

Pomroy Jones' History of the Town of Augusta (1851)

The following is a chapter from Pomroy Jones' Annals and Recollections of Oneida County, published in 1851.

This is the south-westernmost town in Oneida County. It lies in an elevated position, and from its bounds waters flow to the ocean through the Hudson and St. Lawrence; and if there are no waters which flow from this town to the ocean through the Susquehannah, it is but a short distance from the southern line of the town to waters which enter the ocean through that channel.

This town lies principally upon two high hills, or ridges, running nearly north and south upon each side of the Skenandoa Creek. On the side hills, and in some places reaching almost to their summits, are inexhaustible beds of limestone. This has been extensively quarried for fences and building purposes. In some quarries the seams are very regular, and no better stone for masonry can be found. From the abundance of lime in the soil, winter wheat is cultivated more generally than in any other town in the county. Although the town lies principally upon two ridges, yet its south-west corner extends into the valley of the Oriskany, and the village of Oriskany Falls is in this section. In general, the soil is excellent, and there is less of swamp in the town than in almost any other section of equal in the county. Besides a small proportion of hemlock, and a very small quantity of cedar, with a short distance north of Augusta Centre, the forests of this town were composed of those kinds of hard timber common in the county, and denoting good land for grain.

In 1794, Peter Smith, father of Gerrit Smith leased of the Oneida Indians about 60,000 acres, which, in honor of his name, was called New Petersburg. Gerrit Smith asserts that this lease was for 999 years; some of the oldest inhabitants, however, are of the opinion that it was for but twenty-one years, as they received their leases for that period. The pagan party of the Oneidas was opposed to the leasing to Mr. Smith, and at one time they proceeded so far as to drive the surveyor off from the tract. The south-east corner of New Petersburg was the south-east corner of Augusta, and it extended quite across this town and the County of Madison. There was a tract of 1,000 acres, which was situated east of Stockbridge, and west of the "Four Miles Square," as it was called, and lying within Smith's 60,000 acres: this was granted to John Gregg, Sen., John Gregg, Jr., and James Alexander, and was called the "School Lot," the rent of which was appropriated to the education of Indian children. Zaccheus Barber, Charles Francis, and Samuel Farrington, reside upon this lot. Riley Shepard resides upon the north-west corner lot of the "Four Miles Square" above mentioned. Mr. Smith divided his tract into four allotments, the first of which was entirely within the town of Augusta. Previous to 1791, most of the lands of this tract in Augusta were leased for twenty-one years. In 1795 and 1797, acts were passed by the Legislature, providing that all who had obtained leases of Smith, could have patents from the State upon paying the State \$3.53 per acre and that Smith should be allowed to retain six lots in this town, as part or entire pay for his lease from the Indians. The lands thus patented were mortgaged to the State, to secure the purchase money; and it is believed that one-fourth of the original purchase money is yet unpaid. P. Smith was born in 1768 of Dutch parentage. In 1795, the Oneidas sold to the State a large tract, known in those days as the "Oneida Reservation." This purchase included the north part of Augusta, and large portions of the towns of Vernon and Verona. It was soon

surveyed, and was sold at Auction in August, 1797. The Indians retained within this reservation a tract a mile square, which was eventually conveyed to the Northern Missionary Society, and for which the Society was to maintain a missionary and teacher among the Indians. This tract was located in the following manner:- A stake was stuck by the side of the spring, about sixty rods south-west of the present residence of John Curry, which was made the centre of the tract, and from this point the mile square was surveyed. The Rev. Samuel Kirkland, who came to Oneida in 1776 as a missionary, enjoyed a part of the avails of this lot after it was conveyed; and in 1809, after the death of Mr. Kirkland, the Society employed a Mr. Jenkins as a missionary among the Indians. His services were acceptable to but a very small number of the Indians, and he became discouraged, and left. The Indians have since sought further compensation for the land they had conveyed to the Society; but its acting members declared that they had been ready to fulfill upon their part, and as the land had been disposed of by the Society in good faith, they saw no violation of Christian principles in their course. The author knows nothing of the merits of this controversy, but is entirely satisfied that if all the dealings of those professedly Christians had been conducted upon "Christian principles," the efforts of the missionaries of the cross would have been attended with much happier results among these benighted children of the forest. Two hundred and forty acres of this tract were patented to Israel Chappin, being the lots upon which Lemuel Smith and Mr. Murray settled, and the remainder was patented directly to the Society.

FIRST SETTLEMENT OF THE TOWN, AND FIRST SETTLERS

A man named Gunn built the first habitation for white persons in Augusta, in 1793, which stood not far from where Peter Stebbins now resides. Benjamin Warren built the second, upon the precise location upon which his house now stands. David Morton built upon the place upon which the Rev. Sheldon Smith now resides; and John Alden commenced a clearing in the same year upon the south lot upon the north and south road which passes through the centre of town.

Upon the 17th of August, in this year, Ichabod Stafford, Joseph and Abraham Forbes, and their families, took up their residences upon the east hill in this town. Mr. Stafford "took up" the lot upon which Truman Cole resides, and the Forbes took up the lots adjoining and south of Stafford. Some of these slept upon their cart the first night they resided in Augusta. In 1794, Isaac and Benjamin Allen settled upon the farm upon which Isaac Allen resides; and Amos Parker, who had occupied a farm upon the Brotherton Tract for two years, removed to the place where he died. He was a brave soldier for his country, and lived and died an eminently active and devoted Christian. Upon one occasion, while serving in the army of the Revolution, he saved the life of La Fayette by disobeying orders. La Fayette ordered an intrenchment, which was protected by palisades and abattis, to be carried by storm (The author presumes that this was one of the redoubts stormed at the siege of Yorktown. La Fayette commanded the Americans, who stormed one, while, to excite emulation, a division of French troops stormed the other). For this purpose, he selected a forlorn hope of twenty-five men, armed with muskets, and also with axes, for the purpose of removing the abattis and palisades. Mr. Parker was one of this party, and marched by the side of La Fayette. They cleared the way to the palisades, and Parker struck one of the pickets with his axe, intending to sever it at a blow, but his instrument was too dull to produce that effect, even by a second blow. Putting his hand to the top of the post, by the help of his brawny arm it was so loosened that, by a well-directed effort, it was drawn from its position, and then another and another shared the same fate in quick succession. Upon the removal of the third, La Fayette exclaimed, "That will do, my boy," and passed through the breach, followed by Parker, to the works thrown up by the enemy. Within were the enemy, opposing their entrance, while friends were pressing in their rear. Death to his beloved General now seemed inevitable. Their orders

were not to fire, under pain of death, until the word was given; yet Parker, preferring the chance of losing his life by the sentence of a court martial, to seeing his commanding officer sacrificed, drew up his trusty musket, and fired. This made an opening, through which he rushed, followed by La Fayette, into the intrenchment, and with the butt end of his musket he soon made a lodgment for himself and his comrades, the fortress was taken. After the transaction, he was arraigned before a court martial, and tried for disobedience of orders; but it was so evident that his disobedience had been the means of saving the life of La Fayette, and crowning the expedition with success, that he was acquitted. In 1824, when La Fayette, the "Nation's Guest," was at Utica, the old soldier called at his room, and although some disposed to deprive him of admission, he persisted, and obtained an entrance. He offered his hand, and gave his name, but his old commander, not recognizing him, requested him to relate some circumstance by which he might call him to mind. Mr. Parker mentioned the above occurrence, when they, who more than forty years before had undaunted shared danger so imminent, now wept, like Joseph and Benjamin, upon each other's neck.

Mr. Parker, because the tallest man in the army, stood upon the right of the American troops when Cornwallis surrendered. As a conqueror he also met death when it came.

In 1794, Thomas Cassety came to the Falls of the Oriskany, and built a log house, and commenced preparations for building a saw mill. Ozias Hart, Abel Prior, Thomas Spafford, Ezra Saxton, Abiel Lindsley, and Francis O'Toole, removed into the town this years.

Francis O'Toole was an educated Irishman, and was impressed into the service of England while on his way to France to complete his education. He was in a number of desperate battles, and, after three years, was landed in Boston, without money or friends. He traveled over the country some four or five years in search of a home. The following narrative was related substantially to a friend by Mr. O'Toole:- "After he had landed in Boston, he went to Hartford, Conn., where he hired to Col. Thomas Seymour, with whom he lived two years. Frank had the fortune soon to ingratiate himself into favor with the Colonel and his lady. For the first year he passed only as a wild, unlettered Irishman. Upon one occasion, Mrs. Seymour kindly proffered her service to teach him to read. Frank, with the greatest possible nonchalance depicted upon his countenance, gravely told her he thought himself now too old to commence an education. His benevolent employers were not undeceived as to his knowledge of letters until his second year's service, and he was then detected as follows:- Col. S. had a son, by the name of Richard, pursuing his studies in Yale College. Being at home during his vacation, he wished to excite some wonder among the servants in the kitchen by a display of his learning, by "spouting" a sentence in Latin. This pedantry threw poor Frank off his guard, and Richard was retorted upon severely in the same language. This was overheard by Mrs. S. in an adjoining room, who soon made her appearance, and told her son she thought he would be very much improved by a farther acquaintance in the kitchen. The news soon spread that Col. Seymour's wild Irishman was liberally educated, and he who had been only greeted with the epithets of Pat and Paddy, was now addressed as Mr. O'Toole."

In coming to this town, Mr. O'Toole followed the old Indian path, and upon arriving at the spring near where he built his house, was so well pleased with the place, that he resolved to make it his residence, if he could obtain it. This he was so fortunate as to accomplish, and located himself here in 1794, and remained until he was removed to his last resting place, February 23, 1842, at the age of ninety. He left a son, who is an Attorney-at-Law in Albany, and also a number of daughters who are enterprising and highly respectable, and three of whom reside in Rome.

In 1795, Mr. Cassety completed his saw mill at the Falls. Lemuel Hart and J. Reynolds came into the

town this year.

In the autumn of 1796, a grist mill was so nearly completed that the inhabitants were not all compelled to go either to Clinton, Westmoreland, or Madison to mill. Previous to this time, it was not an unfrequent occurrence for the inhabitants, for lack of beasts of burden, to carry their grain to those places upon their backs. A grist mill was built at Fishville, in 1808, by Charles Fish and Benjamin Gregg. In 1809 one was erected at the Centre, by Josiah Bartholomew and Eleazar Metcalf.

Abraham and Alexander Holmes resided upon the east hill this year. Oliver Bartholomew, Deacon Philip Pond, William Martin, Stephen Crosby, Archibald and John Manchester, Robert Worden, and John Goodhue, were also residents of the town this year.

In 1797, an effort was made in the Legislature to organize this town. The bill passed the Assembly, but when reached in the Senate, Samuel Jones, then a Senator from the southern district, and who was the first State Comptroller, arose and asked, "What will they do for town officers? for the law declares they must be freeholders." This defeated the bill, for Peter Smith's land was then yet held by leases for twenty-one years, and the Oneida Reservation had not been sold.

In the spring of this year, five families came in company from Washington, Litchfield County, Conn., of whose number were Robert Durkee, Newton Smith, Joseph Hurd and Sheldon Parmalee. Benjamin and Joseph Durkee, in the course of the year, followed from the same town. They all settled upon the road running south from the Centre, and which was called "Washington street." Previous to the arrival of these settlers, there was no road from Michael Hinman's, where George L. Brigham now resides, to the Centre.

An election was held this year, while the territory of this town was included in Whitestown, Herkimer County, at the public house of Charles Putnam, upon the hill east of Harvey Putnam's present residence.

The town was organized in 1798. The name of Augusta was given in consequence of a promise of Gen. Augustus Van Horn to Thomas Cassety, who was now a Colonel in the militia, that if the Colonel would procure the town to be named after him, he would give him a new military hat. The name so nearly resembled the General's, that the Colonel received the promised "hat."

By the act organizing the town, the first town meeting was to be held at the house of Timothy Pond, Jr. The first meeting was held agreeably to the Legislative appointment, and Thomas Cassety was elected Supervisor, and Joseph Durkee Town Clerk. Col. Cassety, from his education and talents, became a leading spirit in those days. Mr. Durkee held the office of Clerk twenty-four successive years, and of the nineteen men elected to office at this meeting, he is the only one who yet resides in town. But one other is known living. Oliver Bartholomew, who resides near Watertown. Col. Cassety was a Justice of the Peace for Herkimer County, for we learn of his having solemnized marriages while this territory belonged to that county. He administered the oath of office as Supervisor to himself, as appears by the records, and certified that the oath was taken before himself. Perhaps a part of this irregularity arose from the fact that the oaths of all town officers were recorded in the town book, and subscribed by themselves. In newly settled towns, many irregularities had to be overlooked. The statutes of those days require the oaths of town officers to be taken before a Justice of the Peace, or other proper officer, without fee or reward; and it is believed that Col. Cassety was the only person authorized to administer oaths within the limits of the town. The first election of Justice of the Peace by the people in town meeting, was that of Nathan Kimball, in 1830; but Justices were elected

previous to that year at general elections, under the amendment to the Constitution adopted in 1826; but which the town records do not show. Esquire Kimball, who is yet living, has since held the office of County Judge. The town meetings were held regularly up to 1802. In 1801 the town meeting adjourned, to meet the next year at the house of Seth Holmes, who resided upon the west side of the road ascending the hill from the south at Vernon Centre. This venerable mansion is yet standing, although much gone to decay, and uninhabited. The meeting failed, for before the time appointed, the town of Vernon had been erected, leaving the house of Mr. Holmes in the latter town. Accordingly, three Justices of the Peace appointed the town officers for 1802. In 1805, a Town House was built at the Centre, in which the town meetings have since been held. It has been twice removed to different locations, the last time to the Centre, in 1842, when it was repaired at the expense of the town.

The first merchant was a Mr. Adams, who kept his goods in the house of Ichabod Stafford, in 1798. He built, or rather raised and covered, a building for a store in that vicinity, but failed before he had filled it with goods. Mr. Smith "sold goods" near the present residence of Christopher Stebbins, but committed some crime, for which he was sentenced to State's Prison. Elisha Carrington established himself as a merchant at an early period at Newell's Corners, but he soon removed to Peterboro. Abel Lindsley traded at a very early period at the place now occupied by Cyrus Barber. Samuel Chandler came into the town and engaged in business with Mr. Lindsley some five or six years before he commenced business with his brother. This firm failed, and Winthrop H. Chandler, after some delay, entered into business with his brother Samuel, in 1806. This firm, under the name of Samuel Chandler & Co., became one of the most respectable mercantile establishments in the county, and the brothers long enjoyed the confidence of the community.

They were both, at different times, elected Supervisors of the town, and Winthrop H. represented the county in the Assembly. Winthrop H. did not become an actual resident of Augusta until May, 1808, and the two continued the business until 1818, when Samuel died. Winthrop H. continued the business until Feb. 24, 1835, when his store was destroyed by fire. This was the most disastrous blow to the prosperity of Augusta Centre that has ever happened. John J. Knox settled in Augusta in 1811. He has been extensively engaged in mercantile operations, and the purchasing of produce, up to the present time. He was for a time President of the Bank of Vernon. Knox's Corners is a place of considerable business.

Two citizens of this town have assisted in electing Presidents. David Ambler was a member of Assembly when the electors were chosen by that body who elected James Monroe. John J. Knox was an elector when W. H. Harrison was elected. While in the Assembly, Mr. Ambler voted for the construction of the Erie Canal, a measure of vast importance, and which has fully shown the far-seeing wisdom of its supporters.

W. H. Chandler, Riley Shepard, and David Murray have been members of the Assembly. Chauncy C. Cook, a native of this town, was a member of Assembly from Kirkland in 1845.

The first white child born in Augusta, was Peter Smith Gunn. The first persons married in the town, were Daniel Hart and Catharine Putnam. Col. Cassety officiated upon the occasion. The oldest native now residing in this town, is Mrs. Margaret Mahanny, daughter of Francis O'Toole. The first death in the town was that of Eleazar Putnam, who died April 15, 1795, aged 31 years. He lived upon the east hill; and as a number of families of that name had located near together, that section of the hill was known to the early settlers as Put's Hill. The next death of an adult was that of Lucy Greene, who died in March, 1796. Age not ascertained. Two deaths of children occurred in this town at an early period, one a child of Ozias Hart, the other of John Porter, but which died first can not now be ascertained.

They were first buried near where Herman Parker resides; but the ground proving unsuitable, they were afterwards removed to the present burying ground, south of David Stilson's. This ground was originally given for that purpose by John Porter, and was enlarged, newly fenced, and beautified in 1845. There are four clergymen buried in it: the Rev. Amos Crocker, whose grave is lost, and Rev. Simon Snow, whose epitaph is, -

"With Heavenly weapons I have fought
The Battles of the Lord,
Finished my course, and kept the faith,
And wait a sure reward."

The Rev. A. P. Clark, and Rev. John Ormsbee.

During the nine years preceding September 1847, there were 247 deaths in the town. The annual proportion is one in 76.2. The greatest number in a year, 42; least number, 19. Population, 2,271.

There have been four deaths by fire-arms where the design to shoot, if not to kill, was shown. Mr. Major Wood, who lived upon the east hill, was shot by a woman who lived with him as wife. He had served in the continental army, and this woman came from the army with him. She was intemperate, and had been to an election the day preceding the commission of the deed, and was intoxicated at the time. Little was known of the circumstances, or how much of malice or design were manifested by the act. She was tried, convicted of murder, and sentenced to be hung, and her body given to the surgeons. In the night preceding the day of execution, she hung herself in the jail at Herkimer. At the time, it was the opinion of many that she was induced to commit suicide by the belief that thereby she would evade the last part of her sentence, and save her body from the dissecting knife. If this was so, she failed in her object, for her remains were used for the promotion of professional science. (See section upon Capital Convictions, pp. 42, 43 for particulars of her trial.)

Theophilus Fowler, an Indian, shot Ethan Wiggins, another Indian. They, with others, had been on a squirrel hunt for two or three days. Coming into the neighborhood of the distillery, Wiggins went into the shoe shop of Charles Stiles, an upper room of the house now occupied by David Fish, and Fowler went to the distillery and obtained something to drink. Very soon Fowler took his gun and went rapidly up the street, until opposite the shoe shop. Wiggins was looking out of the window, and Fowler, without giving any notice of his intentions, drew up and fired. Wiggins fell, one shot having entered his eye, and was immediately carried to Brotherton, where he survived but about three days.

After the Revolutionary war, the Oneida Indians who resided at Oriskany, left that location, and a part came to the "Mile Square," in the neighborhood of the present residence of John Curry. This location had long before been occupied by Indians. Mr. Philo White was of the opinion that when the Oneida Indians left Oriskany, a part of them went to Canesaraga. After the settlement of Augusta, a number of those Indians yet remained upon the "Mile Square." Cornelius was their head man, and he had a son-in-law named Jacob. Jacob and another Indian, whose name can not now be ascertained, went to Clinton, where they obtained liquor. While upon their return, they had a quarrel, and although Jacob was much the smaller man, yet, as is believed from the fact that he was less drunk, he obtained the advantage in the fight. Upon arriving at their settlement, they first came to the home of the larger Indian. The latter went to his wigwam, and obtaining his rifle, came to the door, and shot Jacob, who fell dead. He then dragged the body into the woods, and made an attempt to conceal it. The next morning, Jacob not having arrived at his home, his father-in-law, Cornelius, started to search for him. When he arrived at the place in the road where Jacob had been shot, his practiced eye discovered

blood, and with true Indian sagacity, he traced its trail into the woods, and found the body. From the circumstances, he at once knew who was the murderer. Standing in the relation of the "avenger of blood," according to the Indian laws, he immediately proceeded to the cabin of the murderer, burst open the door, and with his ever ready knife, gave, as he supposed, the fatal stab. By means of "eavesdropping," a few evenings afterwards, he ascertained that his aim had not been true, and that the murderer was recovering from his wound. Cornelius then went to Hendrick Smith, his nephew, who resided at the Indian Orchard, and who was also from Oriskany, and borrowed his brass hatchet, with a steel edge, and also persuaded Smith to go with him. They started, and ran without once halting, until they arrived at the cabin door of their victim. Cornelius burst open the door, and finding the object of their vengeance upon his bed, without uttering a word, caught him by the hairs, and with one blow of the tomahawk cleft open his head. Not knowing in what light the matter might be viewed by the friends at Oneida, of the Indian whom they had executed, Cornelius and Smith thought it prudent to leave the place until the excitement, if any, had subsided. They therefore went south into the Chenango country, and remained until they learned that the friends of the murderer were satisfied that his punishment was merited and just, and were not disposed to take any notice of it or his executioners, when they returned.

The author is aware that there is some skepticism in relation to this transaction. His informant was the Hon. Aaron Stafford, of Waterville, who is a son of the Ichabod Stafford who settled in Augusta in 1793. He resided with his father at the time, and but a short distance south from where it took place. Although he was not an eye-witness, yet he well recollects the affair, and that the next morning after the murder, Jacob's wife, with a very young infant, came to his father's, accompanied by her mother, the wife of Cornelius, and of their talking of the subject, and weeping bitterly. He also well recollects having seen the brass hatchet, with steel edge, belonging to Hendrick Smith, with which it was said the Indian was executed; and also remembers the absence of Cornelius and Hendrick. Those acquainted with the tenacity of Mr. Stafford's memory, will hardly doubt the correctness of his statements.

Another instance of death from fire-arms was that in which Thomas Grinnell, accidentally, shot himself in the arm, near the shoulder. He survived the accident but about a week.

Timothy Ranney was accidentally shot by his cousin, Silas Cook, on Sunday, the 10th of April, 1810. Riley Shepard and Timothy Ranney, were sitting near each other, reading alternately a verse from the Bible, and if the charge had possessed sufficient force to have passed through Mr. Ranney's head, Shepard would have shared the fate of his cousin.

At the Falls, Mr. Cady shot Mr. Gardner, who was acting the part of a military officer, by giving him the word of command. There had been a training the day previous, and Cady was not aware that the gun was loaded.

Orris S. Cook, son of Josiah Cook, was killed by the falling of a tree, Oct. 22, 1818.

Terence Fagan was killed July 12, 1838, by falling from his wagon, and the horses stopping with one of the wheels resting upon his neck. His death occurred in Stockbridge, but he was a resident of Augusta.

Roswell J. Lewis, of this town, was killed at Oneida Castle, on the 22d of May, 1842, by being run over while attempting to stop his own and E. Wooster's horses while running. After the accident, he survived but about twenty-four hours. Says his obituary: "Within the recollection of our oldest

citizens, death has not entered our town under so painful a shape, and attended by such a variety of distressing particulars, as in this instance."

In 1834, a sum of about \$2,100 was raised for the purpose of an Academical School at the Centre. A very commodious stone building was soon erected, and a school went into successful operation. In 1840, the sum of \$400 was raised for a library and philosophical apparatus, and the Academy was incorporated. The form of the building is peculiar, at least it is so for Central New York. The front is a regular semicircle, while the rear wall is straight. The teachers in this Institution have been: Melville Adams, Rev. Benjamin Lockwood, Robert Bradshaw, J. Manross, Hewitt Bronson, G. L. Hall, Rev. Samuel Whaley, A. K. Eaton, C. Percival. Mr. Hall taught successfully during seven years.

This town, like Vernon, was settled by very many from Litchfield County, Conn. At this time, eighteen of the forty-eight families who reside upon the road which runs north and south through the Centre, were from that county, or are the immediate descendants of such. The town of Otis, in Berkshire County, Mass., at one time had many representatives in August.

Josiah Cook, grandfather of Chauncy C. Cook, of Clinton, attended a half century celebration at the Centre in 1857. He came from Otis to this town in 1799, with thirteen children, all of whom, with a single exception, settled with families in Augusta. His descendants, on the 7th of September, 1847, numbered 250.

Abner Ranney, who died September 17, 1847, aged 101 years, 5 months, 5 days came from Blandford, Hampden County, a town adjoining Otis, had twelve children, eighty-seven grandchildren, and eighty great-grandchildren. These two patriarchs settled upon opposite sides of the same street.

Knox's Corners at one time went by the name of Cook's Corners.

Elisha Shephard, an old resident of this town, and who was in the battle of Stone Arabia, upon the Mohawk, on the 19th of October, 1780, in which Col. Brown, the commander, and about forty out of two hundred soldiers, were killed, related a fact which the author has never seen noticed in any account of the aborigines. Mr. Shephard states that none of the red-haired persons who fell in the battle were scalped, while no others escaped the horrid mutilation.

In 1795, Mr. J. Reynolds, while looking for his cows, accompanied by his dog, treed a bear, when about sixty rods south-west of Osias Hart's. Being within hailing distance, he called to Hart to come with his gun, and shoot the bear. Mr. Hart misunderstood the request, supposing the bear had treed Reynolds. Although he had a gun well loaded, and one or two dogs, he went in search of his brother that he might have his assistance in relieving his neighbor from his perilous situation. Mr. Reynolds becoming impatient, went to Hart's believing the dog would keep possession; but in this he was mistaken, for the dog also left, and before the arrival of Reynolds or the Harts, the animal had decamped, and made good his retreat. The anecdote does no very great credit to the courage of Ozias Hart or the dog.

Another "bear story" is also told by the "oldest inhabitants." As Thomas Spafford was going to meeting one Sunday, at the house of Ichabod Stafford, and when about half way from the Centre to Stafford's, he discovered a large bear following him. For a time he pursued his way quietly, hoping the animal would soon leave the path, but in this he was mistaken, for the animal gained fast upon him. He now attempted to frighten it from its course, but without success. The bear at length having come so near, and its company being so unwelcome, Spafford left the path, and ascended a small

hemlock, and by the time he was fairly out of reach, the animal was at the roots of the tree. Thus unpleasantly situated, and wishing to get a higher, and perhaps easier position, Stafford unluckily took hold of a dry limb, which broke, and he fell. Bruin, doubtless thinking as Spafford "came tumbling down," that he was "come for," suddenly left, while the latter pursued his way without further molestation.

Oriskany Falls is a flourishing village, in the south-west part of the town. The fall of the Oriskany Creek at the place is so considerable, that a large amount of water power is obtained. In its descent, the water is carried over a ledge of limestone, at an angle of about 45 degrees. There are a grist and flouring mill, two saw mills, two woolen factories, besides some small machinery; and the water power is such as to admit a vast increase of business. The village contains about six hundred inhabitants, two taverns, two dry goods and two grocery stores, three storehouses, two cabinet and chair factories, and most kind of mechanic shops. The Chenango Canal, and "Hamilton and Deansville Plank Road," pass through this place. There is an inexhaustible quarry of limestone in and near the village, large quantities of which are quarried for building purposes and for lime, and transported upon the canal to different parts of the country. The Congregational Church is of stone, of good size, and is a substantial edifice.

Augusta Centre has three places of public worship, - a Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist, those of the Presbyterians and Baptists with steeples. They are all painted, and are well-arranged, good buildings. The Academy at this place has been noticed. There are a tavern, one dry goods store, a grist and flouring mill, with the various mechanic shops usual in country villages.

There are four grist mills and six saw mills in the town.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

The first sermon preached within the present limits of the town was by a Methodist minister, in 1794, in the house of a Mr. Fairbanks, upon the place now occupied by Mrs. Camp Williams. Possibly there may have been preaching previously by some missionary, but if so, it is not within the knowledge of any one now living in the town.

The widow of Ichabod Stafford, who is now quite aged and resides in the village of Waterville, informed the writer that a Baptist Church was formed very early in the settlement of the town, in the vicinity of her residence upon the east hill, of which she was a member. It was dissolved after a few years, and no records respecting it have been found.

In 1797, a log school-house stood upon the west side of the road which runs north from William Bridge's. In that school-house, on the 7th of September of that year, the present Congregational Church was formed, with nine members, by Rev. Doct. Asahel S. Norton, of Clinton, and Rev. Joel Bradly, of Westmoreland. The church was organized in the morning, and Rev. Mr. Bradly preached in the afternoon. The names of the first members were Isiah Gilbert, Experience Gilbert, Benjamin Durkee, Susanna Durkee, Thomas Stafford, Lucy Stafford, Ezra Saxton, Abiel Linsley, and Anna Linsley, Mr. Linsley was the first moderator.

After the formation of the church, its members continued to meet upon the Lord's-day in private dwellings, schoolhouses, barns, and sometimes in the open air, for conference and prayer, and occasionally had preaching by Dr. Norton and Rev. Mr. Kirkland, and sometimes others were

employed for a few weeks, or perhaps months.

In 1800, the church numbered but sixteen, having received seven by letter, and two by profession.

In 1804, Rev. John Spencer commenced preaching to this people. He was a native of Connecticut, and had enjoyed but the priveleges of a common school education. At the close of the Revolutionary war, in which he served as a soldier, he came to Worcester, Otsego County. He was a plain, unassuming man, but contemplating the moral desolation around him, and the paucity of laborers, he desired to enter the ministry. He was encouraged, and licensed to preach in October, 1800. He spent two or three years in the County of Greene, and afterwards in the County of Oneida, and removed from Vernon Centre to Augusta. The elder class of the people speak of him with affection. He left this place in 1807, and in 1809 removed to the then almost unbroken wilderness, but now the town of Sheridan, in Chatauque County. His praise as a missionary, was in many churches. A monument, bearing the following inscription, marks his grave in the burying place in Sheridan.

"This stone is consecrated to the memory of Rev. John Spencer, many years a missionary of the Connecticut Missionary Society. He was the first Gospel minister who traversed the wilderness then called the Holland Purchase, and was the instrument, under God, in forming most of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches which existed in this region when he rested from his labors, 1826, aged 68.

"He trod a useful but laborious path to immortality, in the ardent, unremitted exercise of doing good. "The Association of Western New York, grateful to his memory, have erected this monument, hoping that it may prompt the beholder to imitate his self-denying labors. 1838."

Says Mr. Ayer: "From the time of Dr. Spencer's removal until October 15, 1809, the church appears to have been in the wilderness in tumults, like sheep without a shepherd, going astray. At that time the church called the Rev. David Kendall, of Hubbardston, Mass., to take the pastoral charge, which was accepted, and he was installed May 2, 1801. Mr. Kendall was dismissed, August 11, 1814. During his ministry, twelve were received by profession, and two by letter.

The Rev. Oliver Ayer commenced his labors with this church in October, 1814, and was installed January 10th, 1816, the Rev. Dr. Azel Backus preaching upon the occasion, from Hebrews x. 25. Mr. Ayer continued his labors with the church about four years. These are reckoned as the four most prosperous years which this body every experienced in succession. Two years of the time witnessed a revival, in which the church, numbering at their commencement but forty-eight members, received accessions of one hundred and sixty.

Mr. Ayer's health, having failed, the Rev. Ely Burchard commenced his labors with this church in January 1818. Mr. Ayer was not dismissed until Feb. 3, 1819, and the council that dismissed him, ordained and installed Mr. Burchard the next day. The church enjoyed the labors of the latter four years and eight months, and was increased during his ministry by the addition of forty-four by profession, and fourteen by letter. He was dismissed oct. 15, 1822.

The Rev. Benjamin J. Lane commenced his labors, as stated supply, a few weeks after the dismissal of Mr. Burchard, and continued them about four years, In the early part of this period there was an interesting revival, and during the four years of his labors, sixty-five were received upon professions, and fourteen by letter. The Rev. Leverett Hull immediately succeeded Mr. Lane, and like his predecessor, was not installed. He continued four years, and received about one hundred upon

profession of faith. The first protracted meeting in Augusta was held during the ministry of Mr. Hull. The revival, which was the result of this meeting, or at least the measures and means adopted, were condemned by some as extravagant. Mr. Hull had warm and decided friends, while some were as decidedly opposed to him.

The Rev. Mr. Hull was succeeded, for one year, by Rev. John Waters, whose labors were eminently useful. In June, 1831; a protracted meeting was held, in which the Baptists took part; a revival followed, and, as its fruits, on the 4th of September, fifty-three were received upon profession of faith, being the largest number ever received at one time by this church. On the 25th of November, 1832, the church reached its highest point in numbers, having at that time precisely four hundred members.

In January, 1838, thirty-five members received letters of dismissal, for the purpose of forming a church at Oriskany Falls.

After the trial of many candidates, Rev. A. P. Clark was called to the pastoral office, September 13, 1833, and was installed February 12, 1834. He was an excellent pastor and man. During the spring or summer following, he had the misfortune break one of his limbs, which hindered him from his labors a number of months. He died Feb. 6, 1835, aged 38 years. He was entombed with the people of his affections, and his epitaph is, - Remember the words that I spake unto you while I was yet with you." Nothing could have been more appropriate.

A little more than two years of quiet followed, in which Mr. Robertson and Mr. Wells supplied the pulpit.

On the 10th of May, 1836, the present pastor, Rev. Orlo Bartholomew, commenced his labors, and was installed by the Oneida Presbytery on the 24th of the following August. There were upon the church book when he came, 279 members. Of that number 119 have been dismissed, two have been excommunicated, and fifty have died. During this time, seventy-one have been received by letter, and ninety-four by professions of faith, and three who had been absolved, have returned, making the whole number received, 168, leaving the church three less than when the present pastor commenced preaching to them. In the first year of his labors, fifteen were added upon profession, the result of a protracted meeting, held in connection with the Baptist Church. In the third year, thirty-six were received upon profession. Most of these were hopefully converted in the above-mentioned meeting. Elders Smitzer and Parker performed most of the preaching during the meeting.

Deacons Abiel Linsley and Isaiah Gilbert officiated for the first six or seven years of the existence of the church. They had each held the office before they came to Augusta. Deacon Linsley, after he left, was the instrument of doing much good; and a letter written by him to his pastor, when unable to attend public worship from ill health, was the commencement of the means which resulted in the formation of the Genesee Missionary Society. In 1804, Amos Gilbert and Philip Pond were chosen deacons. Lebbeus Camp, chosen in 1814, was dismissed in 1833. John Lewis was chosen in 1822, Robert Durkee and Mark Thompson in 1832, and Russell Knox in 1834.

This church has contributed liberally to the benevolent objects of the day. In five years, commencing with 1837, they gave \$4,419.09 to different benevolent Associations. From the time of the erection of the town house, in 1805, to 1816, it was occupied as a meeting house by this Society. In 1816, the present house of worship was built, and was dedicated Feb. 3, 1817. In 1844, its interior was remodelled and it was re-dedicated the same year.

As early as 1802, there were two Methodist classes in Augusta, one of which met in the neighborhood where now the Messrs. Powers reside, and the other upon the east hill, in the vicinity of which the old chapel stood. This was the center of the denomination in this town for many years, and they had often large congregations for the country. The old chapel was built by Riley Shepard, in 1819, and was regularly occupied until the new chapel was built at the Centre, in 1840. The new chapel was dedicated December 15, 1840, Zachariah Paddock officiating upon the occasion. The first service in it after the day of dedication, was upon Thanksgiving-day, the 17th of the same month, when the Rev. O. Bartholomew of the Congregational Church, preached from John vi. 12: "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost."

There are now in connection with the Methodist denomination at various places in the town, as follows: - At the Centre, forty-two; at the Falls, twenty-one; at Knox's Corners, twenty three; upon the "Strip" twenty; making 106 members of the station or circuit. There are twenty of the inhabitants of Augusta connected with the Methodist Society at Deansville, eighteen with the Society at Vernon Centre, and five connected with the Society at Stockbridge.

The present Baptist Church in Augusta was organized August 22, 1829, with thirty-three members. The first meeting for business was held August 30, the same year, and their meeting house was dedicated the 20th of the same month. These dates may seem paradoxical, but they are in accordance with the records and the facts. It seemed to the author unusual for a Society to erect a good and convenient meeting house, and have it dedicated before the organization of the church; but upon re-inquiry, he is assured the above dates are correct.

The most extensive revival was in 1831, and which is mentioned in the history of the Congregational Church. Seventy-six were added to the Baptist Church upon profession and twelve by letter during its continuance. In September, 1833, the number of members was 127, in 1838, 141. Present number, 85. The preachers to this Church have been, Elders P. P. Brown, James A. Mallory, A. H. Haff, Jason Corwin, -, Bridge, -, Jeffries, and R. Z. Williams.

The Congregational Church at Oriskany Falls was organized January 31, 1833. Its present number is seventy-five, of whom thirty-six reside in Augusta. There is but one more member of this denomination upon the territory which this Church occupies in Augusta, than when formed. The walls of their house were erected and enclosed in 1834, and the basement so finished that the congregation worshipped in it until the building was completed and dedicated, April 9, 1845. The dedication sermon was preached by the Rev. O. Bartholomew, from 2 Chron. ii. 4.

The Rev. John Cross labored with this church one year previous to the last Lord's-day in Nov. 1834, when the Rev. Pindar Field commenced his labors, and was installed by the Oneida Association, December 21st, and was dismissed by the same on May 26, 1846, a little more than one year after the house, for which he had made great personal sacrifices, had been dedicated. At the time of his settlement, the church consisted of forty-seven members. There were added during his ministry ninety-three, forty-one by profession and fifty-two by letter. During Mr. Field's pastorate, the sum of about \$700 was contributed by this Society to the different benevolent objects of the day.

COL. THOMAS CASSETY, - The author has not been able to ascertain satisfactorily the time of his birth. He was the son of James Cassety, who was a captain in the British army, and on service in this

country in the French war of 1756. After the peace of 1760, the captain went to Detroit, and established himself as an Indian trader. Here he continued until the commencement of the War of the Revolution, when he was ordered to take up arms against the colonies. This he refused to do. In the mean time Thomas, the subject of this notice, was born, had pursued the usual preparatory course, and was now far advanced in his collegiate education. During a vacation, he visited his father at Detroit, and while there, an officer of the crown was sent to arrest his father for treason, in refusing to fight the battles of George III against the colonies. The arrest was made in the presence of the son, which so exasperated him, that he seized a loaded musket, and fired at the officer. Whether he killed him or not, is not known, as the Colonel in after life would never throw any light upon the subject, further than that the ball passed through the officer's hat crown. The Captain was taken to Quebec, and for three long years confined so closely in prison, that in the whole period the sun never for once shone upon him. At length, with two others he made his escape. Thomas, after firing at the officer, made good his retreat from Detroit, and took refuge with one of the western tribes of Indians. Here he was received and treated with kindness, was formally adopted into their tribe, one of the chiefs of which gave him his daughter for a wife. By her he had issue; and tradition has said, whether truly or falsely, that "the celebrated Tecumseh was a son of Thomas Cassety."

After a residence of several years with the Indians, and after our independence had been acknowledged by Britain, as he could then return in safety, he left the Indians and again took up his abode in civilized life, and was again married. By this marriage he had seven children, two sons and five daughters. The next that is learned of him is that he was residing at Canajoharie.

The surveyors employed by Peter Smith, having been driven off, as before stated, their compass and chain broken to pieces by the pagan party of the Oneidas, Mr. Smith had recourse to Mr. Cassety, who was residing at that place, to induce him to come to Oneida and make peace with the Indians. From his thorough acquaintance with Indian character, he was peculiarly fitted for this mission, in which he was entirely successful. Mr. Smith, by means of these services, was enabled to realize a considerable fortune.

In 1794 Mr. Cassety removed to the town of Augusta, and settled at Oriskany Falls, a location which for many years was known only by the name of Cassety Hollow. Here he built the mills as before stated, and in erecting the grist mill, he and Peter Smith were in company. Soon after its completion, Cassety, who was now a Colonel in the militia, and Justice of the Peace, purchased of Smith his share, and mortgaged his property to Smith to secure the payment of the purchase money. Eventually, the foreclosing of this mortgage reduced the Colonel from competency to poverty. The earnings of years of toil and privation were all swept away.

His death was most melancholy. A clothier, in removing from his shop, had left among other articles, a bottle of sulphuric acid. This the Colonel supposed to be whiskey, (a poison in most cases just as sure, if not as rapid,) and the fatal draught closed his existence in a few hours. He died August 14, 1831.

Colonel Cassety had talents of a high order, which had been improved by a good education. He was a warm and true friend; generous almost to a fault. The early settlers of Augusta often enjoyed his bounty. Upon one occasion, in a time of scarcity, he divided among them, gratuitously, all the bread-stuffs in his mill, poor as well as rich receiving in proportion to the numbers in their families. Unsolicited, upon another occasion, he advanced the money to save a poor man's cow from being sold upon an execution. He was a wit and humorist. In polished society, he was a gentleman. For the amusement of others, he could represent scenes from savage life with skill and accuracy. In his

intercourse with those in humble life, he could conform to them without compromising his dignity of character. He had his faults, but we would let those lie, buried in the same grave, where, without monument of epitaph, sleep his remains.

His father, Capt. James Cassety, died in Augusta, May 23, 1822 aged 84.

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