

EARLY HISTORY of the Town of WOODHULL, NY
By E.T. Hollis, 1913

This was contributed by Norma Crane (Woodhull Historian) it was retyped by Annette Campbell.

This town was formed from Troupsburg and Addison February 18, 1828.

The first settler was Daniel JOHNSON, who came in 1804, and settled a mile west of the village on the south branch of the creek. The same year SPEARS and MERLIN entered 800 acres near the village on the north side; they did some chopping on the Walter SMITH farm, but abandoned their purchase. Bethnel TUBBS was the second settler, he came in 1805, and also Caleb, Colvin and Josiah STILES.

Ansel STILES came in 1806, Joshua GREEN, Henry MARTIN and three or four others came who made no settlement and stayed only while game was plenty, leaving no descendants in the town. Caleb SMITH settled in 1806 on the farm now owned by Chauncey HOUGHTAILING. In 1808 he built the first saw and grist mill built in the town, it stood opposite the house of Helen MILLER, the dam being where the creek now runs, it being unearthed by the great flood of 1889. By a change of its course the creek ran for many years several rods north of this dam, the dam being covered several feet by gravel and dirt before the flood of 1889. Caleb SMITH was the father of Benjamin SMITH, Col. Jeffrey and Alfred SMITH. There are many of his descendants now residents of the town. (Jeff Smith of H.P. Smith & Son Funeral Home being one--AC).

Hugh BOYED was the first settler on Pulteney hill. He came from the town of Pulteney and settled on what is now known as the William SLY farm in 1822. He later induced a number of his friends in Pulteney to settle here, and that settlement gave that section the name of Pulteney Hill. His descendants now living here are George and Park BOYED.

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Clark BROWN settled where his grandson, Jent C. BROWN now lives, in 1821. He built the first frame house in the town, it was built of hewn plank and for lack of nails was fastened together with wooden pins. This building is still in daily use, it forms a part of Jent C. BROWN's fine farm house. Being a carpenter by trade and quite ingenious, he built spinning wheels and furniture for the early settlers. Several of his descendants are now living in the town and are among its best citizens.

Seth GRAVES settled on the David BUCK farm now owned by Ed HUSTED in 1805. He was a great hunter, often killing six or eight deer in a day, which he disposed of to other settlers; tradition says that his children attended school dressed in buckskin clothes.

Henry P. HARDER came here in 1821 and settled on the land now owned by Randall PRUTSMAN. Micajah SHERWOOD came the same year and took up the farm west of the Pulteney road now owned by Fred S. PRUTSMAN.

John LATTIMER bought out a squatter on the land known as the Craig LATTIMER place in 1825, moved onto it from New Jersey in 1826, bringing with him his family; his oldest child Mary then in her 17th year. Charles WILDRICK came from the same place in New Jersey as did Mr. LATTIMER and at the same time.

Draw a line across the state of New York from North to South and 12 miles east of Binghamton, and remember that 125 years ago no white man had ever purchased an acre west of that line, then consider, there were no telegraphs, telephones or railroads, and but few other roads as late as 1825, and you will get some idea of what these early settlers endured. In 1802 Charles WILLIAMSON with the best team and rig in western New York was three weeks making the trip from Bath to the City of New York The same trip is now made in 8 or 10 hours. (I wonder what they would have thought of our trip now taking about an hour or two by

plane. --AC)

I am inclined to think that WILDRICK then a young man feared that Mary LATTIMER might get lonesome in the wilderness, and for that reason came from New Jersey with them and afterwards married her, and from them are all the WILDRICKS in this section descended.

The year 1826 seems to have been an especially prosperous one for the town, as in that year came not only Mr. LATTIMER and Mr. WILDRICK, but also Wooster PERRY, Thomas HEDGES and Samuel STROUD, from all of whom came a line of descendants who are good citizens and a credit to the communities in which they live.

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It is hard for any person to realize that 110 years ago there was not a white person in all the territory now known as the town of Woodhull. It is also hard to realize that 93 years ago there was not a rod of public highway in the entire town. There is no finer section of farm lands in this county than the southeast section of this town, in which is situated the hamlet of Borden. It is a section of splendid farms, beautiful homes and almost palatial residences. And yet you can hardly realize that a little more than 80 years ago Andrew COLGROVE killed in this very section a female panther and 9 of her cubs, and that he received bounties from Steuben county which amounted to \$137.50 as recorded at the Steuben County Clerk's Office for killing them. Nor do those of the present generation realize that the early settlers had no trouble even 60 or 70 years ago in supplying their tables with brook trout from the small streams of that section and venison and bear meat from the forests then growing upon the rich farming lands they now occupy. Yet it is an actual fact that they did.

Hiram SLEEPER for many years a lumber man at Addison, purchased a large tract of land in this section; Hiram WELCH, an early settler, purchased his land of SLEEPER and worked for him in his lumber camps to pay for it. The writer knew both men in his boyhood and knows that under all and any circumstances SLEEPER was the warm friend of WELCH. In the small stream known as Elk Creek in this section were at one time five saw mills, namely, BURLEIGH mill. Hiram BRIDGES, Herman GREENSLATE, John RICHARDS and Hiram SLEEPER's, and at that time there were more than 30 sawmills on the Tuscarora creek and its tributaries. Sixty years ago this part of Woodhull was known as Greenslate Settlement. I have been informed he went west and died there many years ago.

Among the prominent early settlers were Lansing HAND, Benjamin NORTHRUP, Solomon HARRISON, Hiram GREENSLATE, Adolphus HARRISON, Coral W. MORGAN, Austin HAND, Abram LUNGER, Chester KETTLE and others. They have many descendants who are a credit to the memory of these pioneers in our town's settlement.

One great drawback in the wilderness was the lack of roads. There was not a rod of public highway in the town much earlier than 1825.

In 1821 Charles WILLIAMSON, the father of Steuben county, let to Seth PIERCE the job of building a road from the Canisteo river at a point near Cameron village to the state line; PIERCE was to receive in

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Payment a money consideration and 400 acres of land which he selected at what is now known as Wylies Corners. Most of this land is now owned by Menzo WILDRICK and Mr. SLY. PIERCE chopped over 40 acres and abandoned it and the job.

Wooster PERRY settled near Hedgesville in 1825 and was a week getting his household goods from the river to his land, there then being but two houses from Cameron to Woodhull and no road at that. It was a dozen years after that that Hiram SLEEPER built a lumber road down Elk Creek, and 25 years later when SLEEPER built the dug road from the STRATTON farm to intersect with the Addison

and Woodhull road which ran on the side hill 50 rods north of the STRATTON farm house. The road leading from the Pierce road or Pulteney Hill road was not opened until 1845 and was hardly passable in 1855; yet it is now covered by fine farm buildings its whole length from Pulteney Hill to Borden. What was true about this road was true of nearly every road in town.

And the people of today but little realize the hardships of those who came before them. Mrs. Penelope P. BALDWIN, mother of the late Horace D. BALDWIN, writing her mother, Mrs. Joanna ALLEN, North Kingston, Rhode Island, says in part: "You see by this letter we are in a new place and a new section of this state. Plenty of Hemlock forests and deer in the woods. However new as it is we have purchased a farm of about 90 acres, about half of it the trees are felled or cut down. There is a small dwelling house and barn, also a fine young orchard of about 100 trees, all grafted; and what is better the location is very good for this place. There is quite a village started here, there are two stores, two taverns, a number of mechanics in here and about a dozen dwelling houses, are good families too. There is no house yet for public worship. There is preaching in the school houses once in two weeks, sometimes oftener. They are principally Baptists and a few Presbyterians, I think in the course of another year there will be a meeting house built. The oldest house in the place was built about seven years ago." (Letter written in 1851 according to Norma Crane).

This letter was written sixty-two years ago and preserved by H.D. BALDWIN, who got it from his grandmother, gives the reader a better idea of the country at that date than anything any man can write today.

Samuel STROUD settled here in 1826, his sons, Jacob D. and Edward L., all came at the same time. The sons became prominent citizens, and many of their descendants are now living in the town

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The first merchant was Ira SMITH, his store was in the house now owned by Arthur SMITH. Other early merchants were I.C. LEACH, S.P. LATTIMER, Asa ARNOLD, George DEVISER, George F. COLE, P.B. STROUD. E & D COLVIN did mercantile business here 39 years, being the longest of any merchants in the town. After the death of D. COLVIN the business was continued under the name of COLVIN & Co. The merchants of today you will find advertised in the personal cards or so many of them as desired to be mentioned herein. There are some other merchants here, but they didn't think it pays to pay a dollar to advertise so their names are not mentioned in this history.

Dr. Reed was the first doctor, Dr. WILEY the second. Dr. Albert H. SEELY came in 1851 and practiced for more than 55 years. When he died he was loved and respected by every citizen of the town, all of whom regretted and mourned his loss. Doctors E.E. WEBSTER and John SEELY, son of Albert, are now the only doctors in the town; both have been actively engaged in politics for about three years last passed. WEBSTER is now Supervisor of the town, while genial John SEELY is the State Senator representing this county and Livingston. It is remarkable that during the years these doctors have been thus engaged the town is and has been remarkable healthy, so much so that if people wanted to start a new cemetery they would have to kill a person to start it. If this situation continues the result will be to put our gentlemanly undertakers out of business.

The first lawyer that settled in the town was Hon. George B. BRADLEY, afterwards Judge of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, and when retired one of the ablest judges in the state. Other lawyers have been E. T. HOLLIS (writer of this history), A.J.C. EDWARDS, Peter MASTEN, B.W. SLY and John W. HOLLIS. E.T. HOLLIS has resided here since 1860 except four or five years he lived at Addison during the time of the war.

Up to the year 1850 the roads over the entire town were in a wretchedly poor condition. But as the settlement continued to grow and the town became more populous good roads have been the rule so that we know but little of the road

troubles encountered by the early settlers. One of the four great lines of stone road now being constructed across the state from east to west passes through the town and will be of great benefit to the farming community and all others. One hundred teams and three or four hundred men are this season working

in the town on its construction, having all kinds of costly machines etc. for it's construction.

The first man who preached a sermon in the town was the Rev. John KENT, a Baptist preacher.

Churches---there are two churches in the village of Woodhull, the Baptist, which was the first organized church in the town, it was organized in the year 1837. The Rev. James CLARK preached the opening sermon, the Rev J. B. CHASE acted as clerk. The church then had 17 members. Stephen KENT was elected clerk; he was a son of Rev. John KENT and a brother of Henry F. KENT.

The Methodist church was organized in 1846, the land and most of the money to build the church building was donated by Alfred SMITH. The first Methodist preacher was Rev. KING, who came once a month on horseback and preached to the settlers for some years prior to the building of the church.

Schools---The first school house in Woodhull was built in 1808 by Abram Thomas, the second at Brady's Corners in 1823, and the third near Hedgesville in 1830. The Woodhull Academy was built in 1866 and 7. There was for many years a large attendance at that school. Many scholars came here from abroad, until it was finally turned into a union school.

The first white child born in this town was Polly SMITH, daughter of Samuel SMITH. The first marriage was that of Levi RICE and Cynthia TUBBS. The first death was that of a daughter of Stephen DOLSON. She was buried on the Henry BROWN farm. The first sermon ever preached in the town was at the house of Daniel JOHNSON and was preached by Rev. Mr. KING of Elmira, who of course came on foot or on horseback to teach the early settlers in respect to religion.

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