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Seventeenth Publication
of the

Oswego County Historical Society



1954

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Palladium-Times Inc.

Printers

Oswego, N. Y.

Headquarters House

Oswego County Historical Society



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Program for 1955

January 18—"Oswego Folk-lore," Students of the State Teachers College, Oswego, N. Y., Charles A. Denman.

February 15—"The Antislavery Movement in Oswego County," Dr. Charles M. Snyder, Oswego.

March 15—"Francis Lewis, Signer of the Declaration of Independence," Elizabeth M. Simpson, Mexico, N. Y.

April 19—"Oswego, From Indian Pathway Through the French and Indian War," Louis B. Gimelli.

May 17—Fort Ontario Bi-Centennial Commemoration.

October 18—"The Gerrit Smith Library," Johnson Cooper, Oswego.

November 15—"Mary Sheldon Barnes, Educator and Author," Helen Hagger, Oswego.



MRS. ELIZABETH M. ELLIOTT

“Lest We Forget”

Mrs. Elizabeth M. Elliott

IT IS A PLEASURE and genuine privilege for the Oswego County Historical Society to dedicate its 1954 Yearbook to Mrs. Elizabeth M. Elliott, for many years an ardent worker for and supporter of this Society, and a leading citizen of the City of Fulton, where she has always been identified with all worthwhile civic endeavors in the religious, cultural, mercantile, educational, and charitable fields.

Mrs. Elizabeth Elliott was born in Fulton, the daughter of the late Butler S. McKinstry and Emma Baldwin McKinstry. When she was three years of age, the family moved to Oswego, where they were active in The First Congregational church. Mrs. Elliott was graduated from Oswego High school, and then matriculated in Oswego Normal school, now State University of New York Teachers College at Oswego, graduating from the school in June 1894, with the first class which actually held its graduation exercises in the Normal School building, located in West Seneca Street.

The McKinstry family removed to Fulton in 1894, and Mrs. Elliott became a teacher in the Fulton public school system, also teaching night school in Phillips Street school.

On July 31, 1890, she was married to Edwin Bristol McCully, a Fulton attorney. He died in September 1900. In November, 1918, she married Frank Elliott of Fulton, who died March 1, 1940.

Leaving the teaching profession, Mrs. Elliott joined the staff of the First National Bank of Fulton, now the Marine Midland Trust Co. of Central New York, at the time the savings department was instituted at that bank. She remained there until 1917, when she started devoting her full time to the McKinstry Clothing store, a family mercantile enterprise established by her father in 1894, and which company she has headed and actively managed for many years.

Mrs. Elliott is a parishioner of and has been actively associated in the affairs of the First Presbyterian church of Fulton, having been President of the Women's Association of the church, and is now serving as a Deacon in the church.

Mrs. Elliott is an active member of Kayendatsyona Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and is a past Regent of the Chapter. She is a charter member of the Women's Auxiliary of the Salvation Army. She has been a member of the Salvation Army Ad-

“Lest We Forget”

visory Board since its organization in April 1940. Mrs. Elliott and the late City Judge Herbert J. Wilson have been the only two Fulton citizens to be elevated to life membership on this board.

Mrs. Elliott has been a member of the Board of Directors of Lee Memorial hospital in Fulton since her appointment to the Board several years ago by former Mayor Charles R. Baldwin. She is one of the Directors of the Francis H. French Endowment Fund of the hospital.

A member of the Fulton Chamber of Commerce, Inc., she has been active in the Retail Division of the Chamber for many years, her advice being sought on many occasions when perplexing problems confront the merchants' group.

An honorary member of the Fulton Reading Circle, one of Fulton's oldest cultural societies, Mrs. Elliott has through the years prepared and presented many valuable papers before the Circle.

Enjoying a wide circle of friends, among whom are former residents of Oswego and Fulton who have become famous personages in their chosen professions, Mrs. Elliott and her daughter, Mrs. Frances Dann, are known for their gracious hospitality in their attractive and comfortable home.

Through the years, Mrs. Elliott has shown great interest in antiques, possessing valuable pieces which charm her home. Her interest in history is unbounded, particularly in the history of Oswego County, to which her grandparents came by ox cart from Greene County. Mrs. Elliott has for many years been an active member of and an indefatigable worker for the Oswego County Historical Society. She has been a member of its Board of Managers, has presented most interesting historical papers before the society's membership, and has generously contributed to its support in many ways.

Always quiet and unassuming, and modest in all her endeavors, it is the privilege of her host of friends and associates to appreciate her many charities; her ability to own and operate one of the largest mercantile establishments in Fulton, as well as the management of large real estate holdings; her efficiency in serving the Church, the City, and the many organizations with which she is affiliated.

It is most fitting that members and officers of Oswego County Historical Society show their appreciation to Mrs. Elizabeth M. Elliott for her interest in and devotion to the Society, and honor her as a charming lady, an able citizen of her city, benefactor of the aged and needy, a person whom it is a privilege to know, by dedicating this volume to her.

Annual Report of the President

DURING 1954 the Oswego County Historical Society continued to serve the Oswego County area. A series of programs were presented before the Society and subsequently published in the Palladium-Times. The Museum attracted hundreds of visitors including numerous delegations of school children. Headquarters House was used as a meeting place for the Society, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and other organizations. Through its activities the Society cultivated an interest in local history and citizenship, preserved and collected materials of historical interest, and made available to future generations through the Yearbook subjects of lasting interest in the history of the region. The Museum in Headquarters House was open to the public on Sunday afternoons from April to November. The Society is indebted to those members who volunteered to act as hosts and hostesses.

State Historian Albert B. Corey addressed the Society on two occasions, the annual meeting in January and the dinner meeting at the Pontiac Hotel in October. At the latter the Society participated in the unveiling of a George Gray mural depicting General Benedict Arnold at the Battle of Saratoga. The annual summer pilgrimage, headed by our Curator, took the Society to Onondaga County to the Old French Fort, the Salt Museum and the Mud Lock along Onondaga Lake, and thence to Brewerton to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Denman, where the group enjoyed a picnic supper and rode around the grounds in the Denman collection of antique autos.

The year was marked by extensive improvements upon Headquarters House, under the direction of the Headquarters Council. New sidewalks were laid, the building was painted, and two porches were removed. The project, with the exception of landscaping, was completed, and the building now presents a handsome appearance. To finance the pro-

ject \$5,000 was borrowed, to be repaid in 10 annual installments. An anonymous contribution of approximately one hundred dollars made possible the reconditioning of the two metal sphinx which flank the main entrance-way.

The Ways and Means Committee sponsored and directed a bake-sale, which netted about \$240; of this sum the Fulton sub-committee raised more than \$90. The Auxiliary Committee served refreshments at the annual meeting, and the House Committee continued their work upon the furnishings. The Committee on Historic Sites again collaborated with the New York State Division of Archives and History in the administration of a Trading Post at Fort Ontario, and the Society supplied materials for exhibits there. Our Corresponding Secretaries merit special mention for their efficient handling of the dues, and our Curator and Treasurer warrant commendations for their time-consuming services to the Society.

Due to inclement weather in January the Constitution of the Society was amended so as to postpone the annual meeting from the second Tuesday in January to the third Tuesday in April. Meetings in January will ordinarily fall on the third Tuesday as in other months.

Membership in the Society continued to grow, and now totals more than 500. Annual dues remain at \$2.00 despite increasing costs. Members will make a significant contribution to the Society by inviting their friends and new-arrivals in their communities to membership. The Society's endowment, supplemented by the Barnes fund, adds to the income from dues and the annual appropriation from the County. But additional resources will be needed for repairs to the roof and other miscellaneous items. Needed also are cases and shelves for displays.

In conclusion, your President would like to thank the members for their many services throughout the year. Your cooperation has made possible the completion of another successful year.

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Future Plans for Old Fort Ontario

(Paper Given Before the Historical Society by Dr. Albert B. Corey, on January 12, 1954)

Tracing the history of Fort Ontario, Dr. Corey said that it was built in 1755, destroyed the following year, and in 1759 the star-shaped fortifications were raised by the British. The fort was destroyed again by the Americans in 1778, but four years later was rebuilt by the British who held it until 1796, when it was taken over by the United States.

The British under Lord Yeo recaptured the fort in 1814, and after the cessation of hostilities in the War of 1812, it lay virtually idle until 1939 when the present fort was constructed along substantially the same lines as the 1759 fort. The stone work was added in 1863 and in 1903 other additions were made.

Stone to be salvaged from the foundations of Officers' Row houses will be used to complete two sections of the wall never filled in, Dr. Corey continued. Other foundation stones will be used as capstones elsewhere on the fortifications.

Records show that 40,000 persons visited the fort last summer, Dr. Corey said, about double the number who signed in during 1952.

Museum Planned

Dr. Corey also described the ambitious plans the State Department of Education has for a museum at the restored fort and for returning buildings within the walls to their condition in 1839.

The guard houses, commissariat, officers quarters, powder magazine and barracks will be fitted out in the manner of that year, and gun emplacements, flags and other equipment added as they become available.

The museum is expected to contain arms, ammunition, literature and maps of the period, as well as civilian goods in use in those days. Models of all the forts that have stood at Oswego will be constructed eventually, augmented by dioramas, pictures and animated maps to show Oswego as it was more than a century ago, Dr. Corey concluded.



The Pioneer in Oswego County, 1790 - 1820

(Paper Given Before the Historical Society by Anthony Slosek, on February 16, 1954)

When the first census was taken in 1790, the continuous settled area in New York was along the Hudson River and up the Mohawk River about Schenectady. The search for soils took the New England men to New York. These immigrants were attracted by the cheap lands of the frontier. Year by year farmers who lived on soil whose returns were diminished by unrotated crops were offered the virgin soil of the frontier at nominal prices. Their growing families demanded more lands and these were dear.¹

One of the most important factors in restraining population in New York, in retarding the settlement of its frontier, and determining the conditions there, was the land system of that colony. From the time of the patroon grants along the Lower Hudson, great estates had been the common form of land tenure while still farther, on the Mohawk were the vast possessions of Sir William Johnson.² It was not simply that was, that New York became divided into two distinct peoples: the dwellers along the Hudson Valley and the Yankee pioneers of the interior. It is the Yankee pioneer that we are interested in at this time.

A new society had been established, differing in essentials from the colonial society of the coast. It was a democratic self-sufficing, primitive agricultural society, in which individualism was more pronounced than the community life of the lowlands.

The Military Tract

The Military Tract was bounded on the north by Oneida Lake, Oneida River, Oswego River, and

Lake Ontario; on the west, by a line drawn from the head of Great Sodus Bay to the head of Seneca Lake, on the south, by a line drawn from the head of Seneca Lake to the west line of the present county of Chemung; on the east, by the counties of Chenango and Madison. It comprises generally speaking the counties of Onondaga, Cortland, Cayuga, Tompkins and Seneca and parts of Wayne and Oswego Counties.³

On March 12, 1772 Montgomery County (formerly Tryon) was erected from Albany County and it embraced nearly the whole of central and western part of this state. From Montgomery County on February 16, 1791 was erected Herkimer County, embracing all the territory now constituting Onondaga, Oneida, Hamilton and Herkimer Counties and a part of Otsego County. From Herkimer County on March 5, 1794 Onondaga County was erected.

All of this immense Military Tract was within the limits of Onondaga County. Then Onondaga and Herkimer Counties were further reduced in size. In 1816 Oswego County was formed from Onondaga and Oneida Counties.

The Military Tract had its origin when Congress passed several resolutions on September 16, 1776 granting lands to officers and soldiers in the following manner:

To a Colonel	500 acres
To a Lt. Colonel	450 acres
To a Major	400 acres
To a Captain	300 acres
To a Lieutenant	200 acres
To an Ensign	150 acres
To each non-commissioned officer	100 acres

By an act of August 12, 1870 Congress also made provisions for land bounties to a Major-General 1100 acres and to a Brigadier-General 850 acres.

This land was located in the State of Ohio. It was afterwards so arranged between the State of New York and the United States, that any soldier legally relinquishing his claim to the one hundred acres in Ohio, should draw a full right of six hundred acres in New York. Failing to relinquish that right by neglect or otherwise, the one hundred acres over five hundred reverted to the State of New York. Hence the origin of the term "State's Hundred", once so much in use on the Military Tract.

On March 20, 1781 and March 23, 1782, the State Legislature passed acts which further provided for the raising of troops to complete "the line of this State in the United States Service" and for two regiments to be recruited on bounties of land, for the further defence of the frontiers of this State. The land granted by these last mentioned acts was known as "bounty lands" and that granted by the other legislation, as "gratuity lands."

When the war closed in 1783, the New York Legislature undertook to discharge this obligation and granted gratuities in lands, on its own account. This was accomplished by a resolution granting lands in addition to those before mentioned in proportions to their rank from 5500 to 500 acres. In May, 1784, commissioners were appointed to proceed to grant military bounty lands and to settle individual claims.

The original acts granting these lands were subsequently modified and amended until finally it was ordered by an act passed February 28, 1789, that the commissioners of land office direct the Surveyor-General to lay out as many townships to satisfy the claims of all persons who are entitled to bounty lands. He accordingly laid out twenty-five townships, numbering from one to twenty-five inclusive.

Later three more townships were added. Each township was to contain sixty thousand acres of land. These townships were to be subdivided into lots of six hundred acres each. In 1790, the Surveyor-General completed the survey, and fifty acres, to be located in one of the corners of each lot, was subject to the payment of forty-eight shillings to the Surveyor-General, as compensation for his services. Hence the origin of the term "Survey Fifty."

The Surveyor-General, Simon DeWitt, personally laid out the whole Military Tract; he plotted and mapped the boundaries and calculated the whole area. It comprised an area of 1,800,000 acres extending sixty miles in length and fifty-five miles in breadth.

It should be kept in mind that the Indian title to these lands were finally extinguished in 1788 and by 1789 by treaties with the Onondagas and Cayugas.

Only a few of the men ever settled on their lots. Many of them sold their claims for insignificant sums and, in numerous cases several times over, to different purchasers. Speculation and fraud were so prevalent that the resulting legal confusion in regard to titles was not overcome by the State until 1803. This served to check settlement of the Military Tract as pioneers pushed farther west where a valid title could be obtained..

Scriba's Patent

Nearly the whole of Oswego County, east of the Oswego River, was purchased by John and Nicholas Roosevelt from the State in 1791. The following year George Scriba bought the 499,135 acres tract for thirty-nine cents an acre and the transfer of the title to the tract was confirmed by Letters Patent dated December 12, 1794. Mr. Scriba's copy is now in the possession of the Oswego County Historical Society and is found appended to this paper. The contents of the letters patent, afterwards known as Scriba's

Patent, describe the boundaries in some detail. For the sake of simplicity the tract was bounded by Oneida Lake, Salmon River, Lake Ontario, Oswego River, and the Oneida River. From this area must be subtracted several grants previously committed, lands reserved for the Oneida Indians, and land at the mouth of the Oswego River. One condition in the letters stated that within seven years "there shall be one family actually settled on the said tract of land hereby granted for every six hundred and forty acres thereof otherwise these our Letters patent and the estate hereby granted shall cease determine and become void."

The laws of 1800 extended to January 1, 1808 the time for the required settlement, while the laws of 1830 released to the Patentees, their heirs and assigns the state's right to enter patented lands where the letters contained the above similar conditions.

All of Oswego County north of Scriba's Purchase was formerly a part of Macomb's Purchase. Letters Patent were granted to Alexander Macomb in 1792 and shortly after conveyed the tract to William Constable.⁴

Benjamin Wright, who was one of the assistants in the survey of the Military Tract, made a survey of Mr. Scriba's purchase. Subsequently the tract was divided among several partners and these allotments again changed hands many times before they were sold in smaller farm acreage. It is not the intention of the writer to trace the land titles from the original owners and the other subdivisions.⁵

Description of the Land

A description of Scriba's Patent was given by Francis Van Der Kemp who explored it as he traveled from Fort Stanwix as far as Mexico Point. His experiences and opinion of the land are taken from his letters written to Col. Adam G. Mappa and collected under the title "A Tour Through

Part of the Western District of New York in 1792."⁶

"It is true, my dear sir, a good soil, good water, and plenty of wood for fuel and timber are strong inducements to settle in a new country—more so, when the price of all this enhanced by the prospect of a good market in the neighborhood; but if thou art there nearly alone, without neighbors; if from the vicinity you obtain nothing even ready cash, if, as is the situation of the largest number who transport their families in the woods—their all consists in an axe, a ploy, a wheel, a frying pan, kettle, bed and pillow, with a scanty provision of flour, potatoes and sweet pork—then what? Then, my dear sir, something else besides is required not to suffer during the first season. It is true a little wheat is often saved in the fall, a small spot cleared to plant in the spring corn and potatoes, while they live in hope, if their health is spared, to prepare the soil for sowing flax seed; but something more is yet required to the maintenance of a numerous hungry family, and in this respect, too, Providence has in this district graciously provided even to satiety.

"This country so abundant in water and fish, (ducks, geese, bear, deer) is, if possible, yet more profusely endowed by our bountiful Maker with wood. Every kind of timber of the northern and eastern States is here in the greatest plenty and perfection. . . .

"I visited and examined this tract with a view to fix there my permanent residence and obtain a valuable possession for my children and your family.—I did not shrink at meeting in face some hardships, but visited it and endeavored to examine it from creek to creek, not only near the water side, but after several miles in the interior, to obtain a sufficiently correct knowledge of its situation, of its real and relative value; and in this mind I do not hesitate to make you this frank and honest confession, that I have not yet encountered in this State

an equal extensive tract of land on which I would prefer to end my course, if joined by a few respectable families in the vicinity of a tolerable settlement of which, if my wealth was equal to its acquisition, I should, in preference to all which I have yet seen, desire to secure its possession."

Settlers and Settlements

Who the early pioneers were, where they settled and when they came are listed below. Oliver Stevens, the first white settler in Oswego County, came to Fort Brewerton in 1789.⁷ Three years later "Major" Lawrence Van Valkenburgh settled (on Military Lot No. 75) in Oswego Falls, Town of Granby. He brought with him a son, his newly-wedded wife of sixteen and two other men. In the same year and on the opposite side of the river, Daniel McMaster set up the first blacksmith shop in the county. Later John Van Buren located a short distance to the north. George Scriba began a settlement of his land in 1793 at New Rotterdam (Constantia). His men built several buildings including a saw mill. Besides his agents, Adrian Van Der Kemp was one of the settlers. In 1795 Captain Nathan Sage, land agent for Frederick Redfield, settled in the town named after the proprietor. Neil McMullin and Captain Edward O'Connor came to the present site of the city of Oswego in 1797 and in the same year Asa Rice passed through Oswego to live on Military Lot No. 2 in the present Town of Oswego. Several settlers came to the village of Mexico but gave up their holdings and moved on. In 1798 Calvin Tiffany and Phineas Davis appear to be permanent residents there. At that time Benjamin Winch, a surveyor, left Mexico to establish a tavern in present day Pulaski. A more detailed story of the early pioneers can be gleaned from histories of the several towns.⁸

Up to 1796 settlement in and around Oswego was retarded by the presence of British soldiers at Fort Ontario. Oneida County as-

sessment rolls for 1798 show thirty-two residents assessed in Redfield, while there were twenty-six in all of the rest of the present Oswego County, east of the Oswego River.⁹ Settlers were increasingly afraid to invest in Mr. Scriba's lands when they discovered what heavy mortgages they carried. The growing fears and alarms of ensuing war (1812) days, the British control of the lake and their attack on Oswego (1814), dread of possible Indian raids, the enforced absence of the Militia from their few scattered homes, and devastating fever in 1812, all conspired to stunt the growth of settlements, checking prospective immigrants from eastern New York and New England. Following the war there was a flood of settlement. It was the building of the Oswego Canal which brought prosperity and importance to Oswego County.

From the narratives of the old pioneers, from journals and diaries kept we learn something about the conditions under which the first settlers lived. It is the purpose of this paper to relate as much of the story as possible in the words of those who experienced it. In order not to make this paper too cumbersome, some of the material has been placed in the appendix.

In June 1795 the French Duke De la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt visited Rotterdam and his detailed description of the settlement and life as it was lived there is still preserved. He wrote: "Rotterdam is a new establishment begun eighteen months ago by Mr. Scriba, a wealthy Hollander and a Merchant who is owner of a large tract extending from here to Lake Ontario. He has chosen the mouth of Bruce Creek as the site of his principal city and has begun another at Salmon Creek. Mr. Scriba has opened a road from here to his new city. At present his establishments amount to but little. A dozen poor houses built almost entirely at Mr. Scriba's expense constitute all there is to the city of Rotterdam, so named in honor of the native place of its founder.

The dams for the use of the mill that he has built have cost much money and being always poorly built, he has been obliged to recommence them several times. The grist mill is not yet built and the dam appears too feeble for the pressure it will have to sustain. Some work and money has been expended at the mouth of the creek to make a landing but the accommodation is very poor. They estimate that Mr. Scriba has expended over \$8,000 here and if the work had been well applied, it would be a profitable investment. Mr. Scriba is now building a fine frame house in which he plans to place a store. In this he will share the profits with two associates whom he has as his agents for these works."¹⁰ This store came to have a stock valued at \$10,000 and being the only one available did an immense business with white men and Indians for a great distance around.

Mr. Scriba attempted to build a great city, Vera Cruz, on the lake shore at the mouth of Salmon Creek.¹¹ His surveyor, Benjamin Wright, laid out the town in 1796, a map of which may be found in Miss Simpson's book. A glowing account of the town's future is described in handbills printed about that time.¹² The infant community received a tragic setback in 1799 when several of its residents were lost on the lake in a storm and in 1820 fire destroyed all the buildings. Because of these disasters and for other seasons mentioned elsewhere success did not come to the builder. Unfortunately Mr. Scriba got into financial difficulty and lost his vast fortune estimated to be million and one-half dollars.

In the "Oswego Commercial Times" of March 19, 1859 Arvin Rice gave the following account of the first settlers and settlement in the Town of Oswego.

"There were three brothers by the name of Rice, who came from Wales, in Great Britain, to this new continent, and were among the first settlers. One made his home in Connecticut, one in Rhode

Island, and the other in New Hampshire.

"The one in Connecticut had several sons, one of whom was a soldier in the old French and Indian Wars of 1754-63, and was taken prisoner by the Indians and kept by them several weeks.

"It was the custom of the Indians to take from their prisoners anything of value, whether clothing or money; but Mr. Rice kept his new blanket by sewing bits of dirty rags around the edges, and otherwise disfiguring it, and his hat he stamped into the dirt; his money he put into his stocking and wore it under his foot.

"He had a son named Asa, who served in the Revolutionary War for three years. He helped put the great chain across the Hudson River, at West Point, to prevent the British from coming up in their vessels. He was in the Battle of Saratoga, in which General Fraser was killed and Burgoyne was taken prisoner. He afterwards married and had several children. In 1792 he traded a piece of land, poor and sandy, containing four acres, for a soldier's claim to bounty land.

"When the township of Hannibal, (now town of Oswego), was surveyed into Military Lots, the old soldiers cast lots for them, lot number two falling to said Rice. In September, 1797, he started with his family consisting of himself, wife and eight children, for his new home in the woods far to the west.

"They came up the Mohawk River in a boat, which they had to draw on wheels from the river to Oneida Lake. They came on through the lake, and down the Oswego River till they came to the rapids. They here engaged a pilot (the family went on the shore afoot) but he, from some cause, rowed the boat on a sunken rock, which stove a hole in the bottom. The boat immediately sunk with all the goods on board. Everything was filled and soaked with water. Beds, clothing and all were as wet as water could make

them. It was near night, and the goods could not be got on shore, and no inhabitants were near. They found an uninhabited hut in which they spent the night but it was so small that after the family lay down on the ground—for there was no floor—it was so completely covered that the boatmen had to stand in the corners to sleep.

"After a day or two they got another boat. After considerable difficulty (such as drawing the boat around rapids and the Oswego Falls), they arrived at the place where Oswego City now stands. There were living at that time three families and a few soldiers. They went out into the lake then west three miles. There they landed on the beach at two o'clock P. M., October 2nd 1797. The boatmen immediately left, promising to return in three weeks with the winter provisions.

"There they were in the woods without a friend or neighbor, with only a pillow case partly full of flour, very little or no meat or other provisions. They were longer on the road than was expected so that their provisions were nearly exhausted.

"However, the weather was fine and the mother with the girls spread their beds, bedding and clothing on the shore to dry (for they had no chance for drying since their misfortune on the river) while the father put up a tent seven feet by nine, which they had borrowed.

"Before night there came a terrible storm of wind, thunder, and rain. The next day the father and two eldest boys aged eleven (Arvin) and fourteen years, set to work to build a house seven by nine feet of such poles as they could carry over which they spread the tent for a roof. It had no floor, window or door.

"Provisions soon became scarce, and the father tried his skill in fishing, but only caught one, and that was a salmon. It was a poor time of the year to fish; he, however, robbed an eagle of one, but these did not last long. He then went to Oswego to buy provisions

of the soldiers, but there were none to be had. He finally succeeded in obtaining a barrel of flour that had lain in the water six days and was covered with blue mould. It was brought home but it was so injured that it would not rise, so they had to bake it without, but when baked and eaten it would rise in their stomachs and could not be kept down. Their stomachs were not strong enough to contain it. The children would eat it, then go out and vomit it up; it was so hard that it had to be cut up with an axe.

"It was six weeks before the winter provisions came. In the meantime, the mother and youngest child, then about three years old, were taken sick, so they could not leave their beds. After lingering awhile, the child died—from starvation. The mother lingered till spring then recovered. After six weeks, the men returned with the winter provisions but having no mother's care, the children suffered nearly as much, from eating to excess, as they had done from starvation.

"The boatmen helped build a log house, sixteen by eighteen, and covered it with bass wood bark. After it was finished, they gathered together in the evening, and with the wine in their glasses, they named the place "Union Village" (Fruit Valley today). The next day the boatmen left and took with them two of the families, who lived where the city (Oswego) now stands, so there was only one left. During the winter the boys (for the father was a feeble man) cleared four acres, ready for a spring crop.

"The next building erected was a mill, which consisted of a large maple log, set up at one end, and hollowed out like a kettle or large mortar. The large pestle was fastened to a spring pole and the boys would work in the woods till eleven o'clock in the forenoon then one of them would go to the mill and grind (i.e., pound) corn enough for a pudding for dinner and a Johnny cake for supper.

The father also split bass wood logs and laid the flat side up for a floor, and made some other improvements for domestic comfort, their floor previously having been the ground carpeted with hemlock boughs.

"In the spring they planted some corn and some other crops but the squirrels, raccoons, bears and other wild game destroyed a good share of them. The cattle which had been purchased the fall previous were sent on from the east as soon as the spring opened. They consisted of one pair of oxen, one cow and one yearling heifer.

"The family then thought they were quite comfortably situated. Summer had come; others had moved into the city; they had plenty to eat and were getting along finely. Misfortune had not forgotten them yet; for, the cattle strayed off and could not be found. Finally the father hired some men and agreed to pay them twenty dollars to find and return them. They were gone twenty-one days. He then hired some men to build a log and brush fence from three mile to four mile swamp which enclosed between that and the lake some 300 or 400 acres. The summer passed quite comfortably but the days of pleasure were short. During the fall the family was all taken sick with the lake fever except the mother. The times looked dark and gloomy, their crops were nearly destroyed, no hay cut for their cattle, their stock of clothing nearly gone, the family sick, and they were about to enter upon another long and dreary winter on the bleak shores of Lake Ontario. The mother's clothes were worn to rags with no change of garments and the rest were equally destitute. If the mother was discouraged, she kept it to herself and tried to cheer and comfort the rest. She emptied her feather beds into boxes and barrels and made new clothing and patched old with the ticking. Trees were cut in the woods and the cattle

ate and lived on the tops—so they worried out the second winter, that of 1798. The next spring new settlers came in and the family began to see better times; still they had no meetings, schools, mills or conveniences of grinding, sawing or manufacturing of any kind."¹⁸

The story of Oswego begins in 1797 when the State Legislature passed an act (April 3) directing the surveyor-general to lay out a hundred acres on the west side of the river at its mouth. It was further enacted that the town so laid out "Shall be known and called forever and thereafter by the name Oswego." It was surveyed by Benjamin Wright. The plot ran from the river west to the line of Military Lot No. 6, now known as the Van Buren Tract, and from the lake southward to Utica Street.

From the "Oswego Daily Commercial Times" of March 22, 1886 a sketch of the early days of Oswego is quoted verbatim:

"Mr. Editor:—As I am the Oldest male resident of Oswego City, I have been repeatedly requested by citizens, to furnish an account of my first visit to Oswego, and of the appearance of the place at that period. In accordance with the expressed wish, I have given this account of my father's visit here, and of the circumstances that induced me to come; my first visit, with incidents connected with it; and; lastly, of my first permanent location in Oswego, with a sketch of the then residents, and of the country adjacent, and mentioning a few of the old "landmarks" still in existence.

"In the Winter of 1799 and 1800, my father, Daniel Burt, of Warwick, Orange County, New York, having business of importance to transact with a man in Canada, with a horse and sleigh took the route via Lake Champlain, crossing the St. Lawrence river at Shadaqu; and having completed his business, and not wishing to return by the same tedious route, proceeded to

Kingston, where, in May, 1800, he bought a bark of an Indian, and made passage of the Lake to Oswego, then a trading post. While here, he "put up" at a tavern kept by Archibald Fairfield. This tavern was a large frame building, and stood where now stands the office of the Ontario Steamboat Company, corner of Water and Seneca Streets. During the stay here he prospected up the river nearly two miles, liking the country and concluding to buy Mill Lots Nos. 1 and 7. When leaving Oswego he took passage for Oswego Falls in a Batteaux owned and run by Major Van Valkenburg, taking his canoe with him, and returning to Newburg, North River, via Three River Point, Oneida Lake, Mohawk River, and North River. While in Albany, he purchased of Lieutenant-Governor Van Rensselaer, Lots Nos. 1 and 7, and rented for ten years, at \$10 per year, 100 acres of State land in what is now the Fort Ground. In the Summer of 1801 I was living in New York, and father sent for me to come to him at Warwick, and gave me glowing accounts of the country, saying that some day Oswego would be a great place, and wished that my brother William and I would go there and build a forge. His glorious descriptions induced me to come. I would at least try it. I was hale and hearty in my 21st year; so in November, 1801, I started. Upon my arrival in Schenectady I bought a boat, and while putting my goods, which were few, aboard, I was accosted by an old gentleman by the name of Watton, (father of Mr. Watton, of the firm of Willett & Watton, at one time forwarders in this city,) in this manner, "Where are you going, young man?" I replied that I was going to Oswego. "Going to Oswego?" said he, in surprise, "why, that is the very jumping off place, the worst place in this State. If you want to hear anything about Oswego, just go up to that house, (pointing to a house in sight,) and you

will find a man just from there." Going as he directed, I made the acquaintance of Mr. McMullin, who gave me what I should call a not very flattering account of the place. He said I would starve, that he had to leave, that it was next to impossible to support life, &c, &c. Notwithstanding these glowing accounts, we concluded to come, but changed out intended course, going to Utica, selling the boat and coming through the Cayuga country to Ovid, where we wintered. In the following May, 1802, I, being joined by my brother Joel and a lawyer by the name of Baird, set out for Oswego, in a skiff. We put up in a tavern kept by Peter Sharp, which stood near the coal depot of J. M. Corlius, a little South and West of it. Next morning at breakfast, I was accosted by a man who had arrived the night before in a vessel from Canada, who asked me if he had not seen me before, and I soon recognized him as an old acquaintance in New York as early as 1800, Mr. Mathew McNair by name—a name well known and honored by our citizens. I was pleased to meet him, and this meeting was a basis of a close and intimate friendship that lasted till his death.

"All the residents of the place then were Capt. Augustus Ford, Peter Sharp, Archibald Fairfield, John Love, Rasmussen, and Capt. Connor, with their families. The place contained no Stores, all merchandise being brought from the East by trading boats. The Oswego fleet represented by one small schooner, owned by Archy Fairfield. It would carry about 100 barrels, and was called the Flat Bottom, by the residents. There were two Forts on the West side of the river; one the old Franch Fort, is known to all, and another near the foot of First street. A Fort on the East side was built of earth, and stood where Fort Ontario now stands. About two and a half miles West of here, and what is now Union Village, lived a man by the name

of Rice, father of Arvin Rice, and grandfather of Dr. Rice, Surgeon of the late 110th N. Y. V. Arvin Rice was then about 16 years old, I should judge. After a few days' stay, I returned to Cayuga County, where I stayed till September, 1802, when I again came to Oswego, and erected a Saw Mill on the ground now occupied by the old Red Mill, which may have changed its color, but cannot change its name with old residents. In raising my Mill I had the help of nearly every man in the county, some ten or twelve, and then had to use a tackle. In the Fall of 1802 I went to Warwick.

"March 5th, 1803, I again started off Oswego, via Rome, on horseback. I blazed my way through the woods of the trees, stopping the first night at the house of a Mr. Curtiss, of Camden, a miller; next night at Col. Parkhurst's, and another night at the home of Solomon Smith, of New Haven, who I knew in 1802. When near the house of Smith, where I arrived at 12 P. M., I heard the sound of a fiddle and knew the tune right well. He had a dance, and I stayed and shook the "light fantastic toe all the afternoon and part of the night." Among the dancers were a Mr. McHannon and wife, Smith and wife, and Smith's two sons and a daughter. It was in a log house, which had settled so much that we had to "duck" when we "promenaded" so as not to bump our heads on the beams, in fact one beam had to be taken out. I left this gay and festive scene next day and approached the "city" by the way of the Fort, where I met the garrison, consisting of a Sergeant and two privates, and while talking to them, I was seen by the people across the river, and the whole town turned out "en masse," crossed the river in canoes, and I, for a reason, was to them the ninth wonder of the world, being the first arrival that year, causing as much excitement as the great stone that fell in Boylston. I took

my residence in Oswego from that day, and turned my horse out to pasture, in what is now the Second Ward. During the year I erected what was in those days known as the "Burt House," and subsequently as the "Washington Hotel," corner of Water and Schuyler streets. Oswego slowly increased in size and population.

"About the year 1804 I assisted Mr. Daniel Hugunin in building a store on the lot next north of J. M. Hart's fine store. That year direction the road was cut from Oswego to Oswego Falls. The same year I also built a log house on the East side, which stood in the center of what is now East Seneca street, and which was standing as late as 1818.

"In 1803 there were no houses on the West side of the river, between Bridge street and a point three miles south of Baldwinsville. On the East side, near Seneca Hill, lived a Mr. Bush, a Mr. Tiffany and Mr. Everts. At the "lower Landing," still called that name by the people of Fulton, lived a widow Waterhouse, and at the Falls lived Squire Wright and Daniel Masters.

"In 1806 or 1807 Capt. Vaughn being at Niagara, saw a skiff with a centre-board, and liked the idea, he borrowed it, brought it to Oswego, and I built for him the first centre-board schooner ever built on Lake Ontario, and launched it from near what is now the foot of Cayuga street.

"The yellow building, corner First and Cayuga streets I built, about the year 1811. It then stood near the river, and was used as a store and warehouse by Alvin Bronson. I built the house now occupied by Mr. Bowne, on First street, in June, 1811, having to clear away dense woods to lay my foundation.

"I might mention much more connected with Oswego, but fear that I have already tired my readers. I might speak of "merry meetings" in those bygone days, when, by counting your fingers once, you could enumerate the families of the present thriving

city of Oswego. It would be needless for me to mention any of the stirring scenes of strife, as it is well known to many citizens of Oswego. So with this rambling sketch of "Ancient" Oswego, I close, hoping it may meet the wishes of my friends. I subscribe myself,

"Your obedient servant,
"J. BRADNER BURT"

The Log Cabin

The early settler upon his arrival to this area faced an ironical situation. He found a land covered with forest trees of every description but no sawmill. He set up a temporary shelter made out of tree limbs covered with bark. He then proceeded to cut down trees and hewed them into logs about sixteen feet in length. The logs were cut or notched in such a manner so as to overlap or extend at the corners. Then poles were laid forming a gable on which were laid hand made shakes or shingles. Windows were covered with bear skins or greased paper later replaced by glass. Doors were hung on wooden hinges or by straps of hide. Split bass wood logs, shaved to an even surface, were placed side by side to serve as a floor. To keep the wintry breeze out, the spaces between the logs were filled in with chips of wood, moss or clay by a process called "chinking" or "daubing." A fireplace, usually a large one, was made out of stone found nearby. A pioneer describing his home says: "I well remember the house my father first built with the help of settlers in that vicinity. The walls were logs, the floor basswood logs split, and hewed, the roof covered with long shingles split from block ash, not a door about the premises, nor a board. The blanket hung at the entrance served as a door, and kept out the cold and wild beasts. The fireplace was some stones against logs at one end of the house, and the chimney was a hole through the roof. This sheltered us from the rain, but

the snow sifted in plentifully." ¹⁴

If he were fortunate to have neighbors a mile or so distant, he would be assisted in a logging-bee or a raising. Without doubt his new friends enjoyed not only his company but also the ever present and necessary liquid refreshment, a gallon or two of whiskey—an important item in keeping energy and enthusiasm at a high level. An item from the "Palladium," April 13, 1878 relates a reminiscence of the first attempt to raise a building in the Town of Oswego without the aid of whiskey. It was made on "Paradise Street," the road from Fruit Valley to Oswego Center, by Daniel Pease and succeeded admirably although "Satan came also among them" in a gallon jug brought by a man that liked to have the "critter" honored on all such occasions. There were not more than two or three that got a "nip" before Edgar Beckwith ran against the jug with a pike pole just as an old gentleman's lips were about to greet the foe of mankind, and left nothing but the jug handle in the old man's hands. Several friends of whiskey held back on the timbers as the first bent went up and then went home disgusted.

Furniture

His bed was made by drilling holes into the logs at the corners of the house and poles were stuck into them. If rope was not available, poles were placed across these inserted pieces. Later a bed of native wood was made with ropes serving as springs. A hand made wooden implement was used to tighten the cords. In some instances a loft above the fireplace was utilized as a bedroom, access to it was by a ladder. Half-split logs with hickory legs driven into augured holes served as chairs. As soon as he found time he made stools by inserting dry seasoned hickory legs into the drilled holes of a "green" board. This made a tight joint without the use of glue. The table was a board or boards placed upon saw horses. On either

side of the fireplace boards were set up to store kitchen utensils and other items. Thus the simple furniture was placed in its appropriate place in the room, which was at once a kitchen, dining room, living room, bedroom and a workshop.

Fireplace

The fireplace took the entire side of the room. On the shelf or mantle piece were objects of immediate use. Hung above the mantle were the gun and snow shoes; still higher were long poles on which were apples, pumpkins, etc. placed there to dry. On a swinging crane were hung sundry pots and kettles. There was also a back-bar from which were hung pot hooks or chains with hooks to hang iron ware to the desired height. Near the fireplace were utensils necessary in preparing meals such as skillets, broilers, braziers, toasting forks, waffle irons, gem-irons, gridirons, dutch ovens, etc. It was the fireplace that gave warmth, cheerfulness and welcome in the home.

Food

Food at times was scarce as evidenced by the descriptions of the "cold summer" of 1816. It was widely reported that every month of that fateful year was visited by a killing frost or snow. Early travelers in this area reported that the streams were full of many varieties of fish and the forests abounded with birds and animals. Every pioneer was an excellent hunter who brought in food and fur. The family enjoyed the following foods: salted meat, sausage, hash, stew, deer, turkey, pigeons, birds, hare, squirrel, honey, maple sugar, fish, duck, corn, beans, pudding, Johnny cake, pumpkin, peas, squash, potatoes, parsnips, carrots, berries, grapes, apples (pies, butter sauce), pears, pickles, spiced fruits, marmalades, wheat, rye, ale, beer, cider, rum, milk, butter, cheese.¹⁵ Sugar came in large nine or ten pound loaves. How the food was prepared would be

an interesting subject for the future. It seems that corn in the form of pudding and Johnny cake was found frequently on the table. Corn put into an Indian Mill as described by Arvin Rice could be converted into **samp**—a course meal—which when boiled made very good eating in milk. The Indians used it almost exclusively for bread. The making of maple sugar was hailed with delight by the boys of the household who found in this work in the woods a wonderful outlet, and the girls would come out to taste the new sugar or drop it into the snow to make candy.

Pioneer Industry

Each season brought its special work such as salting beef, frying fat, boiling soap, making maple sugar, wine, etc. All the intervals were filled with spinning their own wool and flax. The pioneer's farm was a self-sustaining unit. Money was scarce and was not spent on non-essentials or luxuries. He had to be by necessity a "jack of all trades"; his wife had to be just as versatile in the kitchen. Judge Hedges says: "From his head to his feet the farmer stood in his own clothes of his own and his wife's make. The leather of his shoes came from the hides of his own cattle; the linen and woolen were from the produce raised. The wives and daughters braided and sewed the straw hats on their heads. The fur cap was made from the fox or chipmunk or squirrel he had shot, and feathers that filled the beds and pillows were plucked from his own geese. The quilts and the towels and the table cloths were all home made. The harness and lines the farmer cut from hides grown on his own farm. Everything about his ox-yoke, except staple and ring, he made. His whip, his ox-goad, his flail, axe, hoe and fork handles were his own work."¹⁶

Light

The art of candle making was quite a task and an important part of every house-keepers work.

Wife make thine own candle
Spare penny to handle
Provide for tallow ere frost
cometh in
And make thine own candles ere
winter begins.

Farmers kept bees as much for the wax as the honey. It was the regular autumn job for boys and girls to pick berries from the bayberry bushes that made such pretty green, sweet-smelling candles. Candles were made by dipping candle wicks of cotton or hemp in tallow of deer, moose, bear and meat fats. Six or eight candle wicks on a stick were dipped into the tallow heated to the proper temperature and allowed to cool while another stick was dipped. Each dipping added a layer until the candles were made. Care was taken to make certain that candles did not become too brittle. Later candles were made by using molds, a much easier process compared to dipping. The wick was put down through the center of the mold, fastened and the tallow poured in.¹⁷ To make a fire, flint, steel and tinder was used. Matches were first made in England in 1827 and in America in 1836. They were expensive and not too widely used.

Butter and Cheese

As soon as the farmer could afford one or more cows his duties increased not only in caring but feeding. It became the duty of the housewife to make butter and cheese. The cream was churned into butter in the same way as today. Milk warmed over a fire, curdled. The curds were then shaped into a cheese by a press; once pressed it needed constant turning.

Soap

The ingredients of soap are lye and grease. Ashes from the fireplace were saved and stored. These ashes were placed in a barrel at an angle and water poured into it. The residue or lye was caught in a bucket. Grease, saved from cooking and other sources, and the lye was boiled in

a great pot over a fire outdoors. This soft soap was used not only for the washing but for other household needs.

Flax and Wool

From the time the flax was planted, processed and made into cloth was a long, hard and dirty process. Briefly this was the method. Flax was planted in May and harvested in July. It was then dried, rippled (seeds taken out), placed in water to rot off the leaves and then dried. It was pounded by a flax brake to loosen the fibers and further beaten on a swingling block. It was drawn several times through hetchels, spun, reeled, bleached and woven. Wool had to be sheared, washed, carded, combed, spun and woven. The kitchen surely was an industrial center.

Farming

In all new communities the people had to work hard to make both ends meet. They produced almost everything they consumed, and consumed nearly all they produced. The farmer wasted much energy; for, his crude implements demanded much strength. How he plowed a field filled with roots, stumps and stones without the aid of Hercules is amazing. He used crude implements such as a wooden plow, harrow, spade, hoe and wooden fork. He cut his wheat with a sickle or a cradle and thrashed it with a flail or trodder down by horse or oxen. These tools were either entirely home made or were made by the local blacksmith; that is, the woodwork was fashioned at home and the iron parts such as plow shares, chains, axe-heads, scythe blades, hoe blades were made by the blacksmith. They were heavy, clumsy and tiring to use.

Religion

A large segment of the early settlers were Protestant or at least Protestant by inclination. Following the first settlements came itinerant and circuit riding preachers on horseback and on foot, sent out as missionaries to

the new country. They held services in homes, school houses and mills, sleeping and eating wherever they were welcome. An author, relating the early history of religion in the country, writes: "It is a somewhat remarkable circumstance, in view of the history of Oswego Village itself, and the fact that settlement began at several other points in the county prior to 1800, that a church society was organized in the town of Redfield as early as 1802, and that there was not a church edifice in the county until 1823, when a small one was erected at Colosse. The first one in the village of Oswego was erected in 1825. This may seem to indicate a backward condition of religious

sentiment in the county, but the fact is, religious services were held throughout the county as early as in other sections of the State, when compared with dates of settlement, and the religious sentiment and subservience to the teachings of religion were as prevalent here as elsewhere. There is no reason for believing that the inhabitants, not alone of the village but of the county at large, were not honorable, conscientious and God-fearing people."¹⁸

Thus ends this brief story of the pioneer and his way of life. It was he who pushed ever westward, little realizing that out of his toil there would rise in time a great nation.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Frederick J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1920), P. 5, 21, 80 et passim.

(2) For maps of these early patents see E. S. O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of New York* (4 Vols., Weed, Parsons and Company, Albany, New York, 1849), Vol. 1, PP 421, 774.

(3) Cf. Joshua V. Clark, *Onondaga* (Stoddard and Babcock, Syracuse, New York, 1849) Vol. I, P. 356 et seq. Dwight H. Bruce, ed., *Memorial History of Syracuse*, New York (H. P. Smith and Company, Syracuse, New York, 1891) P. 32 et seq. Jeannette B. Sherwood, "The Military Tract," *New York State Historical Association, The Quarterly Journal*, Vol VII, No. 3, P. 169 et seq. (July, 1926).

(4) For a description of land purchases in Northern New York—Totter and Crossfield's Purchase, Maccomb's Purchase, Old Military Tract—Cf. William Pierson Judson, *Certified Copies of Ancient Field Notes and Maps*.

(5) Merritt A. Switzer, "Land Titles in Oswego County From Sovereign To Settlers," *Oswego County Historical Society Publication* for 1940, PP. 75-80.

(6) Quoted in Elizabeth M. Simpson, *Mexico, Mother of Towns* (J. W. Clement Company, Buffalo, New York, 1949), PP. 38-40. This is an excellent town history.

(7) J. Elet Milton, "Oliver Stevens First Permanent Settler in Oswego County," *Oswego County Historical Society Publication* for 1950, PP. 47-61.

(8) Crisfield Johnson, *History of Oswego County* (L. H. Everts and Company, Philadelphia, Pa., 1877). John C. Churchill, *Landmarks of Oswego County* (D. Mason and Company, Syracuse, New York, 1895).

(9) Johson, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

(10) Quoted in Simpson, *op. cit.*, 54.

(11) *Ibid*, ch. IV describes Mr. Scriba's dream empire.

(12) A photo of one handbill, dated March 9, 1812, is in Miss Simpson's book. Another handbill, dated January 4, 1814, is in the possession of the Oswego County Historical Society; a copy is appended to this paper.

(13) Compare William Cooper's narrative found in the appendix.

(14) Quoted in Clayton Mau, *The Development of Central and Western New York* (The Du Bois Press, Rochester, New York, 1944), p. 196.

(15) Alice Morse Earle, *Home Life in Colonial Days* (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1922). Much information on colonial life was drawn from this book.

(16) Jacqueline Overton, "Dutch and Colonial Life on Long Island," *New York Historical Association, New York History*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, p. 339 (October 1933).

(17) Adelbert C. Abbott, "The Story of American Lighting Devices," *Oswego County Historical Society Publication* for 1953, pp. 25-29.

(18) Churchill, *op. cit.*, p. 157. Cf. Leon N. Brown, "Pioneer Oswego County Preachers and Their Churches," *Oswego County Historical Society Publication* for 1940, pp. 15-27.

Other sources consulted:

Charles M. Andrews, *Colonial Folkways* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1921).

Hamilton Child, *Gazetter and Business Directory of Oswego County for 1866-67* (Daily Commercial Advertiser, Oswego, 1866).

Edwin W. Clarke's *Memorandum Book*.

Hugh F. Murray *History of the Town of Orwell From 1806 to 1887*. (L. R. Muzzey, Pulaski, 1887).

Gordon W. Sturge, *Hannibal's Historical Highlights* (1949).

Notebook of Early Residents in and Around Oswego.

The Erie Canal

(Paper Given Before the Historical Society by Dr. David Ennis, Lyons, N. Y., on
March 16, 1954)

Dr. David Ennis of Lyons, N. Y., an authority on the Erie Canal and canal lore, presented an illustrated lecture before a large audience at the March meeting of the Oswego County Historical Society held at Headquarters House on Tuesday.

Dr. Ennis introduced his subject by reviewing the history of the Erie Canal and of canaling in general. Canals, he noted, were constructed by the Babylonians; however the inventor of the lock remains undetermined. The Romans used canals but no locks.

In the eighteenth century canals were built in Western Europe, and these canals were models for the Erie.

Routes were surveyed as early as 1724 in New York, and George Washington at the close of the Revolutionary War toured the Mohawk country with Governor George Clinton to see at first hand the prospects for canal building. A short time later, in 1794, the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company opened water traffic to Oswego, the improvement including several wooden locks at Wood Creek.

The Erie Canal, after having been delayed by the War of 1812, was begun near Rome on July 4, 1817, the speaker observed. Much of the region to be traversed was still a wilderness. Several mechanical inventions, good illustrations of Yankee ingenuity, helped to speed the work. One was used to pull stumps, another was a dumping wheelbarrow, others included a horse-drawn plough with a brush-cutting device and a horse-propelled scraper.

On Oct. 29, 1925, the canal was completed and a fleet of barges began the first all-water journey from Buffalo to New York City. The procession was greeted by receptions at all of the larger towns and many of the villages. The climax was reached at New York where the largest demonstration in that city's history to that time was staged. It made such a striking impression upon the public mind that the Seneca Chief, the barge bearing Governor De Witt Clinton, and moving at the head of the line of barges, has been familiar to generations of school children from that day to the present.

Dr. Ennis summarized the major improvements to the canal effected during the years following, and pointed out that the value of the canal for flood control alone was worth more than its cost of construction.

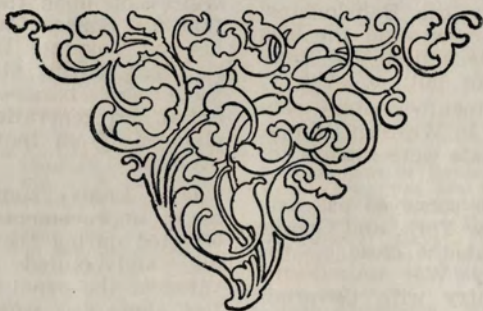
Following these introductory remarks, Dr. Ennis showed a collection of slides, including early prints as well as recent photographs of canal ruins. To mention a few of them: Lockport, where five successive locks dropped the canal from the Erie to the Ontario plain; the aqueduct carrying the canal across the Genesee River in Rochester, the confluence of the Erie and Black River canals at Rome, the locks and aqueduct at Little Falls, and the famous hanging rock there; Freight and passenger including the Seneca Chief, also packet interiors showing sleeping quarters and captains' cabins, canal builders, including Elkanah

Watson and DeWitt Clinton; tow paths from early prints and photographs with present-day ruins.

At the conclusion of his address Dr. Ennis answered questions and participated in a general discussion.

A striking picture of Lockport,

painted a few years after the completion of the canal, the property of Miss Frances J. Eggleston, was displayed. Also viewed was a giant pitcher used to mix and pour pancake batter on canal packets, belonging to J. C. Birdlebough of Phoenix.



The Story of Constantin Francois Chasseboeuf, Comte de Volney

(Paper Given Before the Historical Society, by Elizabeth M. Simpson, on April 20, 1954)

There is one personality that seems to flit rather ghostlike over the Oswego River valley—one Constantin Francois Chasseboeuf, Comte de Volney whose name is perpetuated in that of our neighboring town. The most historically minded citizens of that town know of him only that their fathers and grandfathers were brought up on the story of a visit of a Frenchman, named Volney, at the falls of the Oswego, as told later in the County Histories of Johnson and Churchill.

The earliest known printed version of this story is that published in 1862 by Amos G. Hull, lawyer and local historian, in Chapter 2 of his "History of Fulton and Oswego Falls." In a reprint appearing in the "Fulton Times" from November 5, 1890 to January 21, 1891 we read: "The town of Volney was organized in 1812, taken from a section called Fredericksburgh. It derives its name from the following incident: Volney, the celebrated French writer and philosopher, in making a voyage from Montreal in 1808, had encountered a terrible storm on the Lake by which he lost many of his valuable papers and came near losing his life. On arriving at Oswego he came directly up the river to the falls and put up with Mr. Noah A. Whitney and here spent several days in rewriting what he had lost and in recovering from the effects of his perilous journey. Mr. Whitney became so charmed with the social qualities and learning of his guest that, when the section of

the country called Fredericksburgh came to be subdivided, he proposed that the new town to be organized should take the name of Volney, which was adopted."

These statements and the identical words, in a large part, were repeated by Francis W. Squires, another local historian, in Johnson's 1877 "History of Oswego County." The same story appears again in Churchill's 1895 "Landmarks of Oswego County," with the addition of Volney's full name and title and further identification of the man as an academician. Churchill is less exact, however, in the matter of the year of the visit which he says occurred "very early in the present century, probably in 1808." Elsewhere he accepts without question Johnson's date of 1807 for the settlement at the falls of Volney's host; so he could not have conjectured a materially earlier year for the visit than Hull's 1808.

In Johnson's History, Noah A. Whitney appears as a man of consequence among the pioneers, becoming on his arrival co-manager with Dr. Bissell of a State owned mill, Justice of the Peace in 1809 and postmaster in 1811 of Oswego Falls, as settlements on both sides of the river were then called. Thanks to the "History of Fulton" written by Charles D. Lathrop and published in 1901 we can picture Volney as resting in the Whitney home at the northeast corner of the present First Street and Broadway.

This, then, is the story that has long been locally known and accepted as the origin of the rather unusual name of Volney in the list of Oswego County towns. The fact that the same story is told by Amos G. Huli and Francis W. Squires influences one to accept the account as factual for in their day both were known as men of intelligence and local historians well acquainted in Volney and in the county, who relied not on hearsay and folklore but on official records or the words of participants in, or observers of, the events which they chronicled.

Who and what was this Frenchman, said to have visited the present site of Fulton in 1808, rested a few days and vanished, leaving behind only a memory of charm and learning and a name for a town to be erected four years later? Was he actually in the United States at that time? If so, why? These are the three questions that I should like to have you study with me.

From such sources as have been found in this country, reinforced by others in Canada and France, we learn that our man of mystery, if there be a mystery, was born on February 3, 1757, of a good middle class family at Craon in the Province of Maine et Loire, the son of a barrister, Francois Chasseboeuf. The father apparently did not consider his family name worthy of his brilliant offspring and let the boy be known as Boisgirais, a name derived from that of the family estate. The son used the latter name until he was twenty-five in 1782 and then adopted the name of Volney, whose origin is said to be uncertain but which is a recognized French name.

From his early years the boy, a natural student, devoted himself to the search for the truth, to the ancient languages, the natural sciences and history. After he completed his secondary education at the Colleges of Ancenis

and Angers near his home, at the age of seventeen he received a small legacy from the estate of his mother. With this he went to Paris where he studied medicine and was welcomed in the philosophical salons of the city where he met, among others, Voltaire, Diderot and Benjamin Franklin, his first contact with an American.

He spent the years 1782, '83 and '84 traveling in Egypt and Syria and learning the Arabic language by living in a Coptic monastery. From these experiences he wrote his first book, "Travels in Egypt and Syria," which was published in two volumes in 1787 and was followed the next year by his second book, "Considerations on the Turkish War." On his return to France he founded at Rennes a Journal which he called "La Sentinelle."

France was then rapidly moving on toward the Revolution and the momentous year 1789 saw Volney drawn into politics as Deputy representing the Third Estate in the States General. In 1790 he served as Deputy and Secretary in the Constituent Assembly that framed a constitution, aiming at reforms but preserving the monarchy. Even at this time the name of Volney was known in America for he was mentioned in the "Newport (R. I.) Herald" of December 9, 1790 as a member of the National Assembly.

It was in 1791 that Volney published what was, perhaps, his best known work and certainly the most controversial one, "Ruins or Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires." It went through many editions in English as well as French and was destined to make its author even better known in the United States but to bring down on his head in this country condemnation as a free-thinker, an infidel, an atheist and the enemy of all religion. French authorities deny the truth of these judgments.

Volney next went to Corsica where he attempted to put into practice his politico-economic theories and bought an estate in 1792 on which he experimented in the production of sugar cane, cotton, coffee and indigo. He was appointed Director of Agriculture and Commerce of the island, but was recalled as the Revolution progressed. He returned to the mainland and in 1793 published his "Account of the Present State of Corsica."

From the *Memoires of Philippe-Aubert de Gaspé*, a French Canadian writer, (1786-1871) we gain the first suggestion that Volney desired to visit the United States. Translated, the *Memoires* read: So the 23rd of January 1793 the Committee of Public Safety decided to send Volney, the triste author of "Ruins", as a naturalist with 15,000 livres a year to find out about the state of things in America. The object of the Committee was not to find out if a conquering army would be well received in Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley. Volney had wished to pay for a trip to America at the expense of his government."

This decision of the Committee of Public Safety was made only a few days after the execution of Louis XVI; and the Queen went to the guillotine the following October. The Reign of Terror raged on and many another head fell. Volney himself was arrested, probably as a suspected Royalist for, while he had approved of the reforms of 1791, he could only condemn the crimes of 1793. He was held in different prisons for ten months but escaped the guillotine. On his release in 1794 he was appointed Professor of History in the recently established *Ecole Normale*; but that College was soon suppressed.

This made the plan for the American visit feasible in 1795; but no hint is given as to whether the government still sponsored the plan and provided financial support. Volney wrote of his own

hopes: "I embarked at Havre for America with all dreary feelings flowing from observation and experience of persecution and injustice. Saddened by the past, anxious for the future, I set out for a land of freedom to discover whether liberty which was banished from Europe had really found a place of refuge in any other part of the world, whether a sincere friend of liberty could find for his declining years a peaceful asylum of which Europe no longer afforded him any hope."

In spite of this statement by Volney and Gaspé's denial that the French authorities were planning to send a conquering army into Louisiana, one must realize that the very denial implied a suspicion in certain American minds that Volney came primarily to further a plot for the recovery by France of the great trans-Mississippi territory that she had ceded to Spain in 1762. Such a suspicion could but create a fear that, with a more aggressive nation like revolutionary France in possession, the United States would lose the free navigation of the river and free access to the sea.

It was under such conditions that Volney landed in Philadelphia, then the federal capital, on the twelfth of October 1795, fifteen days before the Directory was established as the government of France. Although he was urged by Thomas Jefferson, with whom he had some correspondence, to come to Charlottesville, Virginia and to visit in the Jefferson home, he chose to make Philadelphia his headquarters. There he devoted the winter of 1795-6 to the perfecting of his English. An accomplished linguist, he easily acquired an excellent command of the language. We have one portrait of the man at just that time. The engraving posted is dated 1796. The photograph and the photostat reproduced from another original are undated. Here is a word picture painted by a contemporary and acquaintance, Samuel Breck, in

his "Recollections", at times suggesting a gossip column: "Volney was a timid, peevish, sour-tempered man."

At that time Volney expressed every intention of becoming a permanent resident of the United States: "Here I beheld nothing but a splendid prospect of future peace and happiness. —Here, therefore, I resolved to remain." Jefferson advised him: "If you have views of fixing yourself (as a resident) of the United States, it would be wise in you to visit different parts of them. In some parts little can be done with a great capital; in others much with a small one. Soil, climate, price, the objects of culture, and the state of society are all worthy of study." Jefferson provided him with letters of introduction to friends as far west as St. Louis, which, at least, indicates that Volney planned to cross into the Spanish-held territory in which the French government was suspected to be interested.

Before setting out on his travels, Volney presented himself to President Washington. Breck reported this meeting: "General Washington who hated free-thinkers was, of course, not very much disposed to caress Volney and, indeed, as President had declined to notice the French emigrants. Volney, however, paid him a visit at Mount Vernon where he was received *bon gre, mal gre*, but was entertained with the usual kindness shown to strangers. When about the depart he asked the General for a circular letter that might procure aid and attention on the long tour he was about commencing. Washington wrote a few lines which Volney considered, it is said, either equivocal praise or much too feeble for his exalted merit. —As well as I remember, the note was in substance thus: 'Monsieur Volney who has become so celebrated by his works need only be named in order to be known in whatsoever part of the United States he may travel.'" Breck's memory may, perhaps, have pre-

served the substance; but Washington's own words, as given in the "Herald of the United States" dated August 13, 1796 and quoted by Mary Ellen Loughrey in her "France and Rhode Island 1686-1800", are needed to convey the cold, non-committal import: "The bearer, C. F. Volney, so well known and admired in the literary world needs no introduction from Geo. Washington, President of the United States."

Volney left Charlottesville, Virginia the 26th of June and by July 12th was across the mountains and on the Ohio at Gallipolis, that unfortunate French Colony founded six years earlier. From there he journeyed on to Vincennes on the Wabash in southwestern Indiana, a much older settlement where there had been a French trading post since, perhaps, 1702. It is surprising to find that here he abandoned his plan to cross the Mississippi. Was it because he wished to avoid arousing suspicion of his true mission or was it for quite other reasons as he explained? "It was my intention to have proceeded as far as St. Lewis (sic) 180 miles from Fort Vincents (sic); but various inconveniences prevented me. I contented myself with noting down facts attested to me by several eyewitnesses who had visited those parts that very year and the four preceding." After enumerating the lesser "inconveniences" he continued: "This great, this magnificent Mississippi, held out as a Land of Promise, is a very bad neighbor," and cited the problems that the river still poses for the Corps of Engineers. He had already decided from his own observations that his compatriots were ill fitted by temperament and experience to cope with the hardships encountered in the settlement of wild lands. Now he heard that they were retreating to Canada and Lower Louisiana before the increasing migration of Americans who were being lured to cross the river by Spain's policy of granting lands to any Americans who would naturalize

themselves. Summing up what he had seen and heard, he wrote: "These accounts, I confess, are very different from what have been lately given in Paris where the country was represented as one that would speedily become a flourishing Empire. But I have received them from several eyewitnesses who had neither places nor interest in speculations in land and I publish them impartially—without the least desire to hinder anyone from going to verify them."

The expressions, "Land of Promise" and "flourishing Empire", are enough to show that Volney well knew that the government in Paris did have a plan for repossessing the vast Louisiana Territory. But he still would have his readers believe that he had learned enough to convince him of the utter futility of such a dream. At any rate, he wrote to Jefferson that, having obtained all the information he needed about lands to the West, he had decided to turn back at Vincennes and to return to Kentucky. By August 24th he was as far east as Lexington, then crossed the state to Cincinnati, "where", he wrote, "I availed myself of a convoy of money going to Fort Detroit, through the civility of Major Swan. I was able conveniently to pursue the military road just traced by Gen. Wayne's army across a forest of 250 miles throughout which we found no accommodations but five palisaded forts recently constructed. The reception given me (at Detroit) by the General (Wayne) afforded me room to believe that I had attained my object (?) beyond my hopes, but the tribute I paid to the fevers of the country and the season robbed me of all my advantages. I was obliged to avail myself of the only vessel that would pass (down) the lake before winter and to return to Philadelphia."

It seems strange that, in addition to Volney's own account of the voyage down the Lake, there should be two others still in ex-

istence, each portraying his character as seen by his traveling companions. The first is by Samuel Breck, based probably on hearsay: "Being on board a sloop on Lake Erie Volney was overtaken by a storm. Thinking himself in danger, he cautioned the master to be careful how he navigated the vessel for it contained the celebrated Volney who would have him punished by the President if he did not conduct himself with prudence. This story was current at the time and generally believed." The second account is Gaspé's, provided by his wife's grandmother, Madame Duperon Baby and repeated by her granddaughter: "I am sorry to say that sainted woman (my grandmother) did not enjoy at all the society of the French philosopher for by his ridicule he tried to destroy the faith of his traveling companions. At every opportunity he hurled sarcastic remarks against the Catholic religion and all Christian sects. He approached Mme. Baby as she was reading a devotional book and offered her, without reason, a book which he drew from his pocket, saying that this book would please her much better than the one she was reading. 'I do not read this book', she answered, 'to amuse myself; but I pray God to save us from all dangers during this often dangerous voyage.' 'No doubt you fear death', answered Volney, 'that fear is very natural to women.'"

"During the night a furious storm arose, one of those storms that the bravest sailors fear more than those of the open sea. The waves were too short. Mme. Baby began calmly to recite her rosary, while Citizen Volney showed a fear which many people shared, but without giving outward sign of it. It was not until twenty-four hours later that the storm ended bringing joy to crew and passengers as well as calm to the philosopher. When Mme. Baby saw Volney recover from his fright, she said to him: 'I am surprised that a great philosopher

like you has shown more fear than the Christian woman whom you laughed at.' As a philosopher always has an answer, he said emphatically: 'I do not fear death at all personally, Madame, but I have a great mission to fulfill, to light a lamp among blind human beings; when that task is done I shall be ready to enter into nothingness.'" Volney wrote feelingly to Jefferson about the storm, the barely averted shipwreck and six days of seasickness.

It was the 24th of October when he reached Niagara and found the Falls "an incident truly astonishing in Geography." Weakened by intermittent and bilious fevers and his long bout with seasickness, he limited his explorations to a descent to the bed of the river below the Falls by means of "Mrs. Simcoe's ladder" made of trunks of trees with notches cut in them and fastened to the side of the precipice. (Mrs. Simcoe was, perhaps, the wife of Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe of Upper Canada.)

An earlier letter to Jefferson had indicated that Volney was planning to go from the Falls to Oswego by way of Lake Ontario; but he had probably had enough of Lake storms and accepted the loan of a horse and a guide from Judge Powell with whom he had spent five days near the Falls. So he by-passed Lake Ontario and Oswego, riding the horse from Niagara to the Genesee country. From the Genesee River to the Mohawk he traveled on foot; but there the weather forced him to take to a conveyance, both open and backbreaking, as far as Albany. A map, published in London in 1804, by its dotted line shows that he followed the Hudson (probably by boat) to New York and returned across New Jersey to Philadelphia. The same map shows also that he carried out his announced plan of visiting Boston and Richmond. The Boston trip gave him a circular tour through Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. After returning to Philadelphia, he crossed Maryland

and Virginia to Richmond, passing through the future federal capital. During these trips he decided that, if he were choosing a site for a home in this country, it would be either in southern Rhode Island or in Virginia.

But life in the United States was fast becoming unendurable for him. With the succession of John Adams to the Presidency in 1797, the political scene became more and more troubled by the European situation, Adams' Federalists favoring the British and the Republicans or Jeffersonian Democrats, the French. The administration's relations with France worsened to the point of an undeclared naval war. All foreigners fell under suspicion. French emigres and refugees were unpopular in Philadelphia political circles. Volney, as a reputed atheist and radical was attacked with special venom by two English critics in America, Dr. Joseph Priestley, the great Unitarian Radical, and the famous William Cobbett whose news-sheet, "Porcupine's Gazette" was violently anti-French. Volney felt that he had now become the object of personal animosity on the part of President Adams because he had dared to criticise Adams' treatise on the Constitution of the United States. Breck refers to this situation: "Volney affected to entertain sentiments of republicanism of a much purer character than those which governed the first John Adams and ceased to attend my father's soirees because he saw there none but Adamites as he called the Federalists of 1798. Meeting him one day, my father inquired the cause of this estrangement. He cast at that worthy parent an angry look and morosely remarked that he chose to keep aloof from the enemies of French freedom."

In the spring of 1798, the Alien Act was passed by Congress, authorizing the President to order out of the United States all aliens regarded as "dangerous to the public peace and safety or suspected of treasonable or secret

inclinations." Jefferson expressed his belief that "Volney was, in fact, the principal object aimed at by the law." For the old suspicion was coming into the open and Volney was being publicly accused as a spy. He declared his innocence by many arguments why the charge could not be true: "I shall point out to the Americans the absurdity of the prime grievance by which I was rendered a suspected person (for at that period the language and system were truly those of terrorism). I was supposed to be the secret agent of a government whose axe had not ceased to fall on those like me. A conspiracy was fabricated which I (a single Frenchman) had plotted in Kentucky (sic) to deliver up Louisiana to the Directory (which had but just risen into existence); and this when numerous and respectable testimonies in that very Kentucky, as well as in Virginia and Pennsylvania, could attest it to be my opinion that the invasion of Louisiana would be false policy; that it would involve us in a quarrel with Americans and strengthen their inclination toward the English; that Louisiana suited France in no point of view; that colonizing it would be too expensive and precarious; to maintain possession of it, too difficult for want of a navy and of stability in our government which is distant, changeable and embarrassed; and that, in short, from the nature of things, it only suited and must ultimately belong to the neighboring power, which possessed every means of occupying, defending and retaining it. This opinion, contrary to that of most of our ministers, exposed me to their disapprobation, nay almost their reprimands, both in America and in France. I have, notwithstanding, continued to maintain it, in times when it required any degree of courage to avow it."

Does the gentleman seem to you to "protest too much" or does he convince you of the sincerity of his protestations?

On June 1, 1798 Jefferson wrote

to Madison: "Volney is gone. So is Dupont, the rejected consul." He added: "It is natural to expect they go under an irritation calculated to fan the flame. Not so Volney. He is most thoroughly impressed with the importance of preventing war, whether considered with reference to the interests of the two countries, of the cause of republicanism or of man in the broad sense." Volney himself explained his unexpected departure: "I had formed a resolution to remain in the United States when in the spring of 1798 there broke out so violent an animosity to France and a war seemed inevitable that I was obliged to withdraw from the scene." "Le Moniteur", official organ of the French Government, announced on July 17th the arrival at Bordeaux of "Citizen Volney with Citizen Dupont, Consul of France in Philadelphia."

A letter from William Vans Murray, our Envoy Extraordinary in Paris, written to John Quincy Adams in 1799 portrays Volney's feelings as revealed after his return to France: "Volney is convinced that the whole American people are bitter enemies and hate the French on account of the depredations of the privateers. He is very angry at the lashings of our newspapers against himself." He did not, however, publish these feelings for, while he had proposed to write an extensive study of the United States from every point of view, physical, political and social, he contented himself with publishing only the part designed as the introduction to the whole, explaining: "Delayed by my recent engagements, both of a public and a private nature, and by serious illness, I felt that I lacked both time and strength to bring my work to a conclusion and determined to publish only the 'View of the Climate and Soil of the United States.'" Charles Brockden Brown, "America's first professional man of letters," who translated the book in 1804, remarked: "Fortunately for Volney circumstances have prevented him

from publishing his observations on the government and manners of the people. These are topics on which his prejudices as a Frenchman and as a vain and captious mortal would have abundant opportunity to show themselves and in which he would have been in perpetual danger of shocking the prejudices of the people he described."

Volney returned to Paris in 1799 in time to witness the fall of the Directory and the rise of Bonaparte to the position of First Consul. He seems not to have been a partisan of Bonaparte at that time for he refused to serve as Consul under the First Consul and as Secretary of the Interior. And now it was Bonaparte who was dreaming of restoring France's Colonial Empire in Louisiana and who did secure the return of the Territory by Spain by the secret treaty of San Ildefonso, signed January 1st, 1800. Another letter written in 1802 by William Vans Murray gives a glimpse of Bonaparte and Volney face to face: "In conversation with Volney Bonaparte said that he wished to yield to the wishes of the majority of the people. Volney replied: 'Good—the majority of the informed people. If you obey the majority in all you do, it will be necessary to recall the king.' Bonaparte got into a violent passion. Volney was frightened and fell into fits. Bonaparte exclaimed: 'Take this man out of my sight.' Volney was sent home in a carriage."

And yet, as Emperor, Napoleon recognized the value to his regime of such a man as Volney, a scholar, a moderate and a liberal and made him a member of the Senate and in 1804 Commander of the Legion of Honor, and a Count of the Empire in 1803. We have no evidence that Volney was loath to accept the honors offered. The fact that, after the fall of the Emperor and the restoration of the Bourbon Kings, he was made a Peer of France by Louis XVIII, suggests a considerable degree of adaptability

to the political climate of the day on the part of the Napoleonic Count. But his French biographer in 1827 asserted that, in spite of his position in the peerage, he always voted in accordance with the principles that had governed his entire life.

Much of Volney's life must have been spent in research and writing for, in addition to the publications already mentioned, he produced many volume of learned treatises in his chosen fields. Such labors continued up to the time of his death. Under his name are listed:

Chronology of the Twelve Centuries that Preceded the Entrance of Xerxes in to Greece.

The Law of Nature or the Physical Principle of Morality (1793)

On the Simplification of Oriental Languages (1795)

A Letter to Dr. Priestly (1797)

Lectures on History Delivered in the Year 1800

A Comparative Vocabulary of All Languages in the World (1805)

The Chronology of Herodotus (1808, 1809)

Researches in Ancient History
New Researches in Ancient History (3 vols. 1814)

The European Alphabet Applied to the Languages of Asia (1814)

The History of Samuel (1819)
Hebrew Simplified (1820)

Abundant recognition of his scholarly and literary abilities came to him in his life time. He was made a member of the French Institute in absentia in 1795 and became an active member in 1800. Three years later he was elected to the Academy Francaise. He also held honorary membership in the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia, the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, and in the Athenaeums of Avignon and Alencon. Bits of evidence of the value set upon his writings from his own day to the present are often to be met, for example: The "Newport Mercury" of June 23rd 1795 quoted from "Ruins" excerpts dealing with the special privileges granted to the

clergy as a class; Volney's "Letter to Dr. Priestley" is listed in a catalogue of George Washington's library; a new edition of "Ruins" was brought out in New York in 1890, ninety-nine years after its first printing; and Velikovsky in his "Worlds in Collision" of 1950 cited as authority Volney's "New Researches in Ancient History" one hundred and thirty-six years after its publication.

Up to within ten years of his death Volney was a bachelor, although as a young man he had wished to marry his cousin, Mlle. de Chasseboeuf; but his roving life of travel in far places had deterred him from making the proposal. In the meantime she had become the wife of another and her husband had died. In 1810 Volney "offered his fortune and his hand and what had been his hope in his youth became his comfort in his latter years." He gave up his small bachelor establishment and acquired a mansion where he expended considerable sums on the gardens for the pleasure of her would survive him, as he told his friends.

Volney died April 25th 1820 at the age of sixty-three. Funeral services were held in the Church of Saint Sulpice in Paris and he was buried in the Cemetery of Pere Lachaise. Many eulogies were pronounced by famous Frenchmen. His friend and executor, Count Pierre Antoine Daru, declared that he was one of the very few whose memory would never die. In this country an unnamed friend and correspondent sent his tribute to the "Saratoga Farmer" and it was reprinted in the "National Intelligencer" of Washington, D. C., July 14th 1821. In part it reads: "In the United States where he came intending to pass the evening of life in ease and retirement, Volney was not fairly used and we view his character under a cloud of prejudice.— Next to our Jefferson, I frankly acknowledge, I regard him among the greatest and best men of the age."

In spite of my own efforts and

the most generous assistance from many friends and strangers to whom I have sent out calls for help, it must be admitted that the answer to only one of the three questions proposed has been found. Enough and, I fear, more than enough has been said to answer the first of the questions: "Who and what was this Count de Volney?" The second and third questions: "Did he visit the United States by way of the Oswego valley in 1808 and if so, why?" possess much more local interest and yet for them we have no answers with proofs for no biographies, no letters, no documents, French or English, have come to light that refer in any way whatsoever to a second tour of America by Volney after his somewhat hurried departure in 1798.

Must one assume, then, Amos G. Hull to the contrary notwithstanding, that no such visit was ever made? Must we conjecture that Mr. Hull's story is a mere legend that grew up in the imaginations of Volneyites, compounded from accounts of the voyage and storm on Lake Erie in 1796 and Mr. Whitney's expressed admiration for Volney based, perhaps, on his writings only and not on personal acquaintance? May not one withhold his answer until proof, pro or con, is forthcoming, in the face of a story told with details so circumstantial and so plausible as to seem to demand acceptance as authentic? It is perfectly conceivable that in 1862 when Mr. Hull's history was published, there were people still living in Fulton who had seen and talked with Volney in 1808 or who had at least, heard the story of his visit from his host and given the facts to the historian, for Mr. Whitney was still living and doing business in Fulton as late as 1821.

Montreal may well have been an easier harbor than New York or Philadelphia for a French ship to enter, in view of the restrictions on shipping imposed by Jef-

fer's embargo of 1807. Or Volney may have wished to make contact with certain French residents of the Province of Quebec and his valuable papers may have been the record of such conferences. One who had left the United States under the shadow of the Alien Act would quite naturally prefer Oswego as a port of entry where he would be less likely to be recognized than on the Atlantic seaboard where he had been well known only ten years before. The water route from Oswego to central New York and beyond afforded easy passage to any point, east, south or west that might have been his ultimate destination, while the necessity of disembarking to pass the falls might easily tempt a weary traveler, just recovering from seasickness, to seek refuge in the privacy of the Whitney home—a quiet place in which to recuperate and to rewrite his notes while they were still fresh in his mind.

A little item of circumstantial evidence has come to light that may or may not have some significance in evaluating the 1808 story and it came from a most unexpected source, from the birth record in the Bible of an Oswego County family. On August 18th 1810 a boy was born to Stephen and Ann Joice. They named him Erastus Volney Joice. Why did this young father, of Irish and Mohawk Dutch descent, choose such a French name for his boy? The first answer to suggest itself is that he didn't, that Ann's unrecorded maiden name was probably Volney and it was **she who** named her baby for her father, Erastus Volney. Possible; but not probable for Volney does not figure as a family name among early American immigrants. **This** baby was certainly not named for the town in which he was born for the town of Volney was not named or even formed until two years after his birth. It is equally certain that the parents did not se-

lect the name because of their approval of Volney's religious teachings for Stephen was a Methodist minister. It is hardly to be imagined that the name was chosen in honor of an unknown scholar in far away France. Nor can it be argued that the parents' admiration for Volney was a holdover from his American travels in 1795-98 for, at the time the Frenchman's return to France, Stephen was only fifteen and Ann was ten years old—not the ages given to admiration for adult philosophers. Wouldn't you like to believe that these young people had met Volney when he was a guest of the Whitneys and had carried away such an impression of his charm and learning that they wanted their son, born two years later, to bear his illustrious name? Not such evidence, I grant, as would stand in a court of law; but isn't it a fair example of circumstantial evidence to help substantiate the testimony of Amos G. Hull?

Grant for the moment that, even without legal proof, one accepts the familiar story as true, the third and equally vital question remains unanswered: "Why had Volney returned to the United States?" May we not toy with the conjecture that he had a mission so secret and a secret so well kept that no reference to a second American trip was ever published until fifty-four years later and then only in a more or less obscure little "History of Fulton and Oswego Falls?"

Unfortunately we find no answer in the known correspondence of Volney and Jefferson for that ends abruptly in 1806. Volney wrote to Jefferson in mid-summer 1805; Jefferson's answer is dated February 11th 1806 and addressed to Paris. Why was the letter of the President of the United States never answered? It is not possible that it was because it was never delivered for the reason that Volney was not in Paris or even in France at

that time? There is a footnote on page 292 of the fourth volume of "Early Western Travels" which definitely indicates such absence. The editor, Reuben Gold Thwaites, states, as if it were an undisputed, well established fact, that the French traveler, Volney, spent the winter of 1805 in the home of Judge Benjamin Foy (Fooy) on the west bank of the Mississippi River, opposite the Fourth Chickasaw Bluff, that is, in Arkansas opposite Memphis, Tennessee. Recently information has come from Ted R. Worley, Executive Secretary of the Arkansas History Commission that at the time of the Judge's settlement in 1794 the site was called Camp Esperanza and later became Hopefield. Elsewhere in the "Travels" the Fooy home is said to have been a good frame house in a handsome settlement, the most healthful, moral and intelligent between the Ohio and Natchez, due to the influence of its first settlers, the Judge, and his magisterial powers.

One wonders if Volney stayed all winter in the comfortable Fooy household and how he filled his days. May he not have explored a little, north or south? It is not possible that he went north into what is now the State of Missouri where the town of Fulton, County-seat of Callaway County, was named Volney at its founding in 1825 in memory of one easily recognized when two local historians identify him as a "French author and infidel." Floyd C. Shoemaker, Secretary of the State Historical Society of Missouri, doubts if the Frenchman ever penetrated central Missouri as far as the future town site, wild and uninhabited as it was in 1805. This is, doubtless, a point well taken; but some founder or settler of the town must, somewhere and sometime, have been deeply impressed by Volney to have proposed his name for the new settlement, twenty years after his supposed visit west of

the Mississippi and five years after his death.

But again, "Why?" Why was Volney in Arkansas in 1805, if Thwaites' note is to be believed? The mere mention of Arkansas cannot fail to bring to mind the whole extent of the Louisiana Territory, including Volney, Missouri, Gaspe's reference to the 1793 plans of the Committee of Public Safety to recover the Spanish-held lands for France, Volney's admission of the existence of such plans, their revival by Napoleon and their realization by him through his treaty of San Ildefonso. If one allows his imagination free range, the thought may even occur of Aaron Burr, his intrigues, still a subject of controversy, and his exploration of the valley from May to September 1805, just before Volney's winter sojourn. The question naturally arises: Had Napoleon already repented of the bargain price of four cents per acre for which only two years before, in 1803, he had sold a vast empire to the United States? Was it he who sent Volney across the Atlantic again and half way across the North American continent "to find out about the state of things in America"?

So we end with more than three times as many unanswered questions as when we began. Then we had three and now, after answering one, we have at least ten:

1. Was Volney involved, as charged during his 1795-98 American visit, in secret negotiations to recover the Louisiana Territory from Spain?

2. Did his efforts contribute to that result in the secret treaty of 1800?

3. Did Volney spend the winter of 1805 in the western Mississippi valley?

4. Did he pass through the Osage valley in 1808 to some undisclosed rendezvous?

5. If he returned to America on those two occasions, was it as an agent of Napoleon?

6. What purposes of Napoleon.

if any, were served by these visits?

7. Was the title of Count conferred upon Volney by Napoleon in 1808 as a reward for secret services in America?

8. Was Volney in any way involved in the plots of Aaron Burr in the western country?

9. If Volney visited America twice after 1798, why were these facts completely ignored by his biographers?

10. If he did not make these visits, why did Reuben Gold Thwaites and Amos G. Hull take the trouble to give us names, dates and local details of events that never occurred?

It is to be feared that the troubled shade of Constantin Francois, Comte de Volney is still flitting restlessly not only over our own Oswego valley but over the Mississippi as well. But even at this late day there may be hope of laying that elusive ghost for Howard C. Rice, Jr., Chief of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections in the Princeton University Library, only the other day came upon a letter that proves that in the autumn of 1809 Volney was in France, at a country estate in Sarcelles. This affords hope that other long lost letters or even secret documents may come to light that will reveal the exact whereabouts of Volney during the winter of 1805 and the open navigation season of 1808 on Lake Ontario and thus prove or disprove the stories of his two

American visits subsequent to 1798.

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George W. Wheeler's Journey To Mexico, N. Y. in 1806

EDITED BY ELIZABETH M. SIMPSON

New Lights On Local Conditions In 1806

(with notes by the great-great niece of the author, Elizabeth M. Simpson).

Through the thoughtfulness of Mrs. Dean Wetmore of Camden, N. Y. one evening last August there appeared at my door out of the past (1805-1806) a manuscript book written by George Washington Wheeler that has a direct bearing on the history of Oswego County and of the town of Mexico in particular. The manuscript was loaned to Mrs. Wetmore by a friend in Camden whose sister had purchased it at auction in Westmoreland, N. Y. It will probably always remain a mystery how it reached Westmoreland from the hands of a family who lived and died within five miles of Mexico Village, with the exception of two daughters who, after marriage, migrated to Michigan—from the hands of a family, moreover, who seem to have cherished and preserved every scrap of writing dealing with their affairs from 1741 to 1841.

George W. Wheeler, son of Thomas and Mary Child Wheeler, at the age of twenty-two, in September-October 1806, made a journey on horseback from the family home in Templeton, Massachusetts to spy out the land in the town of Mexico, N. Y. He was probably led to select this area because his paternal aunt, Sarah Wheeler Rice, with her husband Joseph and son Charles, had recently settled on lot 98 of the

Twentieth Town of Scriba's Patent.

George W. brought with him in his saddle bag his handwritten Exercise Book of 1805 covering the subjects of the Rule of Three, Geometry, Trigonometry, Surveying and Astronomy with the mathematical diagrams and figures and elaborate drawings of the phases of a solar eclipse. He used the blank pages of this book for a day by day record of his journey into the wilds of to-day's Oswego County, his search for a farm to his taste, the contract for its purchase, and the return to Templeton.

His diary reads:

GEORGE W. WHEELER
TEMPLETON, MASS.

Monday, September 29th (1806). Sat out on my expedition to the westward. Stopped at Greenfield, which is 30 miles from home, and refreshed. (hay 6 Cents). Thence I proceeded to Brown's Tavern in Charlemont, 18 miles from Greenfield, and put up. The first day was agreeable weather, and I got along very well except that I went half a mile out of my way in Shelburne. My expenses at Brown's for supper of milk, lodging and horse to grass were 39 Cents.

On the 30th in the morning it was rainy, the summit of the mountain was involved in thick fog and all nature looked dubious. It was late when I started,, the road was wet and slippery and the mountain steep and high, at

length I reached the top and on beginning to descend on the other side had a beautiful prospect of the valley below! I thence passed thro' Williamstown, which is situated among the mountains, and which is a tolerably handsome place. From Williamstown the road ascends almost perpetually for five or six miles, and then descends two or three, I stoped at Mommonds's Tavern in Berlin and got Oats (6 Cents) and thence seven and half miles to Millers which made 36 miles from Charlemount, and put up; he had no hay and but little feed but it was dark and I could not conveniently go any farther. I paid 20 Cents for lodging and horse Keeping and was glad to get away.

On the 1st day of October the weather was fair and I went on to the River—opposite Albany, stoped at Shands Tavern got hay and breakfast and paid 36 Cents for them—was entertained by the woman gratis; for she is a termagant to perfection! I then crossed the noble and beautiful Hudson into Albany, which is a very handsome place—modern buildings are very elegant and even magnificent; there is one Church in particular which is the most magnificent structure that ever I saw—I started from Albany about 12 o'clock for Schenectady on a beautiful turnpike 14 miles in a straight line, made of a hard blue gravel brought from a distance, with side walks made of the natural soil, and posts 4 feet high and 4 rods distant on each side, and mile stones very handsomely executed — (stoped half way to Schenectady and got Cider and Oats 18 Cents). Schenectady is a tolerably handsome place, smaller than Albany and on the Mohawk—Immediately above Schenectady there is about one thousand acres of as good land as the earth affords and as handsome (naturally I presume) as the garden of Eden. I arrived

after dark at Smart's Tavern 12 miles from Schenectady which made 40 miles that day—It was a mean Dutch Tavern, on going in, there sat an old woman or I might say the skeleton of an old woman resembling the Fairies of the Gibbies in the little Book; there was also a girl, who I presume to say is her own mother's Child, and a man—these three kept up a conversations the subject of which I could have no knowledge—I was highly entertained for a season, but soon grew weary and so to rid myself of the clatter of their lungs went to bed—The old woman lighted me into a room about 10 feet by 15 in which there were three beds deposited in cribs or boxes; and Dutch like directed me to sleep in the poorest, so I rolled in and found company enough nor did I come off without many wounds. I went to sleep but was soon disturbed by the man, who come into the room to bed and who kept up a conversation with those who were in the kitchen. I went to sleep again and was again disturbed by the boys who came into the room to bed and who like the other kept up a jabbering—I went to sleep a third time and was a third time disturbed by the old woman who came into the room to scare the Cat out, then the old woman and her husband, who had come home, kept up a continual clatter in another room for an hour or more—In the morning, for the Roosters informed me that it was morning or I had not known it, for light was invisible; I arose took by bridle caught my horse and meeting the man of the house (I will not call him Landlord) very fair morning we keep this, said he, very indeed, said I and I paid him 18 Cents, and departed rejoicing in my deliverance and imploring fate to lead me to better lodgings in future. I proceeded that day (2nd Octbr.) to Canajoharry river where there is a

stone meeting house with only four windows and a Bridge building and where there is a tract of land equal in quantity and quality to that above described near Schenectady—I stoped at Storin's Tavern got Cider and some Oats was waited upon by the landlady whose feet appeared to have been the work of Volcan and to have been employed in his service for centuries (9 Cents) I then went on to Waggoner's in Mendon, there I got dinner and hay (27 Cents) they are Dutch, but agreeable folks, have an elegant house and good accomodations, they discover taste, good breeding and good nature and use good language and good Sense—Thence I proceeded thro' a good Country generally speaking till I came to German flats where the land is so good that I should suppose the owners would want to live forever—I stoped at Devendorf's a good Tavern—Dutch man and Yankee woman, agreeable folks—horsekeeping and lodging (25 Cents) there I left my penknife—52 miles this day.

October 3—Extraordinary foggy—I went on 12 miles to Utica, which is a very handsome place tho' not large—the country around exceedingly handsome and fertile—thence four miles to Whitesboro; a handsome place—the land unparalleled for beauty and fertility, perhaps, by any in the state—thence to Rome or Fort Stanwix 12 miles—This is a handsome village situated on the Canal which unites the waters of the Mohawk with those of the Oneida Lake and Ontario—The land about Rome is exceedingly good but cultivated or I might say uncultivated by poor husbandmen—I got a bating of hay at Flint's, and gave 12 Cents. Thence I proceeded to Gilbert's 5 miles on the Canal thence thro' a pitchpine plain to fish Creek thence thro' a tract of poor rough whitepine land to Camden where

is a handsome tract of country tho' rather dry and sandy—I put up at Parke's—a middling Tavern—40 miles this day—Expense at this place 38 Cents.

October 4th Distant thunder and signs of showers—I proceeded to Cutis's and took a packet of Newspapers which the democratic demagogues at Utica wished to impose on the people of Mexico—thence thro' 15 mile woods so called—exceedingly bad road—had not gone more than four or five miles when all at once it began to rain like a torrent—I put on my great coat pretty fast—it did not rain more than half an hour—but O how sick I was! I could not ride out of a walk and where there were not sloughs there were hillocks and roots and log bridges without covering or gravelling.—Is it possible said I for me to think of moving a family thro' here? the land is miserable poor too—where is de flat? and if there be ever so good land ten miles further who can ever get to it? I almost wished myself home again, and began to form schemes in my own mind quite foreign to settling in Mexico—and in addition to all the rest I had been turned ever since I came from German flats, and continued to be so in spite of myself—But at last I came to Salmon Creek. I stoped at Parkhurst's Tavern, left my packet, got some hay and brandy (10 Cents) and enquired if they knew a family by the name of Rice—they replied they did not but that there was a man in town by the name of Charles Rice and that he lived 8 miles off, on black Creek. I went on—arrived in the neighborhood—enquired—was informed that he was down to the 19th town but a little Boy informed me that he had returned and was then at the next house—I then went to the next house—the children told me he was in the field—I looked and saw him coming, sat down on a log and was

writing when he came up—I called him by name; but he did not know me. I told him who I was, and enquired after his parents—he informed me that they were in Vernon and that he expected them on every day—I went with him two miles to his land; it was almost night and behold, the sun was right—north and south appeared in to opposite directions. We took care of the horse and returned to where we first met and lodged. Next Morning Oct. 5th—we went out, fed the horse—looked of Charles' farm—I liked it—withstanding prepossession—we also looked of another lot. I liked that too and was determined if there were another, adjoining that to purchase at all hazards—Oct. 6th & 7th, we continued to look land. I found another lot adjoining, which I liked, the two lots containing about 250 acres and every way calculated to make just such a farm as I always wanted. Half of each lot had been taken up by one Samuel Rodgers of Whitesboro. Esq. Bloomfield the man of whom I must buy the remainder of the lots lived at Rome and there was a man by the name of Richardson in Mexico of whom it was thought necessary that I should get information about buying Mr. Rodger's right. I consequently proceeded on Wednesday October 8th toward Whitesboro; and after scrabbling about in the woods all the forenoon—losing my way and so forth—I found Richardson; but got no information of any consequence. I crossed Salmon Creek about noon—9 miles and my mistake took Rotterdam road, but on enquiring I found there were no great odds in the distance of the way and for the sake of seeing Rotterdam and the Oneida Lake I concluded to go that way: I consequently went on and found 13 miles woods; the bushes whipping my face from each side of the road—broken bridges—and wind-

falls to encounter—but yet the road is far better than that thro' Camden—I arrived at Rotterdam and had a pleasing view of the lake. I proceeded up the lake ten or a dozen miles—it was 5 miles from Rotterdam to a house and 6 from there to a tavern—it grew dark and road was so new and so little travelled that I could not see it—had to trust my horse; and was in danger of being carried into the trackless wilderness—at length arrived at a little log hovel, which was the Tavern I had taken so much pains to find; I had my horse put up and had a supper composed of white bread, coffee without sweetning, pumpkin pie the crust of which was an inch thick and pumpkin one third—and boiled Corn—I eat of their rustic fare with a joyful heart and went to straw in peace and arose in the morning to proceed on my journey with redoubled vigor. October 9th—Arrived without much difficulty in Rome at noon waited upon Esq. Bloomfield took a letter from him to Mr. Rodgers and went to Whitesboro, 12 miles, enquired and was directed for the furnis \$ miles where I found him, within 8 miles of Rome, he agreed to meet me at Esq. Bloomfield's next morning 9 o'clock (Oct. 10) to Esq. Bloomfield's and was entertained with maps untill Mr. Rodgers came, at 11 o'clock. I then did as well as I could. I gave Mr. Rodgers a note of 30 Dollars, to be paid in March. I paid Esq. Bloomfield 10 Dollars, took a receipt and a letter from him to Mr. Scriba at Rotterdam asking leave of him to sell the other two half lots, and started for Rotterdam and Mexico—After having passed fish Creek a mile or two I missed the new road that I came down in leaving it to the left. The inhabitants told me I was on the direct road to Rotterdam and so I went on—but at last the road became too new—I met a boy who told

me that I must go to the next house where I would see a kind of a road on the left hand which I must take and in about a mile and half I should come into the other road. So I went to the house found a cow path which I took for there was no other road—I went on with much difficulty frequently losing my way, about a mile where I lost it entirely. (Note: The last four lines have been written "downhill" in the journal, and here trail off with a notation "done in the dark." I thought it imprudent to proceed without a guide and went back to the house. The woman told me there was no other way to go and that I must keep on in the same direction when I came to the end of the path. So back again I went was obliged to walk all the way. It was almost night and I knew not whither I should come out but I happened to find a different path from that I had been in and got along without any great difficulty about a mile by marked trees, paying no regard to the Cow path. I began to flatter myself that I should get thro' when my horse fell down and I lost the way entirely; but did not fall off—I was not able even to find the way back; the sun was almost down and in a cloud, so that I had no guide but my own weak judgment to direct me which way to steer—I was in a sad dilemma—it was no time for reflection but I could not help thinking of my Mother—But I did not stand dallying, I rushed on with my eyes wide open and in about half a mile came into the road—then how I blessed my stars! I had then 7 miles to go or to stay at the boiled Corn tavern, and that I was determined not to do—it was dark and I heard something running like a hog, and when it got a small distance it stoped and snufed. It was 2 or 3 miles from any house and I suppose it must have been a bear—but it gave me

no uneasiness—I at length arrived within 5 miles of Rotterdam and had a good supper and lodging. Oct. 11th Went on to Rotterdam and did my business with Mr. Mr. Scriba. It began to rain a little the bushes towards Mexico were very troublesome. I mounted at Rotterdam and did not dismount until I reached Mexico 21 miles. The last mile it rained like a torrent and continued to do so almost all the time untill the morning of the 14th, when behold Uncle appeared had got his family on to within two miles the night before, and had broken his wagon down 10 miles back and left it with the goats.—I stayed with them till Saturday (the 18th Oct.) when I went to the 18th town and to Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario, had a fine view of the lake and fort which fairly compensated me for going—returned to Abel's started a wolf the first I ever saw—staid over night and in the morning waited upon my Cousin's home. On the 21st Oct. started for home with only 2 Dollars 25 Cents to bare my expenses 260 miles. In 5 days I arrived at home having spent every Cent.

2. Once at home, his mother's sooking seems to have satisfied the pangs of hunger due to a budget of 25 cents per day for the last words of his story are:

Empty platters and full bellys . . .

3. To complete the story as told in family letters—the young man took home with him a contract for lots 99 and 86. He returned to Mexico in March, 1807, and paid in cash some \$900 still due on the agreed price of \$987 for 247 acres, receiving a warranty deed from George Scriba in September. He was joined early in June by his father and the two spent the summer clearing the land. Returning to Templeton in the fall, they again set out for Mexico in January, 1808, bringing with them the rest of the family, the mother and two daughters,

and established the new home on lot 99. George W. died in August of the same year and his responsibilities were assumed by his older brother, Edmund, and Edmund's wife, Caty Brown. But they had to postpone leaving their home in Groton, Mass., until my grandfather, George W.'s

namesake, was born March 29, 1809, and reached the age of nine months when he was considered old enough to make the long, cold journey in a covered sleigh in the month of December. The farm remained in the family for over 90 years. E. M. S.



The Aftermath of the Revolution and The Opening of New York State's Frontiers

(Paper Given Before the Historical Society, on May 18, 1954)

By RALPH M. FAUST

The May meeting of the Oswego County Historical Society, held at Headquarters House in Oswego on May 18 featured an address by Mr. Ralph Faust on "The Aftermath of the Revolution and the Opening of New York's Frontiers." New York State, Mr. Faust observed, far from being "The Empire State" in the Colonial era was one of the smaller colonies, and even as late as 1790 at the time of our first census had fewer people than Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Massachusetts.

The reasons for this slow growth were numerous. The presence of the formidable Iroquois athwart the Mohawk, the French on the Canadian frontiers, and the lack of zeal for settlements and the restrictive land policy of the Dutch all deterred immigrants. Later the policies of the Duke of York in refusing to permit a colonial assembly, and in granting huge chunks of land to his favorites, continued to discourage settlements.

But the American Revolution, the speaker noted, hastily changed all of this. The Iroquois power was destroyed and thousands of acres of Loyalist lands were sold off to small land purchasers. New York State from the Mohawk westward was almost empty, and the state, anxious for revenue, was prepared to offer land at bargain prices.

Speculators secured princely estates. Included among them

were Alexander Macomb, a wealthy New York merchant and a partner of John Jacob Astor, and his associates, William Duer and William Constable. The latter organized land companies in France, and promoted settlements. Their lands extended from the northern fringe of Oswego County to the St. Lawrence River. Also in Oswego County was the half-million acre estate of George Scriba, one of the few speculators who actually settled on his land. West of the Oswego River was the immense Military Tract, and west of it were the purchases of Phelps and Corham, and after subsequent subdivisions, the lands of the pultney Associates and the Holland Land Company.

Though some of these ventures were financial failures, the total effect was the launching of a tide of immigration which peopled the western counties within several generations, with the result that by 1840 New York had attained first place in the Nation in population and wealth. The pace was of course stepped up by the Erie Canal, and the spanning of the state with other canals and with railroads.

Of particular interest were the personalities involved, and Mr. Faust interspersed his narrative with colorful sidelights and anecdotes relating to them. A large and appreciative audience joined in the general discussion which followed.

Benedict Arnold and the Saratoga Mural

(Papers Given Before the Historical Society, on October 12, 1954)

By DR. ALBERT B. COREY

The Oswego County Historical Society opened its fall season with a dinner meeting at the Pontiac hotel on Tuesday evening, with approximately 100 members and guests in attendance. Featured was Dr. A. B. Corey, state historian, who delivered an address on the career of General Benedict Arnold. An added attraction was the unveiling of a mural depicting General Arnold in the Battle of Saratoga, painted by George Gray.

Dr. Corey traced the career of the controversial Arnold from his enlistment in the militia at the age of 17 to his treason at West Point. The first thing a school child learns about General Arnold, he observed, is his treason, "for Arnold is the epitome of treason." Throughout our history other military leaders have been accused of treason, but none convicted. The article defining treason in our Federal Constitution, he noted, was based on Arnold's treason.

Arnold's difficulties, the speaker pointed out, stemmed in considerable part from his "inordinate concern for money." Biographers have never untangled his finances, but they were marked by double-dealings, smuggling—in which he had numerous patriot associates—and dishonesty.

Arnold enlisted in the Connecticut militia in the French and Indian War, when 17 years of age. He deserted, then reenlisted. He jumped into the Revolution with characteristic vigor, reaching Massachusetts just after Lexington and Concord had been

fought. He proposed a campaign against the British fort at Ticonderoga, and was commissioned to lead it. However, he was not supplied with troops, and when he reached Vermont he found Ethan Allen prepared to assault the post. Arnold attempted to wrest the command from him, but Allen refused to step aside. The fort was subsequently taken with Arnold at Allen's side, but not in charge.

Invaded Quebec

Arnold's first real achievement, Dr. Corey pointed out, was his invasion of Quebec by ways of Maine in the fall of 1775. Though he was unsuccessful before Quebec and had to finally retreat into New York, he showed remarkable qualities of leadership. Unfortunately for his future career, much of the money appropriated by Congress for the campaign could not be accounted for. Charges of graft and mismanagement plagued him from this time to his treason.

In 1776 Arnold revealed talents, also, as a naval commander. With a small fleet he attacked a superior force moving southward on Lake Champlain near Valcour Island. It delayed a British invasion by this route for a full year.

Arnold's activities seemed to give him either extreme satisfaction or frustration. He was matchless as a tactician before his troops, and he was the idol of his soldiers. But he lacked overall strategy. He was impatient and critical of any plan which

failed to open the door for his personal advancement.

In 1777, Arnold was dispatched to the Mohawk Valley to block St. Leger's advance from Oswego toward Albany. He scarcely reached the valley, however, before St. Leger retreated to Oswego. Freed for duty elsewhere, Arnold proceeded to Saratoga. Here he was to win greater fame, only to find his heroics belittled by his superior in command, General Gates. At Saratoga on Sept. 19 Arnold made possible the American advance which hemmed in Burgoyne. On Oct. 7 he delivered the final blow against Burgoyne, though technically relieved from command.

Made Major-General

His difficulties with his associates and with Congress resulted in his being passed-over for promotion to major-general in the spring of 1777. With Washington's support he ultimately received the promotion, but he remained disgruntled. For his valor at Saratoga he was given the seniority which he sought; but his sensitivity continued to embroil him in controversy.

When the British abandoned Philadelphia in 1778, Arnold was given command of the city and made responsible for its restoration. Here he lived in grandeur in a manner far in excess of his means. He was soon involved in shady dealings in his handling of public supplies and funds. And here he began his negotiations with Sir Henry Clinton at New York which led to his treason at West Point.

Explains Mural

Dr. Corey interpreted the Saratoga mural on display, noting in particular the position of Arnold before his troops, and the uniforms of the Patriots which identified them as New Englanders, New Yorkers and Pennsylvanians. He also called attention to the uniforms of the Hessians and the Germanic features of these foreign mercenaries.

Stuart Kines, manager of the Pontiac Hotel, explained the background of the mural, which was discovered in the basement of the hotel.

"The Saratoga Mural," he declared, 'at the time of its painting, was quite a controversial subject. The mural depicts the final phase of the second Battle of Saratoga and shows General Benedict Arnold leading his men against the British in the face of heavy enemy rifle and artillery fire. With the completion of the painting by George Gray, an inscription was added which read, 'Saratoga—the turning point of the American Revolution.' A victory made possible by an American major general who, neither forgotten nor forgiven and nameless to loyal men, nevertheless, with bravery and resourcefulness, commanded our forces at Quebec, Valcour Island, Fort Stanwix, Ridegfield and finally at this, one of the decisive battles of the world. Troops, under Morgan, being led by the 'Black Horse Rider' in the last assault on the British Line, Oct. 7, 1777.'

"After completion of the mural a photograph of it was sent to Kenneth Roberts, author of Northwest Passage, Arundel, The Lively Lady, and Rabble in Arms, for comment. Mr. Roberts wrote General Kincaid, president of the American Hotels Corporation, that it seemed to him inaccurate to refer to General Arnold as being 'nameless to loyal men.' Mr. Roberts made the points that Admiral Mahan, describing the Battle of Valcour Island, had paid high tribute to Arnold's bravery and resourcefulness, and that no one ever accused Admiral Mahan of disloyalty; that Admiral William S. Sims had repeatedly expressed admiration for Arnold's achievements and indignation at the treatment accorded him by an ungrateful Congress, and that nobody had ever mentioned the word "disloyal" in connection with Admiral Sims; that he himself had repeatedly and appreci-

actively named Arnold in the novels Arundel and Rabble in Arms, and that he resented any imputation that this laid him open to the charge of disloyalty.

Mr. Roberts suggested to General Kincaid that in the interests of truth and accuracy, General Arnold be named in the text beneath the Saratoga mural, and given credit for his service in the American Revolution.

Mr. Roberts also suggested that the small panel showing the statue of Arnold's leg be replaced by a scene from the Battle of Valcour Island, in which the American fleet was commanded by General Arnold. In support of this suggestion, Mr. Roberts said:

"It seems a pity to perpetuate such an artistic atrocity as the DePeyster monument, which is without truth, beauty or any of the other things that a monument ought to have . . . It would be so easy to replace it with a scene from the battle that made

Saratoga and American independence possible."

Change Inscription

"The value of Mr. Roberts' suggestions were at once recognized by General Kincaid, who gave instructions that the legend on the mural be revised to read as follows:

"Saratoga, turning point of the Revolution, made possible by the bravery and resourcefulness of Major General Benedict Arnold. His defense of Lake Champlain in 1776 delayed the British a year, giving the Colonies time to regain their waning strength. By relieving Fort Stanwix in 1777 he prevented St. Leger from joining Burgoyne. Flouted by Congress and superior officers, he stopped Burgoyne at Freeman's Farm, Sept. 19, 1777. At Bemis Heights, Oct. 7, he routed England's finest troops, stormed the Hessian redoubt and turned Burgoyne's right flank, ending forever the British invasion from the north."



Elmina Spencer, Heroine Of the Civil War

(Paper Given Before the Historical Society, by Fred P. Wright, on November 23, 1954)

Reading our splendid daily newspaper we often notice accounts of the doings of Elmina P. Spencer Tent No. 50 Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War. This organization keeps alive the name of a very noted person whom we honor to-night. This organization is made up of female descendants of Union soldiers.

Upon Memorial Day let us visit our cemeteries and take time to note the great number of United States flags that are set honoring the soldier dead. Under each a soldier sleeps in his little green tent. Let us drive out to Rural Cemetery in the Town of Oswego.

Dead Of Many Wars

There are graves of Revolutionary, 1812, Mexico War, Seminole Indian War, Western Indian Wars, Civil War, Spanish American War and World Wars I and II. Entering the main gate we proceed a short distance and up on the terrace a grave is noted with a modest headstone inscribed **ELMINA KEELER SPENCER 1819-1912. Nurse 147th N. Y. Volunteers.** Upon it the bronze marker of The Grand Army of the Republic, holding the U. S. flag proudly fluttering in the breeze. Care of her resting place is the sacred trust of the Daughters of Union Veterans.

All of us have passed by the Civil War Memorial in Oswego in Washington Square, commonly called East Park. A shaft surmounted by a figure of a soldier of the Civil War at 'Parade Rest'.

On its front side is inscribed **IN HONOR OF THE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF THE COUNTY OF OSWEGO WHO NOBLY DEFENDED THE UNION. 1861-1865.** On its South side is inscribed. **PRESENTED BY OSWEGO SOLDIERS & SAILORS MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION-BREVET MAJOR NATHANIEL A. WRIGHT-ELMINA SPENCER TENT NO. 50 DAUGHTERS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR MONUMENT COMMITTEE. AVERY S. WRIGHT-FRED P. WRIGHT-HELENA WILSON HEILIG-MADELINE BASSETT MYERS-BRIDGET HODGE COLLINS.-MAY 30, 1932.** This monument honors over 11,000 men from Oswego County who served in the Civil War. A grand and glorious company whose deeds of valor equal in glory and bravery any chronicled upon the pages of history. After the war Oswego County received from the state \$552,700 for soldiers furnished in excess of our quota.

Upon the West face of the moundment is inscribed — **147TH NEW YORK INFANTRY Sept. 23, 1862-June 7, 1865. Col. Andrew S. Warner succeeded by Col. J. G. Butler. Organized and enrolled in Oswego. Of 837 enlisted in Oswego 147 returned. Nearly 2300 on the muster roll. Elmina Spencer, Matron and Nurse Hospital Dept.**

When in Albany we toured the capital and ascending the magnificent marble stairway we were thrilled to find in a place of honor a bust of **ELMINA P.**

SPENCER, Civil War Army Nurse—where the great Empire State honored her, as a typical Army nurse. We then visited the room where are treasured the battle flags of N. Y. Regiments of the Civil War. There on its original staff is the Colors of the 147th Regiment N. Y. Infantry. These colors were carried in the following actions Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Peebles Farm, Hatcher's Run, Dabney's Mills, Gravelly Run, Laurel Hill, North Anna, Bottom's Bridge, Weldon Railroad, Chapel House, Bellfield, Five Forks, and Lee's Surrender.

In addition to the four places where her name is found and honored in these ways in the archives of New York State and in the archives at Washington are found records of her services in the Civil War. I am indebted to Congressman Clarence E. Kilburn for procuring for our Oswego Historical Society her military history, which will be a valuable acquisition to our museum records.

Born In Mexico

Elmina P. Spencer was born in Mexico, N. Y., Sept. 15, 1819. Her maiden name was Keeler. When she was very young her father moved to this vicinity. He lived on West River Road and operated a saw mill between Minetto and Oswego.

In 1829 when she was ten years old she joined the Sunday School of the First Methodist Church here. This church was in the Southwest corner of Franklin Square (West Park) and faced Cayuga Street. Methodists those days were thought a very peculiar people. They found closest fellowship among themselves. Quarterly meetings when communion was held, none were admitted except those who had a ticket, showing their character had been passed upon. Worldliness such as shows, cards, dancing and finery in dress was shunned and denounced. Mrs.

Spencer told how when a young member she was labored with because she appeared with a Quaker bonnet trimmed with fiery red cheapness and shirred with a cape. Rev. Sayer the minister was condemned for getting his wife a box of artificial flowers. Members were disciplined for not attending church, for Sabbath desecration and another for calling a sister Methodist, "A nuisance".

The young man, Robert H. Spencer, whom she married had an interesting life. He was the son of Col. Abner R. Spencer of the U. S. Army who served in the War of 1812. He desired his son Robert to study law. He entered the law offices of Judge William F. Allen of Oswego. He was seventeen and finding the study of law rather dry, he ran away to New York City, where he shipped on a whale boat as a sailor. He shipped as a sailor before the mast, was promoted to be Mate, and finally was employed as Captain. He was away three years before he returned to Oswego. He sailed summers and taught school winters. Robert H. Spencer and Elmina P. Keeler were married at Oswego, N. Y., Nov. 4, 1840, by Rev. C. L. Dunning, Methodist minister.

That winter Mr. Spencer taught school at Fulton where they lived. In 1841 Mrs. Spencer went with him on his vessel, Kirvosha, to Southport. The vessel was lost on the shores of Lake Michigan. His friends induced him to remain there and teach school which he did; and they remained there until 1844, when they returned to Oswego. He again took up the study of law and was admitted to the bar. He did not follow the profession much but continued as a teacher and kept a book store in Oswego. Mrs. Spencer wrote of him that "His only habit of dissipation was chewing tobacco and that moderately."

When the 147th Regt., N. Y. Infantry, was organized, Robert H. Spencer, although past draft

age, volunteered and was mustered into service Sept. 23, 1862, as corporal of Co. G. He was appointed ward master of the regiment. Elmina P. Spencer also was mustered into the service of the U.S.A. as matron of Hospital Dept. of that regiment. Together they left with the regiment. At times they were detailed at division hospitals, field hospitals and in 1863 the New York Legislature passed a law creating Agencies for the Relief of Sick and Disabled Union Soldiers in the Service of the U. S., appropriating \$200,000 to carry on this work. His Excellency Horatio Seymour, governor, set up 14 agencies and appointed agents to carry on this work. No. 5 was the Agency in the Army of the Potomac under the charge of Rev. J. V. Van Ingen and Mrs. Robert H. Spencer. These agents were subject to orders from the Surgeon General of the Army, and held credentials from New York State, also from the military. Gen. U. S. Grant issued to Mrs. Spencer an order permitting her to pass in and out of Union lines, in all places. The work of these agents was to see that wounded and sick were cared for; that articles of food, clothing, medicines, etc., were theirs; that wounded were cared for on battlefields, in emergency camps, hospitals, etc.; that hospitals be visited and things for comfort of wounded be procured and distributed, and the families of the soldiers at home be contacted and informed as to whether they were living or dead, and if wounded where they were and their condition. Also later on they did a great work getting soldiers in touch with their regiments so that they might obtain their pay, having not received any pay since they were separated from their military unit, in action, and their whereabouts became lost to their military units.

The regiment arrived in Washington Oct. 1, 1862. She slept that night on a bench in front of the Soldiers Rest. Some of the men

of 147th Regt. had sunstrokes crossing Long Bridge and she cared for them. The next day she began service feeding from her stores wounded from the Battle of Antietam. The regiment moved to Arlington Heights but they remained in Washington in charge of hospital stores and caring for the wounded. Supplies and tents being sent to Acquia Creek, they volunteered to stay and take care of the wounded from Fredericksburg. These were brought into the hospital in the Patent Office. Jan. 1, 1863, Mr. Spencer rejoined his regiment at Falmouth, Va., and she went to New York City for supplies. Returning she joined the regiment at Belle Plains and went to Wind Mill Point and was there six months caring for the wounded in Hospital of First Corps. Mr. Spencer was an attendant there. Transferred to Belle Plain and to Acquia Creek until June 13, 1863, when they rejoined their own 147th Regt. Mrs. Spencer was a good horsewoman and foraged for supplies for sick and wounded. By orders of Dr. Hurd, Medical Div., First Corps, she took with her, her mount and rode with the regiment on the march to Gettysburg. On this march they encamped a week at Broad Run. Mrs. Spencer's horse carried besides herself, her bedding, clothing, and 350 pounds of supplies for the sick. She had two knapsacks and two haversacks and materials to make tea, coffee and beef broth. She often took care of soldiers' coats when they went into action, or on forced marches, when they threw them off, but later sadly needed them. Many a cheer she received from the soldiers when after forced marches or falling back, from fighting. Mrs. Spencer made coffee for them, and cared for their wounds. The Battle of Gettysburg had begun when on July 1, 1863, the 147th arrived and went into action, losing that first day 40 killed, 200 wounded and 30 missing. On this day the color bearer, Sgt. Hinchcliff, was shot

and had fallen upon the colors. Sgt. William A. Wybourn, Co I, volunteered to secure it and did so amid a storm of bullets. During this he was wounded.

The day before, an ammunition train attached to the regiment exploded—and Mrs. Spencer tore up her comforter that covered her bed to get cotton to care for the driver's burns, and the calico for bandages. Mr. Spencer remained to care for the man while she stayed alone with the regiment, spreading their rubber coats on the ground and with others making a tent, in the mud where she slept.

July 2 she joined Mr. Spencer. They occupied a barn, where she made coffee for the soldiers. Wounded from 11th Corps were brought in and to get them off the field they had to cross between two lines of artillery firing. Orders came to fall back but they moved forward seeking to regain their regiment. The surgeon of the 1st. Div. hurrying past called her to help form a hospital. They two found that men of the 147th were in the ambulance train so they crossed to White Church on the Baltimore Turnpike, four miles away, arriving there after dark. There 60 wounded were crowded into the small church. Wounded were placed on boards covered with straw, placed on top of the pews. The supply train having been sent back many miles she made coffee from her knapsack. The Sanitary & Christian Commission sent supplies and here were cared for 600 wounded and 100 wounded prisoners.

By mutual agreement the supplies of the Sanitary Commission were available and could be drawn upon by Agents appointed by N. Y. State for Relief of Sick & Disabled Soldiers.

Mrs. Spencer stayed in White Church Hospital. Some trips were made to N. Y. City with wounded men. While there she secured supplies, Mr. Spencer was clerk in Medical Purveyors Office in Gettysburg Hospital and she re-

mained there. From there they went to Brandy Station where Mr. Spencer was discharged from the Volunteer service of 147th Regt and entered the regular army of the U. S. as Hospital Steward attached to the Medical Purveyors Dept. Mrs. Spencer went to Alexandria to care for wounded from Battle of The Wilderness. Went to Belle Plain until May 1864 went to Port Royal. Medical Purveyors boat arriving with Mr. Spencer she went to White House Landing where she was Supt. on the Govt. cooking barge and as agent for N. Y. State distributing supplies to thousands in distress and need. June 18, 1864 she arrived at City Point. About one mile from the landing she got her kitchen set up and her station remained here until the end of the war. She visited General Hospitals to discover all N. Y. State soldiers and be of service to them. She rode horseback 20 to 40 miles a day about Petersburg and Richmond. One day with her black hat and feather, looking quite like an officer on her mount, a sharp shooter fired at her. The bullet lodged in a tree just back of her. She dug it out with her knife and carried it for a souvenir. She said,—“I never believed I would be harmed by shot or shell.” At City Point when a boat blew up, struck in the side by a piece of shell, she suffered temporary paralysis of her limbs. A small missile cut off the string of her hat. It was found the next day.

Visited by Lincoln

On April 8, 1865 Abraham Lincoln came to the hospital at City Point and went about shaking hands with the wounded soldiers. This was just one week before he was assassinated.

Mrs. Spencer stayed at City Point until all wounded were transferred. On May 31, 1865 she went on Medical Supply boat to Washington and offered her services. Stayed there until June 15, 1865 visiting the hospitals.

Mrs. R. H. Spencers report of

the New York State Agency at City Point, Va.

Nov. 7, 1864

"To Mr. John F. Seymour
General Agent N. Y. Soldiers
Relief.

"Dear Sir; — In Albany last Summer I said to you I would send you a report of my labors from the time I left Alexandria to find our wounded after the Battle of The Wilderness. My husband being Hospital Steward I made my home by consent of Dr. Brinton, Medical Purveyor of The Army of the Potomac with that Dept. Under orders of Surgeon General May 8th, cars were loaded and we left for Rappahannock Station with supplies to care for the wounded. We found no wounded and learned the enemy had intercepted our trains and the wounded had been taken elsewhere. We returned next morning to Washington. With monies supplied by Governor Seymour I had purchased such supplies of food and comfort as I needed, including a large supply of tobacco thanks to the generosity of Thomas Hoyt, 104 Pearl St. N. Y. On our way back we distributed tobacco to all soldiers on duty. Returning to Alexandria we were ordered to load two boats with supplies for Belle Plain. I stood on the dock with my basket and haversack filled with rations. We arrived in early morning. The Sanitary boat with her stores, delegates, and ladies lay beside us. Slightly wounded soldiers who had been able to walk from the field were moving slowly toward the boats with hungry anxious faces. These were fed with crackers and other food. As soon as I could land I went from the boat to the shore with my rations thinking I might make a little coffee or tea for some of them. I met Dr. Babcock our State Medical Agent moving from one wounded man to another, dressing their wounds and cheering them with kind words. After feeding my rations I went to another portion of the field and found ten theological stu-

dents delegates of the Sanitary Commission employed in making coffee in camp kettles. The kettles hung upon a pole over the fire each end of the pole resting in crotched sticks driven into the ground as standards for the poles. I offered my services to stir, dip or serve in any way. My services were gratefully received and we all worked with a will. Some cut wood and brought it, some brought water, some kept the fire, other with pails and cups to distribute to our hungry wounded men.

"We worked until dark and far into the night. We fed six thousand men including those brought in by ambulances, with their drivers and attendants. In the afternoon it rained without ceasing. The rain descended in torrents. The wounded lay upon the ground surrounding us by thousands; some under bushes for shelter; others without shelter except blankets; more with no covering of any kind. It was impossible to make shelter in such short time. We were thankful that we could feed them. Often when passing from one to another I have heard, a grateful 'God Bless You'. Often I passed a soldier lying in the mud and rain with his arm or leg off or a wound in his body he would say in answer to my inquiry, if he had had tea or coffee? 'Yes, I've done well. Thank you. But you lady will get your death in this rain. How can you go through this mud to wait on us?' Their cheerfulness to me was surprising. I stood in the mud that day over the tops of my boots while preparing food for the wounded. The sanitary had but one tent erected. That sheltered their stores. At 11 o'clock it occurred to me I had no place to sleep.

"One of the men who had been assisting me said he would go and ask a driver to give me a place in his wagon. One of the drivers readily assented and left his wagon for my use—finding room for himself with another teamster. I got into the wagon,

wrapped my shawl about me, sat myself on the bottom of the vehicle, placed the mule saddle at my back and for the first time since morning settled myself for rest. I could not sleep, my clothes were saturated with rain and mud. My bones were aching with wet and fatigue yet I did not feel discouraged. How could I? When I thought of the thousands lying around me, crippled, wounded some dying. I found myself in prayer for my suffering countrymen.

"At dawn I felt rested and ready for another days work. In going from the wagon to our cooking place I experienced the difficulties of walking through Virginia mud. I found many of our wounded lying in these beds of mud mortar. All that the ambulances could they had placed upon the hillsides. The wounded continued to come and be cared for. Miss Dix with her lady nurses came and after a while passed to Fredericksburg. The government kitchen issued supplies to thousands furnished by the Sanitary Commission when short of meat, bread, sugar, coffee etc. I stayed here in charge of the cooking. There was so much suffering and need for my services. My shoes were worn out and I needed clothes. But we were working in an emergency. May 25th, we left Belle Plain for Port Royal. The wounded were arriving in large numbers. We found an old building with fireplaces but no wood. We tore off the outside of the building for fuel and started our fires and we worked all night distributing coffee. That day Col. Cuyler, Inspector General of the Army had stoves brought into the building and five cauldrons outside and sent 28 men to assist in the work. Two cauldrons were filled for coffee, one for soup, two for meat. With these facilities we cooked enough to feed all who came."

"Just before leaving for White House Landing which was to be our next base I met Mr. Fay, of

the Sanitary Commission. He asked me if I was aware that the Commission did not employ lady agents and as their greatest need now was past, he advised me to join some hospital as a nurse. I thanked Mr. Fay telling him I could not do so as I was at present State Agent for New York, and that I could get passage on the Medical Purveyors boat on which my husband was a steward.

"I reported to Col. Cuyler what Mr. Fay had said to me and he said he would place me in charge of the cooking on the government barge to oversee it and at the same time, see to my work as Agent for N. Y. From the barge we fed the first wounded that came to White House from the field. After a day or two our stoves and cauldrons were brought on shore and we fed our thousands again. We called it the Government kitchen and from it regiments including those from N. Y. were supplied with nourishment. Mrs. Lyons of Williamsburgh, L. I., and Mrs. Jenkins of N. Y., labored with us until both returned home sick from the scenes that they had witnessed. Their superhuman exertions and overtaxed strength gave out. Senator Bell of N. Y. visited us and helped us distribute coffee, meat, bread and tea to the Tenth Regiment of New York, State Heavy Artillery, over 1500 strong, but worn and weary with a long march without rations of any kind. We fed them all and they can testify to the benefit of having an agent on hand to give them help in their need.

"We came to City Point June 10. Here again was plenty to do. The wounded were still coming in. The ground was covered with them and our labors were no lighter. Our hospital was finally established. Our Medical Purveyors boat moved around upon the Appomattox River. The Government kitchen was kept in action and I stayed until the hospital

kitchens were in good order, and our hospital ready to receive patients from field hospitals or battlefields. From that time my labors were mostly distributing to needy soldiers at the front, field hospitals and rifle pits. In general hospitals I am not needed so much although I visit them and distribute a portion of my supplies to them. They have their surgeons, ladies and ward masters while at the front have to struggle on alone with only their regimental surgeons. I have found many friends willing to assist me. Dr. Brinton of the Medical Purveyor has kindly given me of such things for the soldiers as do not belong to the Government but are classes as hospital stores. One reason being my husband being one of his stewards. Another he saw I did not grudge to any State soldier that I found in need.

Miraculous Escape

"General Grant has kindly given me a pass to visit the front with supplies where other ladies are not permitted to go. General Mead and Provost Marshal Patrick have shown me great favor. I have been furnished transportation when in need of it. I think I have great need to be thankful to an over-ruling Providence for aiding and protecting me in this great work. I never felt more sensibly my dependence on a higher power than when in the explosion of our ammunition boat at City Point, I sat on my horse about 65 feet from the boat. When it exploded pieces of shell, cannon balls, human flesh, and sticks of timber over and about me—no escape in any direction. I was hit but not seriously hurt. I felt in that moment of destruction that no power but the Almighty could save. I still feel that God in his great mercy protected me in that terrible time.

"I could continue but my report is now too long. The money I have received for the soldiers has

been faithfully expended and supplies distributed according to my best judgment. I have sent you the vouchers. Still with all you send and have sent I have not been able to reach every N. Y. Regiment. New York has an army of her own and immense supplies are needed to give to all a mite. With much respect, Truly yours, MRS. R. H. SPENCER."

Archives of N. Y. State, and daily papers of New York, Albany, Oswego and many other cities published during the war, contain letters from regiments of N. Y. State troops in the field, expressing gratitude to Mrs. Spencer in her distribution of supplies from the state and her great services to the sick and wounded soldiers.

During the war Mr. Spencer's health failed and after they returned to Oswego he secured different employments but in none was he able to perform all the duties they entailed. His ailment seemed to be partial paralysis. Thinking Government land in Kansas might be available to them in 1872 her father, Mr. Keeler and Mr. Spencer went there and took up some land. In May 1873 Mrs. Spencer followed taking with her their mothers, Mrs. Keeler and Mrs. Spencer. She sold her piano and earning money teaching music she built a small house. Robert Spencer's health continued to fail. He died Nov. 27, 1873. Mrs. Keeler died July 17, 1874. Mr. Keeler died Nov. 4, 1874—and on Dec. 24, Robert Spencer's mother died.

Loses Prairie Home

In September of that year her home and contents was destroyed by a prairie fire. So she sold her land and bought a small house in town, Great Bend, Barton County, Kansas. She mortgaged the house, hoping to get a widow's pension from the Government. She went to Washington in her attempt to secure it. In her application she states: "I worked faithfully for

my country. I have given her my husband. I now ask that out of her abundance, she will give me sufficient to sustain my few years in comfort. I will be 61 if I live to the fifteenth of next September. I submit this to your fair consideration hoping God will direct you, MRS. ELMINA P. SPENCER, Washington, D. C." Her application was granted and she was awarded a pension of \$8 a month on services of her husband in the Union Army.

In the early 1880's she returned to Oswego. Hon. N. W. Nutting of Oswego, our Representative in Congress, set himself to the task of securing for her a better pension and was untiring in his efforts to that end. At this time were recited her own services in the Union Army, in the field, on the march, on battlefields and in hospitals. Mr. Nutting said in Committee—"Her pension of \$8 a month is entirely inadequate for her support. She has no child, no home, no property. She is 65 years old, bowed down with poverty and pains of disease. She cannot at the most live long. She is an object of charity and the American people owe it to themselves and to her to increase her pension to \$20. a month." Passed by Congress Feb. 26, 1885.

Honored In Parades

In the 1890's every parade in Oswego in the place of honor escorted by the military units, marched a great company of the Grand Army of The Republic. At their head in a carriage rode Elmina P. Spencer, always proud of the respect and love that the G. A. R. showered upon her. Some of these comrades would never have lived to come home only for her sacrificial service when wounded. She was a member of the Grand Army of The Republic and of the Womans Relief Corps, both of

these organizations named in honor of Capt. John D. O'Brian, first Captain of Volunteers Commissioned in N. Y. State.

Thirty years after the Battle of Gettysburgh July 1, 1893 the State of N. Y. sent all survivors of the 147th Regt. to Gettysburg to dedicate the monument erected on the position held by that Regt. They also received The Gettysburg Medal from the State. 150 survivors answered the roll call. Major Nathaniel A. Wright presided, and called the roll of 76 killed in that battle. Horatio N. Berry a Drummer boy in the Regt. gave the oration. Mrs. Elmina P. Spencer made this trip and recounted her experiences there caring for the wounded on the field.

In 1905 she lived in the Arcade Block. Failing health compelled her to give up living alone. She lived with Mrs. A. Vickery, 142 E. Mohawk St., Emeline E. Gray, W. Bridge St., and Ella H. Smith, 84 West Second St. where she died Dec. 29, 1912. The ladies of the Womens Relief Corps for many years were very kind to her and she was provided for. For the several last years of her life she was bed ridden.

When her Spirit was released it is our Faith that she heard a voice say:—

"Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

I was hungry and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger and ye took me in, Naked and ye clothed me. I was sick and ye visited me I was in prison and ye came unto me. Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, Ye have done it unto Me."

Holy Bible, Matt. 25.

History of The Elmina Spencer Tent

By MRS. ANNA MIDDLETON

A call came from Mrs. Jennie Brown of Syracuse, N. Y., to the daughters and grand-daughters of Oswego to meet and band together to perpetuate the memory of our fathers.

A meeting was held on the evening of March 24, 1921, at the Oswego State Armory, the late J. K. Prosser, Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, acting as master of ceremonies. He asked the late Mrs. Margaret Elder, mother of Dr. Grover Elder, to be chairman of the meeting. The tent was then instituted, and officers elected.

On the evening of March 29, 1921, the department president, Miss Anna Miner of Elmira, accompanied by a large delegation of the Col. Butler Tent, Syracuse, arrived at the Armory and organized this tent with 76 charter members. At this meeting the question of a name of a tent came before the members. Our constitution tells us that each tent shall be named for an army nurse who served during the Civil War, or to a loyal deceased woman who rendered aid to the Union cause. Preference shall be given to an army nurse. A Civil War veteran, Comrade Meamer of Syracuse suggested that we call it "Spencer Tent" after Mrs. Elmina Spencer, a Civil War Army nurse, whose home was in Oswego. He spoke of her with great praise, based on personal knowledge of her work during the battle of Gettysburg.

No agreement was reached that evening, but at the next meeting it was decided to name it Elmina Spencer Tent. The late

Mrs. Charlotte Mosbrugger was the first president. I had the honor of being the third. Mrs. Margaret Elder for several years held the office of patriotic instructor. She used to tell us about going to Chicago to the National Encampment of the Grand Army with Mrs. Spencer, and how the veterans would flock around her, recalling her kindness to them. One would say, 'Do you remember what you did for me?' Another would say something similar; they were so happy to see her. Mrs. Elder was a dear lady. We always enjoyed hearing her tell about Mrs. Spencer.

Comrade Prosser was very proud of the daughters. He worked hard to help us get started. I remember how surprised he was at our large membership. He had thought there were not enough to found a chapter. Despite his doubts he assisted Mrs. Brown, mentioned above, in a door-to-door canvass, and they found a number of daughters. I am proud to say that I was the fifth to sign the charter that day. There is just one other living charter member, Mrs. Mary Gallagher, widow of Fred Gallagher, former superintendent of the State Armory, a son of a Union Veteran. Mrs. Gallagher has been a great help to this tent, and regrets that she can not be here tonight.

Has State Officer

Elmina Spencer Tent is proud to have a member who last year served New York state as department president and last September attended the national conven-

tion at Portland, Oregon, and again honored this tent by bringing back the office of National Historian. She is a past-president of this tent and a member of this Historical Society. She is Mrs. Madeline B. Myers.

"Mrs. Beulah Brownell is now serving her second year as president. Mrs. Belle Coe Smith, a past-president of Betsey Ross Tent, Buffalo, was present when this tent was organized. After she returned to Oswego to live she transferred to this tent. Mrs. M. Helena Heilig is also a past-president.

To Comrade Prosser we owe a great deal, and to Mrs. Brown, who died a few years ago, we are most grateful. Also we will not forget the late Comrade Wallace Halliday, who thought this tent

the best ever. To his memory the daughters take part in the Memorial Day parade and service at New Haven cemetery, where he is buried.

For years we have taken care of Mrs. Spencer's cemetery lot at Rural cemetery and every Memorial Day flowers are placed there.

"We are very happy that we assisted in erecting the monument in the East Park in memory of the Veterans of the Civil War, the boys who wore the blue. Mrs. Heilig was our president at that time.

In behalf of Elmina Spencer Tent No. 50 I would like to thank you for inviting us here and for permitting me to tell you a little about the history of this tent of which I am very proud and happy to be a member.



Standing Committees 1954

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George M. Penney
Dr. C. R. Baldwin
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