

Eliza D. Page National Bank President

BY KARL S. KABELAC

AT LEAST FOUR WOMEN SERVED AS NATIONAL BANK presidents in New York State before 1900. One of these pioneering women was Eliza Dolbeer Page of Perry, New York.

Perry is the largest community in rural Wyoming County. The county is something less than an hour's drive southwest of Rochester and about the same distance east of Buffalo. The village was first settled in the early 1800s, and saw a spurt of growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its population zoomed from 1,528 in 1890 to 4,388 in 1910. Today's population is about 4,200, and the village serves as a trade center for the surrounding agricultural area.

Eliza Dolbeer was born in Perry in 1825, the daughter of William and Hannah (Kimball) Dolbeer, who were early settlers in the area. Her father was a blacksmith and carriage maker. Prior to her marriage in 1850 to Henry N. Page, she taught in a local school.

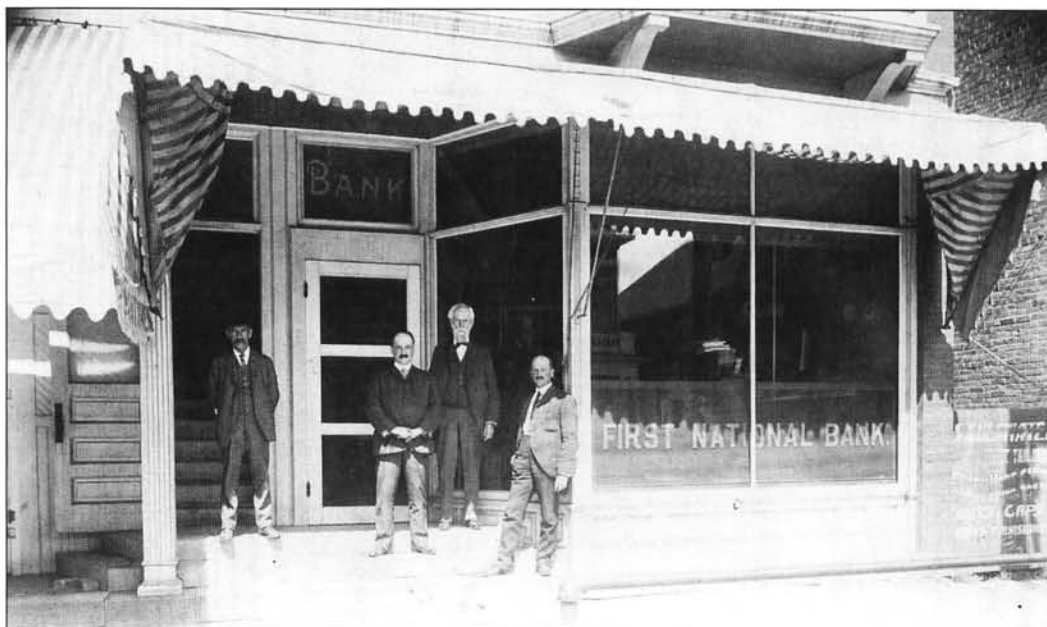
Henry N. Page was born in Vermont in 1823, and came to Perry as a young man in 1843. His sister had married into the Smith family, who founded the Smith's Bank of Perry in 1855. Page first became associated with the bank as cashier and in 1862 became its manager. He became the owner at his sister's death in 1886. Smith's Bank received a National Bank charter (#4519) in February, 1891, as the First National Bank of Perry.



Eliza Dolbeer Page, President of the First National Bank of Perry, NY from 1894-1907.

E.D. Page's signature (unfortunately partly obscured by the bill's design) as bank president on one of the 13,800 Series of 1882 Brown Back \$10 notes issued by the bank. Eliza's son William D. Page has signed as cashier. The geographical designation, E, dates the note as issued after March 17, 1902.





Just a few months later, part of Perry's downtown burned, destroying a group of buildings adjacent to the bank. Page filled a wastepaper basket with the bank's cash and securities and carried them across the street where he successfully waited out the fire.

When Page died on June 29, 1894, at the age of 70, his widow succeeded him as president of the bank. Their older son William continued as the cashier. According to the *Annual Report of the Comptroller of the Currency* for 1895, the First National Bank of Perry had \$11,250 in National Bank Notes outstanding. Mrs. Page, nearly 70 herself when she assumed the presidency, served for more than a decade, retiring in January, 1907.

William then became president, and her younger son, George, the cashier. At her death in April, 1909, it was noted that she had been "one of the few women bank presidents in the country."

The family remained active in the bank for the next half century. William served as the president until his death in 1928. Then his brother George successfully brought the bank through the Depression, and served until his death in 1939. At that point, his son, Henry (named for his grandfather), who had been associated with the bank since 1921, became president.

In 1962 the First National Bank of Perry merged with the Citizens Bank of Perry (founded in 1888) to become the Bank of Perry. Five years later the Bank of Perry was taken over by the M&T (Manufacturers and Traders) Bank of Buffalo. M&T Bank has a large presence in upstate New York, and its office in Perry continues to serve the village and surrounding area with a heritage that now extends back nearly a century and a half.

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

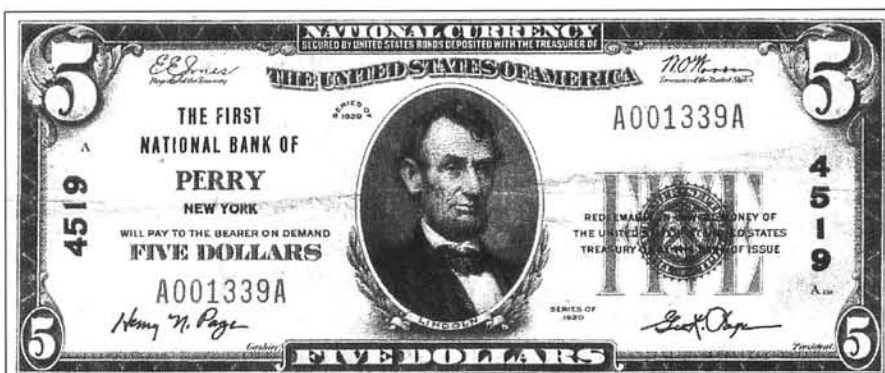
Especially helpful in preparation of this article was the bank's illustrated centennial booklet, *The First National Bank of Perry* (1955). Also useful were the two histories of Perry, Frank D.

The First National Bank of Perry, NY (c. 1897) with Eliza D. Page's sons, George K. (second from left) and William D. (right). Both would later serve as presidents of the bank during the National Bank Note issuing period.

Condition of the Bank on Sept. 28, 1895, as recorded in the *Annual Report of the Comptroller of the Currency*.

First National Bank, Perry.			
ELIZA D. PAGE, President.		No. 4519.	
		WILLIAM D. PAGE, Cashier.	
Loans and discounts.....	\$83,166.31	Capital stock paid in.....	\$50,000.00
Overdrafts.....	15.72	Surplus fund.....	4,250.00
U. S. bonds to secure circulation....	12,500.00	Undivided profits, less current expenses and taxes paid.....	969.51
U. S. bonds to secure deposits.....	4,000.00	National bank notes outstanding.....	11,250.00
U. S. bonds on hand.....	12,000.00	State bank notes outstanding.....	
Premiums on U. S. bonds.....	1,684.50	Due to other national banks.....	34.70
Stocks, securities, etc.....	4,000.00	Due to State banks and bankers.....	
Bank's house, furniture, and fixtures	12,000.00	Dividends unpaid.....	
Other real estate and mortg'g owned		Individual deposits.....	55,372.01
Due from other national banks.....	1,203.73	United States deposits.....	
Due from State banks and bankers.	473.95	Deposits of U.S. disbursing officers.	
Due from approved reserve agents.	5,649.15	Notes and bills rediscounted.....	
Checks and other cash items.....	18.23	Bills payable.....	3,000.00
Exchanges for clearing house.....	81.00	Liabilities other than those above stated	
Bills of other national banks.....	145.00		
Fractional currency, nickels, cents.	104.13		
Specie.....	1,366.00		
Legal-tender notes.....	1,906.00		
U. S. certificates of deposit.....	562.50		
Redemption fund with Treas. U. S.			
Due from Treasurer U. S.....			
Total	124,876.22	Total	124,876.22

A Series of 1929 Type 1 note with Eliza D. Page's younger son, George K. Page, as president and his son Henry N. Page as cashier. (Courtesy William Youngerman, Inc.)



Roberts, *History of the Town of Perry, New York* (1915), and *Perry, New York As It Was and Is, 1776-1976* (1976), and the 19th century *History of Wyoming County, N.Y.* (1880).

Eliza D. Page's obituaries may be found in the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, *Rochester Post Express* and the *Rochester Union and Advertiser* for April 5, 1909, and the *Rochester Herald* for April 6, 1909.

Margaret Parker, Librarian of the Perry Public Library, is gratefully acknowledged for providing suggestions, information and illustrations. Especially useful in the library's resources was the local history collection founded by Henry N. Page (1899-1979), Eliza D. Page's grandson and the last family member to be president of the bank. ♦

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