimes been spelled "Munroe."

Monroe worked at many water-powered mills in the area. The magazine article that follows was published in the "Courier" magazine in November 1955, but there are several published versions of Monroe Kinsman's contributions to the mill best known as *Hansmann's Mill* in Smithville Flats. Another mention of Kinsman is made in "*Mills on the Genegantslet Creek*" also found on this website.

The Kinsmans and some of their family are buried in the Willet Cemetery. Their son Cyrus Kinsman was also mechanically inclined and a skilled carpenter. While working near the sawmill in Genegantslet he met Mary Bradley (daughter of Daniel D. Bradley and Deborah (Francis) Bradley). They married and lived on the Kinsman Rd farm and later in Genegantslet Corners. They later owned the water-powered grist mill and sawmill at that location known as "Genegantslet Mills". In 1918 the mill was sold to Leon Beardsley and is still known today as "Beardsley Brothers Sawmill".

Monroe Kinsman's grandson, Munroe Kinsman, lived at the south end of Canal Street in Greene, NY and was the mayor for several years. There are several Kinsman and Bradley descendants today, but none known to be living in the area.

THE *Courier Magazine*

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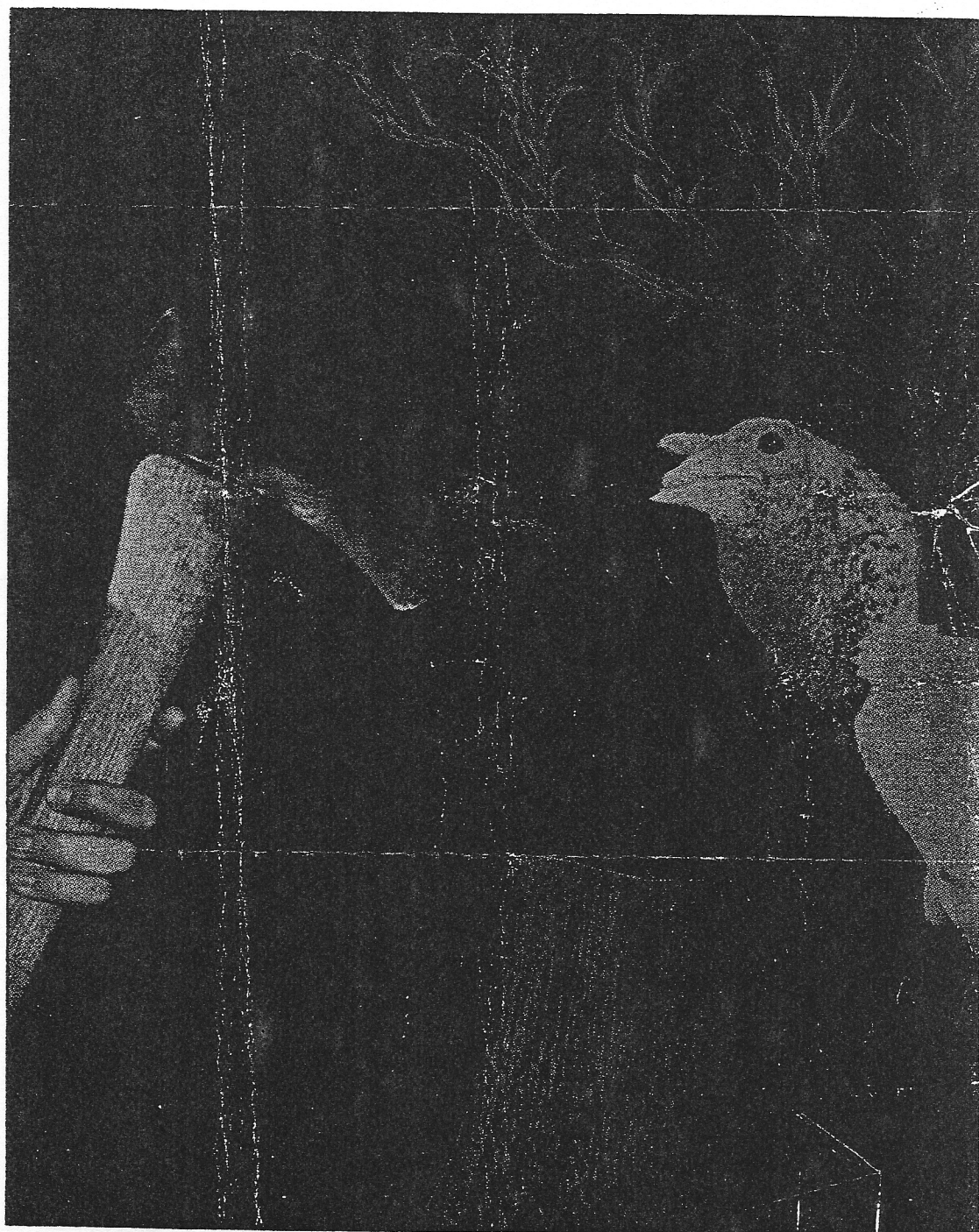
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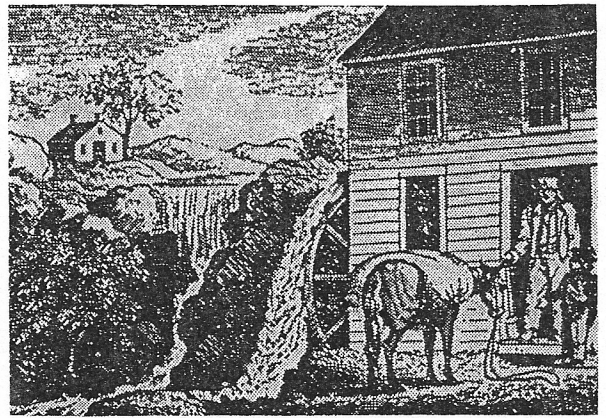
DICK SAMPSON

The Human Interest Publication
OF THE

Nov. 1955

Hansmann's Mill

*Corn, Wheat and Buckwheat Have Been
Ground by Water-Power at This
Smithville Flats Mill Since 1809*



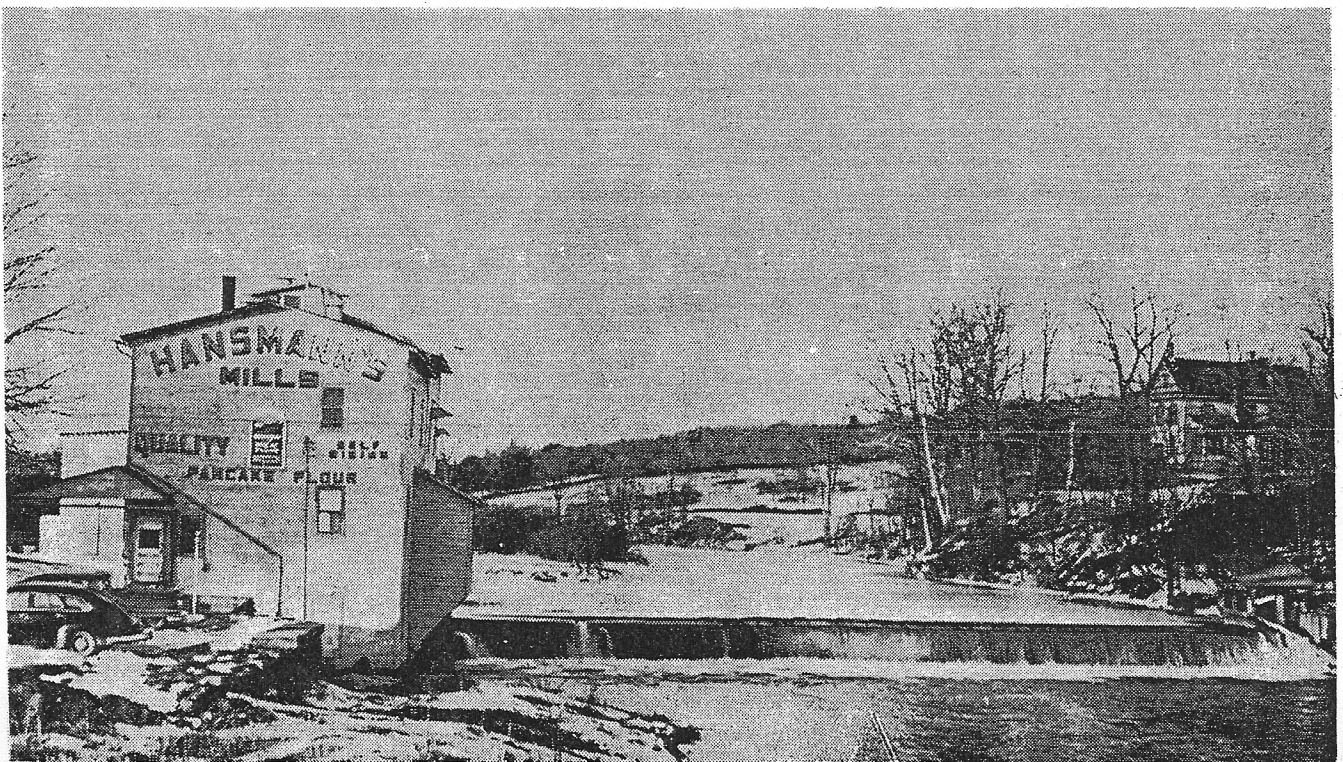
THE ROAD between Greene, N. Y., and a hamlet called Smithville Flats is a quiet one, a lovely one and one on which the driver is apt to reflect on the beauties of nature and on the days of yore. Old farm buildings, stone walls, and many of the old ways of life still exist along this roadway. So it comes as no real surprise, as the motorist crossed a quaint-sounding creek called Genegantslet on the outskirts of Smithville Flats, to see on his right a large, white and old-fashioned mill that looks as if it had just stepped, fresh and sparkling, from the pages of a forgotten era. The mill is perched on the edge of pretty little mill pond, and it has

the distinction of being the only water-driven mill in the central New York region. Part of it actually hangs over the seven-foot mill race that drops water at a terrific pace into a turbine that drives the wheels of the factory.

This mill is the home of Hansmann's Pancake Flour which is distributed throughout the Southern Tier and Central New York, as well as in Northern Pennsylvania and in Northern New York through such large chain stores as the A&P, the Victory Chain, Acme and Grand Union. This mill has a history dating back nearly 150 years. The mill today is as modern as can be (water power is used in only a few of the

mill's operations; electricity drives most of the mill machinery) and it does a dollar volume of business running into the hundreds of thousands. But back in 1809, when a mill was first set upon its site beside the running waters of Genegantslet Creek, it was used strictly to grind farmers' corn and barley and wheat for home consumption.

Not too much is known about the early history of the mill. It is known that the present mill was not built until about four years after the Civil War and is still known to some old Smithville Flats natives as the Tanner Mill, after its owner for many years, William Tanner. The only thing wrong with that is that Tanner



Hansmann's Mill, in Smithville Flats, is situated on picturesque mill pond. There has been a mill on this site for the past 146 years.

never lived to see the present mill. According to the records, this mill was built by one Monroe Kinsman, for Greene, for a Capt. Uri Rorapaugh, which is as good a name for a mill-owner as any. Captain Rorapaugh had served through the Civil War and returned to Smithville Flats to make his fortune in the mill. The mill dam, which holds back the water on which the mill depended for so many years, was also built around this time (although no definite date for the building is given) and this dam is itself a work of art.

It is called a log spar dam, and in a way is taken from the ways of the wild beaver. Giant logs are crossed in alternate layers, one parallel with the stream, and the other crossways. The logs parallel with the stream extend down and back 40 feet into the bed of the stream. The dam is topped with an apron of planks slanted up to carry the water smoothly over the dam. Portions of this dam have withstood at least two major floods. About half of it was washed out in 1890, at which time, it is said, the water washed up to the middle of the second story windows on the mill.

The mill standing now still retains all its huge, hand-hewn beams, and from a tiny office in the front of it, cluttered with papers and almost

dwarfed by a huge old-fashioned safe, Mrs. Frieda Cossitt, daughter to the Hansmann that the product is named after, conducts the business of the company. Mrs. Cossitt is a tall, long-faced woman with very fine, grey hair tied loosely in a bun behind her head and large, horn-rimmed glasses that she takes off and replaces frequently when she talks.

Frieda said that her father, Frederick Hansmann, came to this country at the age of 14 from Germany. When he arrived in the United States he had exactly 75¢ in his pocket and weighed only 65 pounds. He worked here and there, and by the time he had married and had a family, he was the owner of a small hotel and restaurant on the lower East Side of New York City, a district where, at that time, there was a heavy concentration of Germans. Eventually, feeling the call of the wild, he moved his family to Greene, N. Y., where he bought a farm, and several years later, in 1910, he bought the Smithville Flats mill from Captain Rorapaugh. The mill was then a feed mill and Frederick Hansmann continued to run it as such, grinding meal and buckwheat flour on the side with the mill's water-powered rollers.

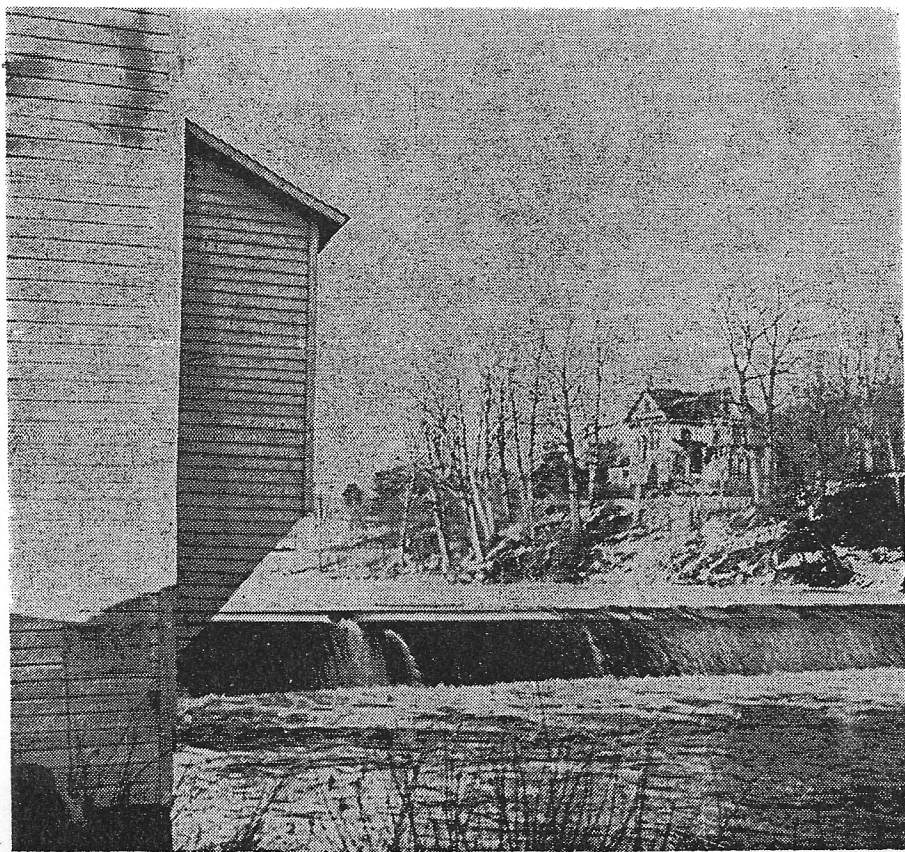
Around 1920 he began experiment-

ing with a self-rising pancake flour (in those days, in order to make a pancake, you had to mix everything yourself) and after experimenting with a wide variety of mixes—Frieda still remembers that the family was the guinea pig in this deal, consuming batches of soggy pancakes until a fluffy one was finally found—he came up with one that he began to market to various people who traded directly with the mill. As word of the mix got around, more and more people began to demand the product, and finally Hansmann, a cautious merchant if ever there was one, began to put it into bags and wholesale it to the local general store.

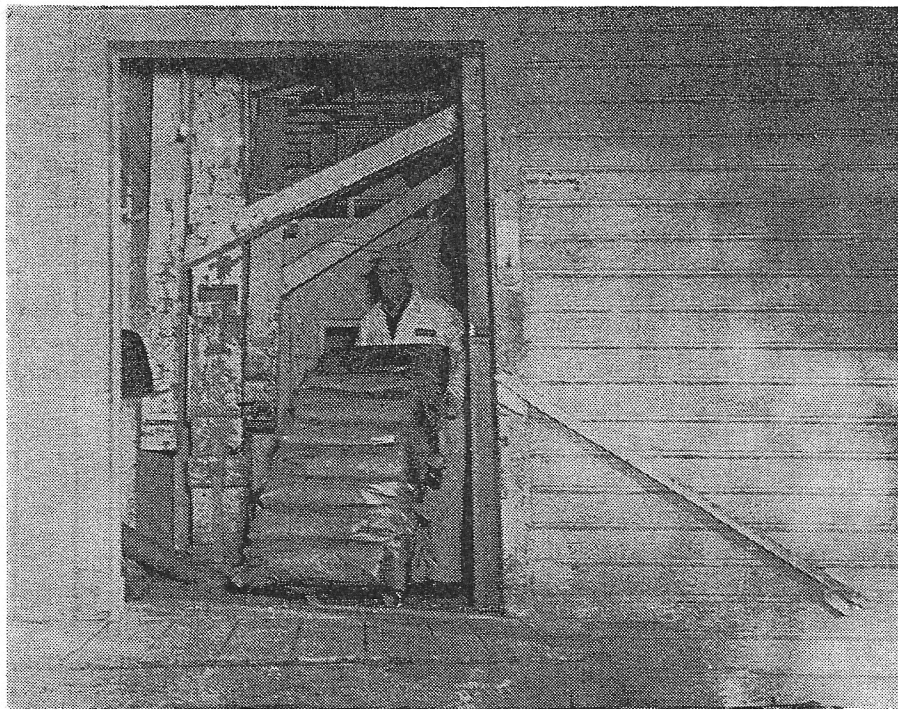
Another daughter of Hansmann, Meta, had married John Auwarter in 1923 and in that year John came in to handle the promotion of the mill's products. At this time the flour product was going under the rather awkward name of Genegantslet Valley Mills Self-Rising Pancake Mix, which was a hefty mouthful for a housewife in a hurry to throw at her grocer. After the death of Frederick Hansmann, in 1940, John Auwarter, who took over as general manager, renamed the product Hansmann's etc., etc. Mr. Auwarter spent a good deal of his time out on the road, and Frieda stayed by the mill to handle production. The former's sons, Frederick, Roderick and John, Jr., have stepped into their father's shoes after the latter's sudden death this past summer.

The mill today is simply operated, despite modern machinery. In the formulating room great sacks of powdered milk, sugar, and buckwheat, wheat, rice and corn flour stand awaiting the master hand to mix them together in the proper (and highly guarded) formula to produce the Hansmann product. These are mixed to the right consistency in large tumblers and then packaged. In a room behind the formulating room are the all-important roller grinders, a series of upright machines that have banks of rollers through which the raw grain is passed and passed again, carried up to the loft and sifted through silk screens, and then brought down and reground. When Mr. Hansmann first took over the plant, these rollers were run entirely by water power. However during the summer, the water level often dropped and the production of the mill dropped proportionately. Around 1925 electricity was run into the mill and the rollers have since depended for the most part on that to turn.

Unique at the mill is the famous



The clean, colonial lines of the old mill in Smithville Flats outline Genegantslet Creek during the spring freshet, as it pours over the mill dam.



Pancake flour for the thousands, as another load of the famous product of Hansmann's Mill comes out of the packaging room and onto the sun-dappled delivery platform.

turbine, built for the mill by Munroe Kinsman. All the parts for this turbine were hand cast of iron at Norwich from plans designed by Kinsman, and this prodigious engineer also installed the tremendous gears himself, seeing that everything was in working order. To show you the caliber of this man, it is said that when the drawings for the gears were in Norwich to be cast the following morning, Kinsman realized he had made an error in his plans. He put on his cap that evening and, leaving the house, said he would be back in the morning. He then walked all the way from Greene to Norwich, got the foundryman out of bed and corrected the drawings. Then he walked back to Smithville Flats, arriving in time to start work in the morning. They don't build them like that anymore.

To get back to the business end of Hansmann's mill, the company now ships its products all over the United States by parcel post. The mill can grind about 15 bushels of grain in an hour, using all the mills, and using strictly water power can grind about 600 pounds per hour. The company maintains two large trucks that make deliveries of the product locally, and there are 21 jobbers who ship out from the main mill. The biggest seller, naturally, is the self-rising pancake mix (for competitive reasons, the figures are not available), with the buckwheat and wheat mix following, and the whole

buckwheat and whole wheat mixes also making a showing. A specialty of the mill is a graham flour, ground on water-driven rollers. The mill also processes yellow and white corn meal, which it packages and sells to retail stores.

These products enjoy a healthy reputation throughout the Southern Tier and Central New York, and small wonder. Into each bag of pancake mix that leaves the plant has gone the careful handling of a group of men and women who have been with the plant as long as most of them can remember. Milling is a time-honored craft, and at Hansmann's Mill it is brought to its perfection by a group of experts who have been turning out excellent flour products for over 45 years.

Retired

I'm thirsty and I want a drink
But it's 13 steps to the kitchen sink,
A fly is chewin' on my shin,
He knows I'm tired, I can see him grin;

I'd like a book from yonder shelf
But Doctor said, "Don't strain yourself."

I crave a smoke so bad I'm sore
But I dropped my lighter on the floor.

That stick of gum would hit the spot;

It's all wrapped up—I'd better not.
I think I itch on the lower hatch
But dang it, I'm too tired to scratch.

Jay L. Goodnough

It Started in York State

By VERN STEELE

The saying—"Apple pie without cheese, is like a kiss without a squeeze" may not have originated in the Empire State but apple pie a la mode and the first cheese factory in America did in New York State.

Hotel Cambridge, Cambridge, N. Y., claims to be the "Home of Pie a la Mode." It is so printed on their menus. During the '80s a New York City violinist dining at the hotel was offered pie or ice cream for desert. The musician asked for both and was amused to find apple pie topped with ice cream set before him on a single plate. Back in New York City he recalled the concoction and called for the dish at Delmonico's fashionable restaurant. Delmonico was quick to add the new desert to his menu and named it pie a la mode.

Should you prefer cheese to ice cream with your pie you will be interested in the fact that the first commercial cheese factory in the U.S.A. was erected near Rome, N.Y. in 1851. A five-foot granite memorial marks the spot. It was accepted by the Rome Historical Society in 1936. Climaxing the ceremonies was the christening of the monument with a dipper of milk.

The man who thought of pooling the milk from several farms to be made into cheese at one place was Jesse Williams born nearby in 1798. An expert cheese maker he revolutionized dairying and cheese was made cooperatively rather than as a product of home industry on individual farms.

The Williams factory turned out four cheeses a day. They were uniform in size averaging 150 pounds each. By the time of the Civil War Utica-Rome had the largest cheese market in the world.

Jesse Williams' basic ideas for methods and equipment are still in use today. A remarkable feature connected with his inventions is that he took out no patents and claimed no royalty on any cheese-making device.

His obituary can be found in the Utica Morning Herald, Dec. 21, 1864. He is referred to as the patron saint of the cheese making industry.