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Historical Album of Orleans County, NY: Pioneer Chapters

MacNamara

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was to make them feel aggrieved when pay day came; and the longer they had been in arrears with their interest the more thoroughly were they persuaded that it was an outrage to ask them to square up their accounts. They vainly called the company's title in question, and asked the interference of the Legislature in their behalf. The financial depression of 1837 rendered payments harder to make, and the harder it was to make them the less the debtors owed them, according to the idea that seems to have prevailed among them. If they could not shake the title of the Hollanders, they could terrorize the land agents and hold agrarian meetings to denounced their debt-paying neighbors as "Judas;" and they could and in some cases did stave off payment for their lands until they gained a title to them by continuance of "adverse possession." In most cases, however, this brilliant expedient was not successfully resorted to, and the Holland Company's customers for the most part finally paid for their farms.

In 1810 the Dutch proprietors sold the pre-emption right to the Indian reservations to David A. Ogden and others constituting the Ogden Company, for fifty cents per acre, the area being estimated at 196,000 acres. These gentlemen found the Senecas reluctant to dispose of the remnant of their lands; but by several councils the company at length extinguished the Indian title to nearly all of the reservations. The negotiations did not affect the territory of Orleans county.

In a council at Buffalo, September 12th, 1815, the Senecas ceded to the State of New York, for $1,000 and a perpetual annuity of $500, all the islands in the Niagara river not within the British line.

CHAPTER X.

PIONEER EXPERIENCES—EMIGRATING, BUILDING AND CLEARING—FRONTIER WORK AND PLAY.

EDIOUSLY and lumberingly, through woods, across rivers, along roads that have been cor­droyed, over dry places and through swamps, over high hills and through tortuous mountain passes, a heavy wagon has been rolling and slipping and sliding—sometimes floating, where the fording places were not good—for many days. Did you ever see one of those heavy old Dutch wagons, with wheels that have spokes like small saplings and felloes like those in the wheels of a modern stone truck; that have poles bent across, bow-fashion, from side to side of the stout box, and covered over with a canopy of canvas to keep out the wind, the storm and the sweltering sunshine? Such is the wagon of which we write—a wagon drawn by a span of sorrelly jaded horses that have seen nothing resembling the inside of a comfortable stable for weeks, and in which ride a woman and two or three small children, the husband and father, perchance, trudging by the side of the vehicle, sinking at times knee deep into the mud or staggering over a fallen log or large stone, in his desire to guide the team and at the same time lighten their burden by walking.

He is a strong, well-built six-footer, with a heart to brave every danger, the kind of man for a pioneer, leaving behind him the comforts and pleasures of civilized life, and going to endure hardships, reverses, struggles, trials, and perhaps to die in a wild country, leaving wife and children to wrest their sustenance from land uncultivated and unpaid-for, or to make their way back to civilization as best they may. But he hesitates not. For himself he cares nothing; but his wife and children? Is he doing right in isolating her from home and kindred and all of the associations of her childhood and her girlishhood? Is he doing right in taking their children to the far away new country, to rear them on the outskirts of civilization, where education had not yet one rude temple and Christianity no voice to proclaim its truth?

These questions he has discussed with his wife over and over again. They have been settled before leaving their former home; but somehow they will not stay settled. They have forced themselves upon his attention many times during the slow and tedious journey; but it is too late, now, to reason about them; and resolutely he sets his face toward the west—for it has, from the earliest days, been west that the sturdy pioneer has bent his steps—ever west, and further west! There is no complaint from the patient woman in the wagon.

It is nightfall—the sun sunk below the tree-tops an hour ago, and the dim shadows of approaching darkness are creeping over the forest, while afar off can be heard the cries of the owl and the whippowil, and over in the swamp at the left bull-frogs are croaking dismally and "peepers" are singing merrily. It is nightfall, and one of the children is asleep on a pile of stuff in the wagon and the baby is asleep in the mother's arms. Her eight year old boy sits beside her gazing out over the horses' heads, at the shadows dropping down, one by one, over the wood. He looks tired, but hopeful, she thinks, as she watches him a moment. She knows what kind of a life is before her—she can half realize some of its trials and hardships and disappointments, but not all of them. She knows that she and her husband will never live to have many years' enjoyment of the fruits of their sacrifice and toil, but their children will—it is for these that she has consented to risk the perils of pioneer life.

A few days more, and they have reached their destination. Again it is evening. Dimly they can see that they are in the midst of a little opening in the timber, watered by a small stream that flows through it. Here they will erect their cabin on the morrow; to-night—one night more—they will sleep in the wagon. The tired horses are watered at the babbling stream and tethered where they can get their fill of the grass that grows rankly in the opening. Then a fire is made on the ground, a
hasty meal is prepared, a few minutes are passed in conver-
sation and many more in silent thought; after that,
weariness and drowsiness overcome them and they know
no more till they are awakened at dead of night by the
snapping and snarling of wolves prowling about the out-
skirts of the opening. The fire has died down and its
smouldering embers can be scarcely seen. It is the fire
that has kept the wolves off till now. The man raises
himself on his elbow and, lifting the corner of the can-
vass cover of the wagon, looks out. Presently one of the ani-
mals, more bold than his fellows, emerges from the tim-
ber and comes stealthily toward the half startled horses.
He is followed in a minute by another and another! The
foremost is now alarmingly near one of the horses. The
man reaches for his rifle. In a moment it is at his shoul-
der. His quick glance runs along the barrel; there is a
lurid flash, a sharp report, a howl of agony—and the wolf
is stretched dead on the ground, while his blood-thirsty
followers are hurrying away in the gloom. This is not
the first time wolves have molested them since they ca-
me into the wilderness—it is a matter for determined ac-
tion but scarcely one to keep them long awake. The fire is
rekindled and they sleep again, and are only awakened by
the singing of the birds in the trees overhead, after the
sun is up in the morning.

The preparations for the erection of a log house are
begun without delay. First several trees are felled, trim-
med, cut up into lengths and laid on the ground in piles
on the four sides of the place where the cabin is to stand.
Then the work of placing them in their proper position
begins. It is no easy task, for the logs are heavy; but the
man and the boy both work with a will. They have slept
in the wagon so long that the thought of lying down that
night in their own house, even if it is unfurnished, affords
an incentive to extra exertion. The work goes briskly on
through the day. So many logs have been rolled up and
notched together at the corners that, by nightfall, the
walls of the house are done. An opening has been left
at one side for a door, and a smaller one opposite for a
window. It is too late and the builders are too weary to
do more than this to-night; so a couple of blankets are
stretched across one end of the structure to serve as a
temporary roof, another is hung over the doorway, and
the house is ready for its first night's occupancy.

In the morning the work is resumed. Poles are laid
across the top of the walls to support the chamber floor,
a ridge pole and rafters are put up and then the roof is
laid on them—a roof of broad bark strips, held in place
by withes fastened at the ends with slender strips of
green bark. An opening is left in the chamber floor, a
rude ladder is constructed and set up, affording com-
munication with the loft; and, with the exception of the
window and the door, the carpenter work on the house
is done, and the family stand and look at it with a feel-
ing of such relief as they have not felt during all their
long journey. It is but a cabin of logs, a rude but only
twelve by fifteen feet square, with a hole in the roof to
let out the smoke,—not such a residence as is built in
these days of elegance and luxury, but it is a home! Of
course no sash and glass are at hand, but the necessity
which is said to be the mother of all invention gives birth
to an idea at the right moment, and the pioneer is not
left without resource. The window hole is not very large,
and he goes to the wagon and gets an old newspaper, one
that was printed far away in New England or Pennsyl-
van ia; and with some hesitation he tears it in two—for it
will be a long time, perhaps, before another newspaper comes to him—saturates it with grease and stretches it across the opening and the window is complete; one that will not permit the inmates of the house to look out, but will let the light in. The canvas which has afforded them shelter during the journey is taken from the wagon, folded to the proper size and suspended over the aperture left for ingress and egress, and this is the door that must serve till a more substantial one can be made of planks split out of logs—a bit of extra work that may be done in any leisure hours before cold weather comes. The openings between the logs are to be “chinked,” or filled with pieces of wood split out of the proper size and secured in place by the use of a thick mortar of mud, and a fire-place is to be constructed; but these can be dispensed with until after the house is furnished and some sort of a shelter has been provided for the horses. In our engravings our readers will recognize the edifice thus completed, and note the improvement which the rolling seasons witness in the pioneer’s circumstances and surroundings.

There is no trip to a furniture store, attended with the trouble of selection and the usual banter about the price, common to these later days. The house is soon furnished “without money and without price,” and as well as any other house within a circuit of twenty miles or more. And this is how it is done: For chairs, three or four blocks of the proper height are sawed from the end of a log; for bedsteads, holes are bored in one of the logs at the side of the building, a foot and a half from the ground, poles about four feet long are hewn off at one end and driven into them, the other extremity being supported on blocks similar to those used for chairs, and on these are laid some small boughs, then some blankets and some quilts; the table is constructed at one side of the place in the same manner as the frame for the beds, its top being a wide, flat piece split from a large log and hewn as smooth as possible; the fire-place, which is the most primitive of all, is simply a spot on the ground under the aperture in the roof. The cooking utensils were brought in the wagon. They are a long-handled frying-pan, a cast-iron bake-kettle and one or two tin pans, one of which serves the purpose of a tea-kettle, in the absence of the black earthen “stepper” which was broken on the way. Some knives, some iron spoons, some forks, and some cups and saucers and a few plates, all of the “blue edged” variety, now nearly out of existence, comprise the table furniture.

And thus they begin housekeeping in their new home, miles distant from any other human habitation, and beyond the reach of mails and other conveniences of the densely populated districts. Here, with faith in their God and faith in themselves, they begin to live their new life—a life of progress from the most primitive elements of civilization through all the years that shall be given them to the prosperity of the future—a life given unre­ervedly for the benefit of those who shall live when they are gone—a career of hardship and unremitting toil freely devoted to the coming generation.

Here, amid such surroundings and with the most primitive appliances and the most meagre facilities, the pioneer begins to exact from Nature the fruits of honest toil. He chops, he logs, he plants and sows and gathers in with each succeeding year; and as the work goes on the little
clearing gradually extends its limits, encroaching on the surrounding forest till the patch has grown to be a small farm, with substantial rail fences and improved buildings, a door having superseded the canvas curtain, a chimney having been built of sticks plastered with mortar, and a comfortable stable having been erected for the horses. Inside the house the blocks of wood have given place to three-legged stools, the beds are a trifle easier to lie upon, and a floor of hewn planks has replaced the hard, bare earth which was the first floor.

By and by other settlers begin to come into the vicinity. One by one log cabins are erected until, within a radius of a dozen miles, there are as many habitations, and it is beginning to be common for the settlers to talk of their neighbors, but perhaps not as some people talk of their neighbors at the present time. To the lonely pioneers, the sight of a human face is so grateful that they never pause to question whether it belongs to a rich man or a poor one. In such a community all are friends, all are ready to help each other along, to do neighborly kindness, to contribute to the general prosperity and the general happiness. One's neighbors, like many other good things, are valued in proportion to the smallness of their number, and an acquaintance who lives ten or twenty miles away, and whom one does not often see, is held in higher estimation than one whom it is no luxury to see and whose frequent visits are looked forward to as infusions; and if one has but few neighbors, and if they all dwell inconveniently distant, one is likely to contemplate the not very frequent social meetings which bring them all together with pleasurable anticipations.

Parties were few in those days, though as settlement advanced an occasional dance was participated in by the rustic belles and beaux. Not more than two or three dozen, at most, would be present, and often it was difficult to get together a sufficient number of girls to make the affair a success. On one occasion two young men walked more than twenty miles through the woods to another settlement, invited a couple of girls to accompany them to one of these frolics, and came back with them on foot, carrying them on their shoulders across a stream they were obliged to wade. At another time two young men arrived at the residence of a sylvan belle at the same time and with the same errand, that of securing her company to an approaching party. The lady had no decided choice, and as no satisfactory settlement of the difficulty could be arrived at it was finally agreed that she should go with both of her admirers, which she is said to have done, conducting herself with so much circumspection as to keep them both good-humored throughout the whole time till they returned her safe home. Those who lived on roads leading directly to the appointed place came in wagons. Others, who lived in the woods, where some of the prettiest girls were found, often mounted a horse behind a young man, with a blanket to sit upon, dressed in their every day apparel, with woolen stockings and strong shoes on. They would dash through the woods on some trail, through streams and over every obstacle in their way, carrying a bundle containing their ball dress in their hands. Upon their arrival a few minutes at the toilet put them in condition for the dance.

The pioneer fiddler was always a well known individual
and often an original character. Sometimes he was a
"jack at all trades." His music was never of a high
order, but it was of the kind to suit the times—loud if not
grand, and energetic if not artistic. His favorite tunes
were "Walk Jaw Bones," "Fisher's Hornpipe," "The
Devil's Dream," "The Bummer's Reel," and a few others
of the same kind. When the interest in the dance be­
gan to manifest itself by grotesque and original steps on
the part of the dancers, he would often accompany his
violin with a rollicking song, bringing in all of the "calls"
in rhyme, frequently ending the "set" by singing out
"Four gents forward and "—after a long pause, giving the
swains time to balance in the center of the room—"ladies
take your seats." This was a favorite trick of his, which
invariably created a laugh at the expense of the young
fellows thus unceremoniously deserted by their partners.
The amusements of old and young were enjoyed with a
keen relish. There were quilting, husking, apple-paring,
raising, chopping, logging and other "bees," and every
athering of the kind was a joyous occasion, giving a
double enjoyment from the consciousness of profitable
employment and social intercourse. They were the means
by which the pioneers helped each other along, and to the
friendly spirit which prompted them the citizens of the
county are largely indebted for the prosperity of to-day.

CHAPTER XI.

PIONEER FARMING—FIRST SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS,
MEETINGS AND PREACHERS—THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

The agricultural implements in use in the early
days were of the most primitive order. Much
of the first farming was done without the
almost indispensable aid of a plow, and the
earliest plows were of home manufacture, having
often been made from the crotch of a tree which
nature had fashioned something after the required
pattern, and which the settler had only to sharpen and
finish in the most unpretentious way imaginable. After­
ward clumsy wrought-iron plows were introduced, which
were effective only to stir up the surface of the ground,
having wooden mould-boards in some cases, the point
only being imported. To construct a drag was an easy
matter. The settler had only to cut two round sticks of
unequal length, joining them in such a manner that the
end of the longer one projected sufficiently to attach
the chain, and boring four holes for teeth in the longer
and three in the shorter piece, the two being held
apart at the rear by a wooden brace. Flails were the
only threshers and hand-fans the only separators. Hoes
and rakes were very heavy and very strong, for there
were few forges in the country and it was no easy matter
to get a broken tool repaired. Grain was cut with a
sickle and hay with an old fashioned scythe, as heavy as it was unhandy.

With such tools seed was put in the ground, the work of cultivation went on and crops were harvested. Sometimes they were almost an entire failure and sometimes there was an over abundance, but the average yield was good. But there were no markets established; while grain was abundant, it could not be converted into funds with which to pay for land, but there was usually no scarcity of food. A favorite mode of money-making in the early days was that of locating and improving a claim and “selling the betterment,” as disposing of the improvement at an advance was called. Some settlers repeated this operation several times, gaining a little with each transaction, and finally buying and paying for a desirable farm.

Among the few business advantages offered to the pioneers was that afforded by a market for “black salts,” which was created at an early day. “All who could raise a kettle,” wrote one informed as to the make-shifts of that time, “entered upon the manufacture of this new article of commerce. It brought money into the country, enabled settlers to pay taxes and buy necessities, and promoted the clearing of land.” The manufacture and sale of potash was another enterprise which proved a God-send to the pioneers. “The trade in the product of their ashes,” says the writer quoted above, “for which merchants paid half in cash and the rest in goods, seemed almost providential. New settlers put up rough leaches and generally made black salts. When kettles were available, potash was manufactured. The lands timbered with elm, beech and maple supplied a value in ashes to almost pay for clearing. It was an expedient of the new settler to go into the forest, cut down trees, roll them in heaps, and burn them, having in mind no thought of clearing, but to supply a want of store trule or money. The proceeds of the burnt log-heaps in the clearings supplied many families with the necessities of life where otherwise there would have been destitution. One must be willfully blind not to see in this relief thus afforded a providential aid.” The timber, which was looked upon as a hindrance to agricultural progress, was thus removed, becoming a source of profit and making way for the work of underbrushing, grubbing and cultivation, which could not have been prosecuted until its removal. Another and a later element of progress was the sale of timber and staves.

Saw-mills were first built at a comparatively early day in the history of the county. They were small and easy of construction, and they were located on some stream whose waters provided their motive power, and conveniently to the timber the manufacture of which into lumber proved a source of profit. There was usually but one saw, and from the peculiar manner in which it was hung the mills were known as “English mills,” by which title, though they have long since gone out of use, they are referred to at the present time. With the increase of the number of these mills and the gradual growth of the lumber trade the fortunes of the settlers improved. They were enabled to dispose of their timber profitably, and at the same time clear their lands and buy lumber with which to erect buildings to replace their early log houses and out-buildings.

Before grist-mills were introduced, the settlers labored under a great disadvantage, sometimes being obliged to carry their grain by the single bag-full across the backs of horses to a distant mill, consuming several days in the trip and having to go often on account of the impossibility of taking much at a time. Many families kept one or two mortars or “hominy blocks” in which to pound corn. They were generally made in the stump of a tree near the house, the top of it being cut off square and burned or gouged out hollow, the cavity being large enough to receive the corn; and to relieve the laborer the pounder was frequently suspended by means of a spring-pole. The first grist-mills were small, usually having only one ran of stones and often lying idle much of the time for want of water.

The early schools, though not so good as they might have been, were certainly conducive in no small degree to that intellectual growth which must precede all systematic and permanent improvement in any community. The teachers were often strangers who were traveling through the country, and who paused to replenish their purses or gain a few months of recreation in school teaching. Sometimes they were foreigners, often they were intemperate, and they were all addicted to the use of the rod. Sometimes, so uncertain and unreliable were they, three or four changes would occur in a single year, the first going away and giving place to another and he, in turn, making a place for a new comer. The school-houses were generally built by “bees,” or gatherings of such settlers as had children to be educated. They were log structures, a little better, because built at a later day, than the first residence described in the preceding chapter. The seats were benches made of slabs split from logs, with legs inserted in auger holes at the corners. The desks, when there were any, were constructed after the same plan; there was no blackboard, and the entire stock of apparatus consisted of a half-dozen well-seasoned switches and a substantial ruler, and no opportunity was neglected to make use of these appliances for the general advancement of the causes of education and good manners.

In those days the question was not, “Has the teacher a good education?” but “Is he stout? Has he good government?” It was a frequent practice in some districts to smoke out the entire school or to “bar out” the teacher. Frequently there was a conspiracy among the large boys to whip the teacher and break up the school. Their attempts in this direction were successful for several successive years, and then, when the district had won a bad name and come to be shunned by the generality of pedagogues, a stranger with well-developed governing powers would happen along, open a school and speedily reduce the belligerent “big boys” to a condition of subjection and prompt if not cheerful obedience, thus setting the ball of education rolling on.
The pioneer teachers were many of them very ingenuous in the contrivance of original modes of punishment, which from their novelty and their untried terrors were a by no means inoperative agency in maintaining the authority which was regarded as so essential to the well-being of the school. Some of these inventive characters flourished in a certain district at a day after the introduction of the box stove. He conceived the brilliant idea of placing a brick on top of the stove over a brisk fire, and making delinquents walk around the stove, one behind the other, and turn over the rapidly heating brick once during each circuit; this was kept up until their blistered fingers goaded them into subjection.

The first religious services were held in the open air, beneath the wide-spreading branches of the forest trees and amid all the varied surroundings of wood and plain, hill and valley—not in a house reared with human hands and dedicated for the worship of a certain few in a certain prescribed way, but in God's own temple, made in infinite splendor for all mankind. How the prayers of the migratory Methodist preachers rang through the arches of the forest, as with plain words from honest hearts they knelt on the ground to intercede for their fellow men; how the great scheme of salvation was unfolded in homely yet terrific sentences, which fell from their lips with all the awful force of prophetic utterance; how their simple auditors trembled at the terribly vivid picture of the reward of sin which was presented to their view; and how they rejoiced at the declaration that salvation was "full and free" to all who sought it with broken spirits and contrite hearts! By scores they owned the saving power of the Son of Man, and crowded the open space around the preacher, asking for prayers or praying for themselves. Thus were the seeds of Christianity planted in the wilderness. They took root, they were nurtured with anxious care, they grew and flourished under the watchful and prayerful attention of the pioneers and their sons and daughters—the parents and grandparents of this generation—and they have brought forth good fruit. It is visible in all the evidences of the progress of the past and the enlightenment of the present.

Thus were a few here and there brought into the fold of the Good Shepherd. Then they organized and began to do His work. First one "class," as the religious societies were called, was formed, then another and another, till in every settlement there were at least "two or three" who regularly "gathered together in the name of the Lord." Soon meetings were held with some attempt at regularity in the school-houses. Circuit preachers would hold services in the various neighborhoods once in two, three, four or six weeks, as the case might be. By and by several districts were united in one charge and put under the pastorate of a minister who went from one to another, managing somehow to make the circuit once a week, though often obliged to preach once every week day and two or three times Sundays. After a time Sunday-schools were started, and they aided greatly to build up and strengthen the church.

One by one churches were built in the county. Some of them are standing yet. They are not like the costly edifices of the present generation. They were nearly all fashioned after the same general plan, being wooden buildings about thirty by forty feet square, with an unpretentious spire at the highest part of the roof near the front, the doors being invariably at the end fronting the street. Some of them were provided with pews and others occupied as Sunday-school rooms, and sometimes, at a later day, by day-schools. The pulpit and the pews were of the plainest and most rigidly simple style imaginable; and the family who had a cushion on their seat were regarded, if not as wickedly proud, at least as being in much danger of relapsing into the "cold and beggarly elements of the world."

The minister often preached for a simple living, which was paid to him in the shape of flour and meat from the well-to-do farmers of his congregation, wood and potatoes from those who were just getting a start on new farms, and general store trade from the early merchants and in payment of orders for the same from such as had nothing to give him but could buy something. His wife was the object of much attention and the subject of no little discussion among the ladies of the society, and was generally a worthy help-mate to a worthy husband. She set a good example to her sisters by eschewing jewelry and gay ribbons and dressing in a style of severe simplicity—which was useful in inculcating lessons of economy if not of religion. There never was a class of men who, taken all in all, were more zealous, more steadfast, more self-sacrificing, and who labored harder for a simple subsistence and the consciousness of doing good than these pioneer preachers. Their works live after them and speak eloquently in testimony of their unselfish devotion of their lives and their best energies to Christianity and humanity; and every one of the many church spires of to-day is a monument to their memory.
As the land was cleared, drained and put under cultivation the public health improved. The seasons following the first settlement were very sickly in proportion to the population. In the summer of some years little or no rain fell, the streams became nearly or entirely dry, and it has been said that “every little inlet became a seat of putrefaction; the heavens seemed on fire, the earth scorched and the air saturated with pestilence.” In some places hogs were found dead in the woods. Fever prevailed to an alarming extent, the cases being more numerous than in the cities but not as fatal, and there were many cases of dysentery. This condition of things was prevalent throughout all this section of the country. An early physician, writing of diseases in the pioneer days, and at a later period, said: “The summer of 1801 was warm, with frequent showers; the days hot and the nights very chilly. Intermittent fevers prevailed. Peruvian bark was generally a remedy, but was of rare use. When left to nature the symptoms became typhoid, and endangered recovery; 1802 was similar to the year previous. In 1803 interments declined and continued fevers prevailed. The summer of 1804 was moderately warm, while the winter was intensely cold. Much snow fell, and lay longer than ever before known. The new settlements were healthy; the winter diseases were inflammatory. The old diseases continued during 1805 and 1806, and the abusive use of mercury sacrificed numbers. The character of the inflammatory fever varied with localities in 1807. Near streams whose course was obstructed by dams strong symptoms marked its attack, whereas on high ground the approach was insidious and more difficult of control. Ophthalmia prevailed in July and August. Influenza was epidemic in September. The season of 1808 resembled the one previous. A typhoid appeared in January and continued till May. The treatment was careful depletion followed by judiciously-given stimulants. In 1811 bilious fevers prevailed. In the spring of 1812 a few sporadic cases of pneumonia typhoides, a previously unknown disease, first came to notice. It was the most formidable epidemic ever prevalent in this country. The disease became general in 1813, and caused great mortality. By spring, 1814, it entirely disappeared. The principal disease up to 1822 was dysentery; it was most fatal to children. The change since 1828 is such that death from fevers became a rare occurrence and consumption took precedence.” The section is now notably healthy, and it is difficult to conceive of the sickness and mortality of pioneer times. This happy improvement is due greatly to the removal of many of the early causes of disease by the drainage of low lands and the general improvement of the whole country, and in no small measure to the advance in medical skill and the high grade of the physicians of the present day.

The pioneer medical practitioners were no less Hardy than the pioneer farmers and no less self-sacrificing than the pioneer preachers. They were men of quick decision and prompt and energetic action. The developments of science had not supplied many of the remedies and modes of treatment to which the physicians of a later day owe much of their success, and much has been said in sarcasm of the lancet and the bistoury and the calomel of those times; but in lieu of something better these were employed with no small degree of success, and many a pioneer who has died within the memory of some of the youngest who read this, owed his preservation for a long and useful career to the prompt administration of those harsh but effective remedies by one or another of the unfainting frontier doctors.

Their rides extended for miles and miles in all directions, embracing much of the territory now comprised within the limits of several neighboring counties. They rode by day and by night; in answer to any call, with their saddle bags well filled with such remedies as were accessible, often traveling for hours guided only by “blazed” trees and thankful even for a cow path running in the right course. A record of their early struggles, sacrifices and adventures would make an interesting volume.

One point of deep interest to the resident and the stranger still claims our notice. It is the cemetery. If the regularly changing style of the architecture of the houses of the living indicate unerringly the period at which they were erected, so the memorial stones raised above the resting places of the dead bear evidences of their newness or their antiquity. The first gravestones were merely flat pieces of stone placed, a large one at the head and a smaller one at the feet of the departed, to mark the place of his narrow home. In walking through the cemetery the stranger is led to the first grave. Perhaps it is at some obscure corner of the burying ground, perhaps it is grass-grown, sunken and almost obliterated by the gradual changes of many years; perhaps there is not even a bit of stone at the head of it or at the foot of it; perhaps those who walk above it have forgotten the name and the history of its occupant. It may have been an old man, wearied out with the struggles and privations of pioneer life, or he may have been an infant who was removed before he could realize them; it is all the same—the first grave is ever an object of more than passing interest to the beholder. It was made in 1806, when the flourishing village was a little frontier settlement; and a memorable day it must long have been to the early settlers when first the earth was opened to receive one of their number, and when first in the experiences of their lives in the new country the solemn words, “dust to dust—ashes to ashes,” fell on their ears. All who were connected with that burial became endowed with a peculiar interest, and all were pointed out for years afterwards—the first mourners, the preacher who preached the first funeral sermon, the man who made the first coffin, and the man who dug the first grave. The grave only remains to suggest their memory; for they lie in other graves around it.

The most important of the initial events that preceded the period of advancement which has brought forth the present flattering condition of agriculture and manufacture, and advanced the causes of education and religion, have been adverted to in the preceding pages. The changes which they heralded are but footprints left on
the sands of memory by the triumphant march of civilization. Flattering as has been the progress of the past, it is not too much to say that it is but an earnest of the more perfect attainments of the future, seed planted in the soil of time to yield virtue, happiness and abundant success in the years to come.

CHAPTER XII.

INDIAN TRAILS—THE OAK ORCHARD AND RIDGE ROADS—THE "LAKE RIDGE" FORMATION.

In their long journeys between the most frequented points in their domain, the Indians naturally found in course of time the most direct and easy lines of travel and adhered to them, forming permanent trails, which the white settlers in some cases located upon and adopted as their first roads. The principal trail of the Iroquois ran through their "long house" from the Hudson to the Niagara. Coming from the east via Canandaigua and Batavia, it emerged from the Tonawanda swamp, says Turner, "nearly southeast of Royalton Center, coming upon the Lockport and Batavia road in the valley of Millard's brook, and from thence it continued upon the Chestnut ridge to the Cold Springs. Pursuing the route of the Lewiston road, with occasional deviations, it struck the Ridge road at Warren's. It followed the Ridge road until it passed Hopkins' marsh, when it gradually ascended the mountain ridge, passed through the Tuscarora village and then down again to the Ridge road, which it continued on to the river. This was the principal route into Canada, crossing from Lewiston to Queenston, a branch trail, however, going down the river to Fort Niagara." Over this road, during the last ten or fifteen years of the eighteenth century, and an equal period in the beginning of the nineteenth, herds of cattle were constantly driven from the eastern part of the country, to feed the garrison on the Niagara and the settlers on the Canadian border. About the close of the last century the Indians allowed such improvement of this trail as enabled sleighs to traverse it in winter, and a weekly mail was carried over it between Fort Niagara and Canandaigua. This road, as thus improved by the so-called Holland Company, was the first laid out north of the main road from Canandaigua to Buffalo.

"The Ontario trail," Mr. Turner tells us, coming from Oswego via Irondequoit Bay, pursued the Ridge road "west to near the west line of Hartland, Niagara county, where it diverged to the southwest, crossing the east branch of the Eighteen-mile creek, and forming a junction with the Canada or Niagara trail at the Cold Springs."

Before roads from the east were opened through to Lake Erie, transportation and emigrant travel from the eastern part of the State and New England largely followed a water route, consisting of the Mohawk river, Wood creek, Oneida lake and river, Oswego river, Lake Ontario and Niagara river. The first through turnpike drew off traffic from this roundabout water route, which in any case must have been entirely superseded by the canals.

The Ridge road is of course one of the most interesting in the county, historically considered, as well as with reference to the singular natural formation from which it takes its name. Augustus Porter is said to have learned of the ridge from the Indians, and had the line of a road traced along it in 1798. Mr. Orsamus Turner, in his History of the Holland Purchase, says that "the Ridge road, through all the eastern portion of Niagara, was discovered in 1805. Some of the new settlers in Slaton's settlement in 1805 were hunting cattle, and observed that there was continuous elevated ground and changed their location, settling upon it east of Hartland Corners. It was not, however, known in its full extent throughout that region until some years after."

The first road laid out in the county was the Oak Orchard road, which the Holland Company, about 1803, had surveyed from Batavia to the mouth of Oak Orchard creek; where a village had been planned which was expected to be the port of a large district of the State to the south of it—reasonably enough, as the lake was then the only pathway for transportation to the east and Canada. An Indian trail originally traversed about the same route as this road. By it the savages journeyed to their fishing grounds at the mouth of Oak Orchard creek, and to their burial places upon the banks of that stream, where mounds containing bones and implements have been found. The trail was straightened by the survey, and the first settlers felled the trees on the line and built bridges and causeways. Main street was the line of the road through Albion, and in the northern part of the present village it traversed one of these causeways. Theoretically the road ran due south from the Five Corners in Gaines; but as a fact Main street in passing south through Albion bears five and a half degrees to the west. On the Oak Orchard and Ridge roads the settlement of the county began, and to them it was for some time confined. The Oak Orchard road was laid out four rods wide and the Ridge road six, the Holland Company in each case giving the land occupied. A mail was carried over the Ridge road twice a week on horseback in 1815, and three times a week in wagons in 1816. In 1819 the road was surveyed through Orleans county by Philetus Swift and Caleb Hopkins, and resurveyed in 1822 under the supervision of John Le Valley, Grosvenor Daniels and William J. Babittt, who employed Darius W. Cole, of Medina, to do the actual surveying.

Perhaps no natural feature of northwestern New York is better known or better worthy of note than the singular formation on which the Ridge road runs. De Witt Clinton spoke of it as follows:

"From the Genesee near Rochester to Lewiston on the Niagara there is a remarkable ridge or elevation of land running almost the whole distance, which is seventy-eight
miles, and in a direction from east to west. Its general altitude above the neighboring land is thirty feet, and its width varies considerably; in some places it is not more than forty yards. Its elevation above the level of Lake Ontario is perhaps one hundred and sixty feet, to which it descends with a gradual slope; and its distance from that water is between six and ten miles. This remarkable strip of land would appear as if intended by nature for the purpose of an easy communication. It is, in fact, a stupendous natural turnpike, descending gently on each side and covered with gravel, and but little labor is requisite to make it the best road in the United States. * * *

The gravel with which it is covered was deposited there by the waters, and the stones everywhere indicate by their shape the abrasion and agitation produced by that element."

Geologists have generally concluded that this wonderful ridge was a mammoth bar on the bed of Lake Ontario when the lake rolled over the country south to the brow of the so-called mountain ridge.

CHAPTER XIII

STAGE COACHING ON THE RIDGE ROAD—HISTORY OF THE RAILROADS IN ORLEANS COUNTY.

The dependence for public conveyance previous to the completion of the canal was the stages running west from Canandaigua, either to Buffalo direct or by way of the Ridge road, Lewiston and Niagara Falls. The latter route was established in 1816. It was controlled at one time by brothers named Coe, living at Buffalo and Canandaigua, and at another by parties of the name of Hildreth. These stages ran one each way every day and did a roaring business, which was somewhat impaired by the completion of the canal and the establishment of the packet lines. In their palmy days they were always full, inside and out, of emigrants, business men, and tourists on the way to Niagara Falls, who would go west from Canandaigua by the Ridge road and return from Buffalo direct, via Batavia, or vice versa. The Coe coaches were met at Wright's Corners by a wagon from Lockport, bringing mail and passengers for the stage line. They were kept running up to about 1850. Passengers paid first or second class fare, the former only being assured of inside seats, of which there were enough for twelve persons. In winter a rectangular box on bobs took the place of the wheeled coaches. These stages ran every day in the week.

In 1828 a number of wealthy gentlemen, principally of Rochester, regretting the violation of the Sabbath involved in coaching on Sunday, established an opposition line to run on week days only, which they called the Pioneer line. Their route left the Ridge road at Wright's Corners for Lockport, where "Gid" Hersey's coffee house, which is still standing in West Main street, was the stopping place; thence it continued west to Niagara Falls, and so to Buffalo. The stages of this line aimed to leave Wright's for the east at a different hour from the Coes', both to secure a larger share of passengers and to avoid running in company with their rivals. When they did fall in with each other the drivers had a war of words, and sometimes raced their four-horse teams at the top of their speed, which the imperfect finish of the road made a dangerous proceeding. The Coe line lowered its rates, and the other failing to get the mail contract, succumbed to the competition and went down after running about two years.

At times, especially in the season of visiting Niagara Falls, neither line could accommodate the tide of travel with its regular coaches alone; both turned out extra teams and wags, and eight or ten stages of various sorts, heavily loaded, sometimes went west in a day.

Gaines, Orleans county, was a place for changing teams and getting refreshments. The stopping place was the old Mansion House, which was succeeded by the Gaines House. Gaines was two hundred and fifty miles from Albany by stage, and the trip required about forty-three hours, including stops.

With the advent of railroads the glory of the stage and packet lines departed. Several roads were constructed about the same time, making the three or four years beginning with 1835 an era of pioneer railroad building in America. In 1835 the Lockport and Niagara Falls company began the construction of its line. The track consisted of oak "mudsills," two and a half inches by twelve, laid lengthwise of the road, with the ties resting across them, and upon the ties four by six inch oak timbers, on which were spiked bands or straps of iron. These irons had a tendency to work loose at the ends and turn up, forming "snakeheads," as they were called, which were ready to catch in the bottom of a car, spearing the passengers and throwing it off the track. The cars were small affairs with four wheels, holding either sixteen or twenty-four persons, those of the former class being divided into two and the others into three compartments, with seats running across, stage coach fashion.

Meetings were held at Lockport in 1835 in favor of the construction of railroads to Batavia and Buffalo, but nothing was done. The next enterprise of the kind in this region was the building of a horse-car line from Medina, Orleans county, to Akron, Erie county, in 1836 by the Medina and Darien Railroad Company. It was operated but a short time, as it did not pay, and the track was taken up. In the same year enterprising Medina took measures for the building of a railroad to the mouth of Oak Orchard creek. The Medina and Ontario Railroad Company was incorporated for that purpose, but the line was never built. The history of the Batavia, Albion and Oak Orchard Railroad scheme of 1875 is equally brief.

On the 10th of December, 1850, the Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad Company was organized. It bought out the Lockport and Niagara Falls company
in 1851, and the latter’s track was abandoned and taken up. Local subscriptions were made along the proposed line amounting to $225,000. The first board of directors consisted of Joseph B. Varum and Edward Whitehouse, of New York; Watts Sherman, of Albany; Freeman Clarke, Silas O. Smith and A. Boody, of Rochester; Alexander Ward and Roswell W. Burrows, of Albion; and Elias B. Holmes, of Brockport. Mr. Varum was elected president, Mr. Ward vice-president, and Mr. Clarke treasurer. The directors and a few others passed over the road June 25th, 1852, and regular trains began running on the 30th. The first one between Rochester and Lockport was drawn by the engine “Niagara,” and made fifty miles per hour part of the way. The new road and the other lines running through central and western New York were consolidated, May 7th, 1853, to form the New York Central. The branch from Lockport junction to Tonawanda was built by the Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls Company in 1852, and opened in January, 1853.

In the spring of 1850 the Lake Ontario Shore Railroad Company was organized at Oswego. The road which the company was formed to build was intended to be part of a future trunk line from Boston to the west. The town of Kendall, Orleans county, gave its bonds for $60,000 worth of the stock; Yates, $100,000; Somerset, Niagara county, $95,000; Newfane, $88,000; Wilson, $117,000; Lewiston, $152,000. The work of construction proceeded slowly. Litigation over the town bonds checked their sale, and crippled the company so that it could not complete the road. In May, 1874, the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg company assumed the undertaking. The road was then principally graded, but it was more than a year later before the bridges on the western part of the line were finished. The road through Orleans and Niagara counties was graded by Hunter & Co. of Sterling Valley, Cayuga county. In the latter part of July, 1875, the track was laid twenty miles west of the Genesee river, and was carried through Orleans county during the autumn, and to Lewiston in the following spring. The first passenger train ran over the western portion June 12th, 1876. The road was built at an average cost of $20,000 per mile.

CHAPTER XIV.

CALAMITIES OF THE WAR OF 1812—THE OLD MILITIA SYSTEM IN ORLEANS COUNTY.

ORLEANS county was generally a wilderness during the war of 1812, and suffered little or nothing of the calamities that visited the settlers farther west, to some of whom it afforded a refuge. In the night of December 18-19, 1813, a force of British and the Indians in their service crossed the Niagara, and, in retaliation of the burning of the Canadian village of Newark by a United States officer a short time before, ravaged the entire Niagara border, driving the inhabitants from their homes, which were then given to the flames.

The flying inhabitants of Lewiston were pursued several miles eastward on the Ridge road, and the Tuscarora village was destroyed. The savages then pushed on up the river, stoutly withstood by Major Mallory and forty volunteers from Schlosser. Along the whole length of the river the destruction and desolation were complete, the inhabitants thinking themselves happy if they could escape inland, forsaking all they possessed. Newark was bitterly avenged. On the 24th and 25th a party of sixty or eighty regularly traversed the lake shore from Fort Niagara to Van Horn’s mill, near the mouth of Eighteen-mile creek, and, back, burning the mill and nearly all the buildings between it and the fort and taking some prisoners.

Some of the people of Orleans county left their homes in the panic occasioned by the foray of the Indians, but they soon returned. A company which Captain McCarthy raised in Gaines helped to drive the raiders back to Fort Niagara, capturing a squad of them, who were sent to Batavia.

"It is impossible now," says Turner, "to give the reader such an account of the condition of things in western New York during that ill-fated winter as will enable him to realize the alarm, the panic, the aggregate calamities that prevailed. On the immediate frontier all was desolate; the enemy holding possession of Fort Niagara, detached marauding parties of British and Indians came out from it, traversed the frontier where there was nothing left to destroy, and made incursions in some instances in the interior, enlarging the theatre of devastation and spreading alarm among those who had been bold enough to remain in the flight. West of a north and south line that would pass through the village of Le Roy, more than one-half of the entire population had been driven from their homes by the enemy, or had left them in fear of extended invasion. Entire backwoods neighborhoods were deserted, hundreds of log cabins were desolate, and the signs and sounds of life were mostly the deserted cattle and sheep, lowing and bleating, famishing for the lack of fodder there were none left to deal out to them."

This region, so afflicted by the hardships of war, was visited with unsuspicious circumstances after the close of hostilities, which prevented its immediate recovery and restoration. The harvest of 1814, though it saved from starvation the pioneer families who had ventured back to their homes and clearings, was of course small; and in 1816 a series of frosts continuing far into the summer so nearly ruined the crops as to seriously threaten the country with famine. Before the belated harvest of autumn, wheat had risen to two or three dollars a bushel, and even corn brought the former figure. Some families were compelled, while the small grains were still green, to gather the milky kernels and eat them, boiled, as a staple article of food. Roots and herbs never commonly eaten came into consumption for the time being.

In the fruitful seasons that followed the great ob-
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stake to the prosperity of the county, which neutralized the fertility of the soil and frustrated the farmer's labor, was the want of means of access to markets where surplus produce might be sold. This paralyzing influence was destined ere many years to be overcome by the noble water way whose construction forms the subject of a following chapter.

One of the ever to be remembered institutions in the earlier history of this section was the militia. There are few incidents of any nature that are recounted with more pleasure by the old men or listened to more attentively by the rising generation than those of the memorable drills and musters. The militia consisted of all the able-bodied white male citizens between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. State officers, clergymen, school teachers and some others when actively employed, were exempt from military duty. Students in colleges or academies, employees on coasting vessels and in certain factories, and members of fire companies were also exempt, except in cases of insurrection or invasion. Persons whose only bar to military service was religious scruples could purchase exemption for a stated sum annually. The major-general, brigade-inspector and chief of the staff department, except the adjutant and commissary generals, were appointed by the State. Colonels were chosen by the captains and subalterns of their regiments, and these latter by the written ballots of their respective regiments and separate battalions. The commanding officers of regiments or battalions appointed their staff officers. Every non-commissioned officer and private was obliged to equip and uniform himself, and perform military duty fifteen years from his enrollment, after which he was exempt, except in cases of insurrection or invasion. A non-commissioned officer, however, could get excused from duty in seven years, by furnishing himself with certain specified equipments, other than those required by law. It was the duty of the commanding officer of each company to enroll all military subjects within the limits of his jurisdiction, and they must equip themselves within six months after being notified.

On the first Monday in September of each year, every company of the militia was obliged to assemble within its geographical limits for training. One day in each year, between the 1st of September and the 15th of October, at a place designated by the commander of the brigade, the regiment was directed to assemble for a general training. All the officers of each regiment or battalion were required to rendezvous two days in succession in June, July or August, for drill under the brigade-inspector. A colonel also appointed a day for the commissioned officers and musicians of his regiment to meet for drill, the day after the last mentioned gathering being generally selected. Each militiaman was personally notified of an approaching muster, by a non-commissioned officer bearing a warrant from the commandant of his company; or he might be summoned without a warrant by a commissioned officer, either by visit or letter. A failure to appear, or to bring the necessary equipments, resulted in a court martial and a fine, unless a good excuse could be given; delinquents who could not pay were imprisoned in the county jail. When a draft was ordered for public service it was made by lot in each company, which was ordered out on parade for that purpose.

"General training" was usually regarded as a pleasant occasion by the men, as it gave them a chance to meet many acquaintances; and was the holiday of the year for the boys. Provided with a few pennies to buy the inevitable ginger bread from the inevitable peddler, they were happier than the lads of to-day would be with shillings to spend among the greatest variety of knickknacks. The place of meeting and the extent of the parade ground were designated by the commanding officer. The sale of spirituous liquors on the ground could only be carried on by permission of the same official. Total abstinence was not the rule, however, on such occasions; and an officer who had the right to throw away the contents of a private bottle did not always practice such extravagant wastefulness, particularly if fond of the "critter," being persuaded that if spared some of the beverage would ultimately find its way down his own throat.

Of general trainings, a veteran of those days writes as follows: "Although the companies exhibited the elite of our regimental splendors, glittering with tinsel and flaunting with feathers, a more heterogeneous and unsoldierly parade could scarcely be imagined. There were the elect from the mountains, who sometimes marched to the rendezvous barefoot, carrying their boots and soldier clothes in a bundle—the ambitious cobbler, tailors, and plough-boys from cross-road hamlets and remote rural districts, short, tall, fat, skinny, bow-legged, hump-backed, cock-eyed, hump-shouldered, and sway-backed—equipped by art as economically, awkwardly, and variously as they were endowed by nature, uniformed in contempt of all uniformity, armed with old flint-lock muskets, horsemen's carbines, long squirrel rifles, double-barrelled shot-guns, bell-muzzled blunderbusses, with side-arms of as many different patterns, from the old dragoon sabre that had belonged to Harry Lee's Legion, to the slim basket-hilted rapier which had probably graced the sword of some of our French allies in the Revolution. The officers of the volunteer companies, on the other hand, were generally selected for their handsome appearance and martial bearing, and shone with a certain elegance of equipment, each in the uniform pertaining to his company. There was also a sprinkling of ex-veterans of 1812, recognizable by a certain martinet precision in their deportment, and a shadow of contempt for their crude comrades, but quick to resent any extraneous comment derogatory to the service. A city dandy who undertook to ridicule the old fashioned way in which some officers carried their swords, was silenced by the snappish reply: 'Young man, I've seen the best troops of Great Britain beaten by men who carried their swords that way.' This harlequinade of equipment, costume, and character was duly paraded twice a day, marched through the streets, and put through its maneuvers on the green commons adjoining the village, much to the satisfaction of all emancipated school-boys, ragamuffins, idlers, tavern-keepers, and cake and
beer venders, and somewhat, perhaps, to the weariness of industrious mechanics who had apprentices to manage, and busy housewives who depended on small boys for help.

The old militia system was well developed in Orleans county. Gaines was one of the scenes of martial display when the old regime was in its palmy days. Here was held in August a drill of the officers of a brigade commanded by General John B. Lee. The brigade consisted of three regiments, one being made up from Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates; another from Ilion, Gaines and Carlton; while the eastern tier of towns furnished the third. The Ridge road was a common line of march, and the more elaborate maneuvers took place in the fields of James Mather, south of the village of Gaines, or those of John J. Walbridge. The general training was held at Albion.

The sixty-sixth regiment included an infantry company of Medina, under Captain Bowen. The brigade districts were changed frequently, and at different times this regiment was in the brigades of General Gustavus Adolphus Scroggs, of Buffalo, General Burroughs, of Medina, Orleans county, and General Williams, of Rochester.

Though many of the militia doubtless voted the institution a bore, and hailed the new constitution, which delivered them from it in 1846, there were some who took an enthusiastic interest in the maintenance and drill of the military organizations. Such were the officers, who found honor and advantage in their positions. They included, besides General Lee, above mentioned, Judge Sanford E. Church, who was very prominent and influential in the organization, in which he reached the rank of colonel, and gained a wide acquaintance and popularity, which stood him in good stead in his early political career. Other well remembered officers were Colonel Edward V. Strong, Colonel Lauren Billings, of East Gaines, Major Benjamin Greig and Captain Larralere.

The nearest that the militia of this section got to actual service after the war of 1812 was their participation in the "patriot war" of 1837, when they spent some time on the Niagara frontier.

CHAPTER XV.

ORGANIZATION AND SUBDIVISION OF ORLEANS COUNTY—ITS OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES.

BETWEEN 1772 and 1784 all but the eastern portion of New York was called Tryon county, having previously been part of Albany. In the latter year the same territory took the name of Montgomery. In 1789 all of the State west of Phelps and Gorham's preemption line was set off under the title of Ontario county. A single town, called Northampton, swallowed up the entire Holland Purchase. In 1802 Genesee county was formed from the portion of New York west of the Genesee river. The town of Northampton was divided into four, of which Batavia comprised all of the State west of the west transit line. In 1804 Batavia was subdivided into four towns. The eastern most retained the old name and all the territory as far west as a meridian crossing the State south from Lake Ontario through the middle of the towns of Yates, Ridgeway and Shelby. The next town west was called Willink, and extended to the west transit line.

Orleans county was formed from Genesee November 12th, 1824. It received its name at the instance of a prominent resident and property-owner at Albion, named Ingersoll. The name Adams was also suggested for the new county.

For a few months Gaines was the county seat and there, at the house of Selah Bronson, the first court was organized in June, 1825. Elijah Foot was First Judge, and S. M. Moody, Cyrus Harwood, Eldridge Farwell and William Penniman were the other judges. Philetus Swift, of Ontario county, Victor Birdsye, of Onondaga, and J. Hathaway, of Cortland, were the commissioners appointed to locate the county buildings. Gaines and Albion were the competitors for the honors and advantages of the county seat. The former was first visited, and its claims set forth by the inhabitants. On reaching Albion the commissioners were received with the exuberant hospitality which everywhere and always awaits men on such a mission; and when Nehemiah Ingersoll offered to donate the finest lots in the village as a site for the county buildings, they saw and announced that Albion was the place.

The first court-house was a brick building about half as large as the present one. This becoming antiquated and failing to meet the public needs, another was built in 1837-38, at an expense of about $20,000. The county clerk had his office in a very small room in the northeast corner of the court-house basement until a separate structure was built for the records in 1836. The jail was erected in 1838. The original one was of logs, or rather of hewn timber, and stood on the same site.

The county poor-house is in the southern part of the town of Albion, some three miles from the village of that name. A good sized farm belongs to it. The building was in 1877 judged by the supervisors inadequate to the demands made upon it, and they voted by a majority of those present to authorize the borrowing of $25,000 to build a new one, according to plans which were presented. The affirmative vote was not a majority of the full board, however, and the action was decided void; but it was subsequently perfected in due form, and the present county house was built in the summer of 1878.

William Lewis was the first sheriff of the county, Orson Nicholson the first county clerk, and Orange Butler the first district attorney. These gentlemen were chosen at the first (special) election, May 10th, 1825, which brought out 1,702 voters.

The whole county west of the east transit line—that is, all of it included in the Holland Purchase—was once
ed in the same paper, the last March 2nd, 1808. In these papers, which Mr. Hawley signed "Hercules," he explained and advocated the canal idea with great originality and foresight, creating a powerful sentiment in its favor. He recommended a route very nearly corresponding with that followed in the construction of the canal through western New York, and prophesied the results to be attained with singular correctness. Having had the pleasure of seeing his views carried out, with the anticipated fruits, he exerted his influence in favor of the enlargement of the canal as earnestly as he had in behalf of its construction; but he had reason to complain that his services never received adequate recognition. He spent his last years in January, 1842. He was buried in the beautiful Cold Spring rural cemetery, and the neighboring city, a creature of the Erie Canal, is in some sense his monument.

Mr. Geddes corresponded with surveyors and engineers on the subject of a canal, and agitated the topic in his county until it became a leading political issue, and Joshua Forman was elected to the Assembly on a "canal ticket." He was the first to propose legislation looking toward the construction of a canal, which he did February 4th, 1808. Pursuant of a resolution offered by him a committee was appointed to report on the propriety of an exploration and survey, to the end that Congress might be induced to appropriate the necessary funds. The committee reported favorably; a survey was ordered April 6th, 1808, and $600 appropriated for the expenses.

The service was performed by James Geddes. He was directed to examine the route for a canal from Oneida lake to Lake Ontario, as well as that from Lake Erie eastward. He reported in favor of the latter, which he pronounced feasible. He suggested that there might be found some place in the ridge that bounds the Tonawanda valley on the north as low as the level of Lake Erie, where a canal may be laid across and conducted onward without increasing the lockage by rising to the Tonawanda swamp.

The latter difficulty was involved in the route contemplated by Mr. Joseph Ellicott. He supposed the summit on that line would not be more than twenty feet above Lake Erie, and that upon it a sufficient supply of water might be obtained from Oak Orchard creek and other streams. In this he was mistaken; the summit was found to be seventy-five feet above Lake Erie, and to be supplied with no adequate feeder. It is probably not too much to say that the canal could never have been successfully constructed through western New York, but for the discovery of such a route as Mr. Geddes suggested, permitting a continuous flow eastward from Lake Erie and making the lake the feeder.

During the legislative session of 1810, pursuant of a resolution offered by Senator Platt, and concurred in by the Assembly March 12th, Peter B. Porter, Gouverneur Morris, Stephen Van Rensselaer, DeWitt Clinton, Simeon DeWitt, William North and Thomas Eddy were appointed commissioners to make a complete exploration of the proposed routes of water communication between the Hudson and the lakes. Three thousand dollars were voted them for expenses. Messrs. Morris and Van Rensselaer traversed the proposed line of the Erie Canal in advance of the other commissioners, and awaited them at Lewiston. The rest of the board, accompanied by Mr. Geddes, after exploring the Oswego river, paddled up the Seneca river, and held a consultation at Geneva on the 24th of July. Thence they continued to the falls of the Genesee, and from there by the Ridge road to Lewiston. A meeting of the board was held at Chippewa August 3d, when Mr. Geddes was directed to make some further surveys. On the 16th the party was at Buffalo.

The commissioners made their report March 2nd, 1811. It embodied a recommendation of a canal on the route selected by Mr. Geddes, and a warning against allowing it to be built by private parties, which would defeat cheap transportation by permitting a monopoly. The cost of the work was estimated at $5,000,000. The Legislature, on the strength of this report, continued the commission and voted $15,000 for further operations.

A year later, it having been found impossible to obtain an appropriation from Congress, the Legislature authorized the commissioners to borrow $3,000,000 on the credit of the State for the construction of the canal.

The prosecution of the work was prevented by the war of 1812, which so engrossed public attention that the canal project was abandoned and the act authorizing a loan in its behalf was repealed.

Toward the close of 1815 the enterprise was revived. An influential meeting in its favor was held at New York in December of that year, at which resolutions were adopted urging the construction of the canal. Similar meetings were held at Albany, Utica, Geneva, Canandaigua and Buffalo, and a sentiment created which expressed itself in petitions with more than a hundred thousand signers for the prosecution of the work.

The Legislature of 1816 reconstructed the canal commission, making it consist of De Witt Clinton, Stephen Van Rensselaer, Joseph Ellicott, Myron Holley and Samuel Young. A year later was passed an act prepared by Mr. Clinton authorizing the commencement of actual construction. The canal, however, was still regarded by many as a ruinous experiment, and lamentations were frequently heard on the miseries of an overtaxed people and their posterity.

The work was divided into western, middle and eastern sections, the dividing points being Rome and the Seneca river. Of the western section James Geddes was appointed chief engineer. In 1815 he surveyed the route. Up to 1820 nothing was done upon this section except to adopt the line laid down by Mr. Geddes. In 1820 he was succeeded by David Thomas, who in that year examined the line adopted from Rochester to Pendleton and modified it somewhat east of Oak Orchard creek. A more important change was made as to the point of passing the mountain ridge in Niagara county—one that determined the site of the city of Lockport. Mr. Geddes's line crossed the ridge in the gorge a mile west of Lockport. The whole western part of the canal was put under contract in 1821.
THE COMPLETION OF THE ERIE CANAL.

Then followed long, tedious years of labor, that must sometimes have tried the faith and hope of the most sanguine. First, a belt of the forest had in most places to be removed. Then little armies of men and teams, toiling in the lane thus made in the woods, slowly gave the ground the shape of a great ditch with its bounding embankments; or still more slowly, with drill and powder, wrought their way through ledges of solid rock. Extemporaneous workshops sprang up along the line, moving like miners' camps with the progress of the contractors' gangs; and shrewd speculators were busied in possessing themselves of lots where more permanent villages seemed destined to stand.

During the autumn of 1823 the completed and navigable portion of the canal was extended westward to Brockport and Holley, and during the next season to the foot of the ridge at Lockport. In 1824, also, the adaptation of the Niagara river and Tonawanda creek to the purposes of the canal was completed, and the line excavated from the creek toward Lockport. It need hardly be said that the stupendous rock cutting extending through and west of that city was the last spot finished between Buffalo and Albany.

The commissioner who superintended the construction of the western portion of the canal was William C. Bouck, afterward governor of the State. On the 29th of September, 1825, he wrote from Lockport to Stephen Van Rensselaer, president of the canal commission, the following letter:

"Sir: The unfinished parts of the Erie canal will be completed and in a condition to admit the passage of boats on Wednesday, the 26th day of October next. It would have been gratifying to have accomplished this result as early as the first of September, but embarrassments which I could not control delayed it.

On this grand event, so auspicious to the character and wealth of the citizens of New York, permit me to congratulate you."

"By extra exertion the work of excavation was completed and the filling of the last section begun on the 24th of October. In twenty-four hours the filling was accomplished, and all things were ready for a grand celebration on the morrow, for which due preparations had been made.

In the forenoon of the 26th a flotilla of five boats left Buffalo for the first through passage from lake to seaport, bearing the highest executive officers of the State and many other dignitaries. Their departure was the signal for firing the first of a large number of cannon (some of them thirty-two pounders from Perry's fleet), stationed within hearing distance of each other along the whole line of the canal and the Hudson river and at Sandy Hook. By discharging one of these the instant its next neighbor—five or six miles away—was heard from, the momentous news of the opening of through travel at Buffalo was conveyed to the ocean in an hour and twenty minutes. A small fleet of boats which had started at the foot of the locks at Lockport about the time that the flotilla left Buffalo met the latter in Tonawanda creek and conveyed it to Lockport, where, and at Albion, Holley, Brockport and everywhere along the line, it was hailed with a jubilant enthusiasm which it is now difficult alike to imagine and to describe.

The length of the canal was 363 miles, and its original cost $1,433,780.86. It was planned to be forty feet wide at the surface and twenty-eight at the bottom, with four feet of water. The locks were ninety feet long, and twelve feet wide in the clear. The capacity indicated by these figures was soon found to be inadequate, and the necessity of enlarging the canal was made apparent. By an act passed in May, 1835, the canal commissioners were authorized to have the work performed, including the construction of double locks, as fast as they should judge advisable. Under this act the enlargement was begun, and continued with more or less activity for more than a quarter of a century before it was complete throughout. The reconstructed canal was reduced to 350 1-2 miles in length, and increased in breadth to seventy feet at the surface and fifty-two and a half at the bottom, while the depth of water was increased to seven feet.

The cost of the enlargement was over $80,000,000.

It can hardly be necessary to point out the effects of the canal in facilitating communication and opening markets, breathing the breath of a new life into the agricultural interest of western New York, and stimulating the growth of population along its line. We might as well call attention to the uses of the sunshine and the air as refer at length to the great cities that have been doubled in population, to the new ones it has created, to the large and prosperous villages that are dotted along its banks, to the new empire it has helped to create around the borders of our western lakes, and the fleets of steam and sail vessels it has put afloat upon their waters."

The canal at the outset, far from being exclusively an artery of commerce, as at present, was the fashionable avenue of western travel. The packets were elegantly furnished, set excellent tables, and outsported the freight boats in speed by their comparative lightness, and their three-horse teams. They ran from the east as far as Lockport before the completion of the upper level of the canal. Mr. Turner informs us that "Seymour Scovell built the first packet west of Montezuma, the "Myron Holley," and Oliver Culver the next one, the "Win. C. Bouck."

The most famous of early travelers by the canal was the illustrious Marquis de Lafayette. After a tour in the west he reached Buffalo in the first week of June, 1825, and journeyed down the Niagara to its mouth, where he was received with a salute from the guns of the fort. At Lewiston he spent a night at the hotel kept by Thomas Kelsey. Thence he was conveyed to Lockport, an escort from that place meeting him at Howell's, on the Ridge road. At Lockport he embarked for the east on a packet at the foot of the locks. At all points he was received with such honors as might be expected from a people who appreciated his services to their country during the Revolutionary war.
CHAPTER XVIII
PUBLIC ENTERPRISES FOR DRAINING SWAMP LANDS—THE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY—STAPLE CROPS.

THE surface of this county is generally level or gently undulating, and in the depressions between the undulations are many marshes or wet lands, which are not well adapted to all kinds of agriculture.

This is especially true of the southern tier of towns, which are bordered on the south by Tonawanda swamp. Estuaries or arms of this swamp extend far into the adjacent dry land, and comparatively few of the farms in this vicinity are wholly without wet land.

In the absence of any law to regulate the drainage of these lands, but little was accomplished in the improvement of them. Selfishness and conflicting opinions as to the best methods prevented the concert of action necessary to success in draining these tracts. On the 1st of May, 1865, a special act was passed by the Legislature, providing for the appointment of two commissioners “for draining certain low lands in the town of Barre.” This act was framed by the late Judge Besac of Albion, and empowered the commissioners to locate and construct drains and to assess the expense upon the owners of lands benefited thereby. Alvah Matison and Floyd Starr were appointed commissioners under this act, and so successful was the experiment that in April, 1867, another act similar in its provisions was passed for draining a larger area in the same town. Charles S. Allen and L. Grinnell were the commissioners in this case, and the success of this enterprise was fully equal to that of the first.

On the 10th of May, 1869, the Legislature enacted a general drainage law, the essential features of which were almost identical with those of these special acts. This law, with some amendments passed by subsequent Legislatures, is still in force; and it is estimated that under its operation 4,670 acres of land have been reclaimed or greatly benefited.

The right under the Constitution to confer upon the commissioners appointed under the law the powers with which it invested them, was predicated on the assumption that the drainage of such lands is conducive to the public health; and it authorized them to assess municipalities through or near which drains were constructed. Accordingly in two among the five cases under the law, the commissioners assessed a portion of the expense upon the town of Barre. An appeal was taken by the supervisor of the town—C. H. Matison—and the cases were tried before the county judge and justices of sessions, who sustained the action of the commissioners, thus affirming the assumption upon which these powers were conferred.

Some twenty different commissions have been appointed under the law up to the present time, in the towns of Shelby, Barre, Clarendon, Murray, Kendall, Gaines and Carlton, and as before stated about 4,670 acres of land benefited or reclaimed, at an aggregate cost of $88,000, or $18 per acre. The length of ditches which have been constructed by these commissions has ranged from a fraction of a mile to some twelve miles; and the cost from about $250 to $7,000.

The following named citizens have been appointed commissioners, each in one or more cases: Alvah Matison, Floyd Starr, Lauren Grinnell, Charles S. Allen, Homer D. Waldo, Stephen Kimpton, Thomas Cushing, T. C. Bailey, Stephen B. Thurston, J. D. Buckland, Nathaniel Braley, N. K. Butts, Samuel D. Smith, Almanzor Hutchinson, Homer Sherwood, M. H. Phillips, Dan Martin, Manning Packard, Cornelius Thomas, Joseph Pratt, Chauncey Lums, Eli Webster, A. J. Foster, O. Love, A. Stilson, John Berry, N. O. Warren, Pierre A. Simpkins, David Conkling, Cyrenus Wellman and Wm. R. Basset.

Tonawanda swamp includes a large area in the southern part of the county, in the towns of Clarendon, Barre and Shelby; a portion of this is covered with timber, of which cedar and black ash are the most valuable varieties. Other portions are what is termed open swamp or prairie. These are covered by a rank growth of coarse grass and other marsh plants. Hitherto this swamp meadow has been considered entirely valueless, but recently successful efforts have been made to utilize it for pasture. Large droves of cattle have been herded during the pasturing season on portions of it, and the results of these experiments have been so favorable that those whose farms include more or less of this hitherto useless swamp are now enclosing it with such fences as the annual fires will not destroy, and pasturing their cattle on it.

It is not believed that the general drainage law is applicable to this large area of swamp land, and efforts to procure the necessary legislation for draining it have from time to time been made, but thus far with only partial success. An act was passed appropriating commissions who were empowered to assess the lands benefited, to an amount not exceeding $80,000, for draining this swamp. So strong a feeling of hostility to the measure was aroused that the act was repealed. Subsequently an act was passed appropriating about $16,000 for excavating the outlet of the swamp on certain conditions, which have never been complied with. It is confidently believed that an expenditure of a few thousand dollars at the outlet of the swamp, in the town of Shelby, will render its drainage entirely practicable; and that then a judicious system of ditches will convert this swamp into arable land, and dry up the sources of the malaria which renders the region unhealthy during a portion of the year.

Although there are conflicting interests, some of which stand in the way of this improvement, it will probably be accomplished in time, and this now unproductive waste will be converted into thrifty farms.

ORLEANS COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

The present agricultural society of the county was organized October 17th, 1856, with T. C. Bailey as president and Hiram Goff secretary. There had been a somewhat similar organization in existence for seven or eight
THE FAIR GROUND—THE FRUIT AND BEAN CROPS.

years previous. It held fairs at Albion, north of the canal, pitching a tent on a spot since used by circuses. Judge E. R. Reynolds was officially connected with it.

The primitive society, however, did not come up to the possibilities of such an institution, and the present one was organized with more ambitious aims and greater resources. Twelve acres of the present fair ground were bought in 1857, and subsequent purchases increased the area to nearly twenty acres.

A constitution and by-laws were adopted, among whose provisions are the following: The officers consist of a president, a vice-president from each town in the county, a secretary, a treasurer and six directors, the whole constituting the board of managers. The annual meeting is held on the second Monday in December. Annual membership costs $1; life membership $10.

At a meeting on the 14th of May, 1870, a committee was appointed "to superintend the erection of a suitable dwelling-house on the fair ground." At the annual meeting of 1871 the subject of disposing of the fair ground and buying another equally eligible, and less valuable for village lots, came up. The final decision was against selling any part of the ground other "than is enclosed in the lot upon which the house stands, on the northeast corner." This house and lot the board of managers was authorized to sell.

March 4th, 1872, it was unanimously resolved that immediate measures be taken for the construction of a new exhibition hall. A similar vote had been had more than two years before, but nothing came of it. It was at that time proposed to put up a struc-ture like that of the Palmyra Agricultural Society, but it was now decided to erect a building similar to that on the fair ground at Lockport, 100 by 36 feet and two stories high, for a sum not to exceed $3,000, of which the town of Barre was to raise $1,500. The building was erected in that season at an actual cost of about $2,800, of which $2,500 had been subscribed by December. April 12th, 1873, it was found necessary to vote $50 to pay the balance then due, and repair Floral Hall, as the new structure was called, a part of the roof having been blown off. The receipts at the fair of 1874 were $2,064.

In the summer of 1875 a row of twenty sheds was built on the east line of the ground, at an expense of $675, and in 1877 two additional sheds, each 12 feet by 100. The fair ground is now claimed to be one of the best appointed in the State.

STAPLE FARM PRODUCTS.

The history of fruit-growing in this county dates from the first settlement of the county by the whites. The motives that induced its cultivation at that early day were not of a character to cause extensive planting of orchards of apples, or any other fruits. The home of the early settler and his immediate neighborhood were the limit of the demand for all kinds of fruit for many years after the first settlement of the county. The improved varieties of fruits were but little known to the inhabitants of this county in those days. The apple and peach were the principal fruits grown for many years.

About the year 1845 there began to be a demand for winter apples in the then newly settled States of the west, which stimulated the owners of apple trees to graft the almost worthless sorts that they had in cultivation with the varieties that were in demand for shipping. From that time to the present there has been a rapid increase of apple orchards throughout the county. The trees that have been planted during the past twenty-five years were mostly Baldwins, Rhode Island Greemings, Roxbury Russels and Northern Spys; the Baldwin has probably been more extensively planted during the past twenty years than all other winter sorts, and judging from the health of the tree, great productiveness and beauty of fruit, it promises at no very distant period to supersede in this section most of the other winter varieties.

One of the sources of Orleans county's comparative superiority in fruit production is the climatic influence of the winds. The winds from the northwest, north and northeast always pass during the whole year over open water before reaching this section, which accounts for the mercury seldom falling lower than five or ten degrees below zero during the winter season. These winds also serve as a protective against the late spring and early autumn frosts. The cool autumn winds blowing directly off the lake are supposed to retard the ripening of winter fruits, leaving the ripening process to be carried out during the winter and spring following, and greatly enhancing their value for market by their long keeping qualities. Another favorable influence is the dryness of the atmosphere. The average annual rainfall is comparatively small. It is conceded by every observant cultivator of fruit, that all fruits possess a much higher quality when the season is dry than when it is very wet; this conclusion is fully verified by the experience of many cultivators in this county, where the various fruits find a climate and surroundings which enable them to better develop all their high qualities than in almost any other section of the United States east of the Mississippi valley.

A notable feature of the agriculture of Orleans county is the large place given to the bean crop, no other county in the State raising so much of this product. The following account has been given of the rise and growth of bean culture in this county. In 1836 Ira Winegar brought a small quantity of white beans from Rensselaer county and gave a pint to Mr. Coe, father of Mr. T. H. Coe, of Yates. Mr. Coe planted them and harvested three pecks, which he gave to his sons. They planted them in 1838 on two acres of land, and raised fifty-five bushels, partly pea and partly medium. The crop was sold to H. V. Prentice, of Albion, for $1.75 per bushel. He sold them for seed. In 1843 over one hundred acres were planted in Yates, and a considerable area in other parts of the county. The crop was so large that it glutted the eastern market, and the price obtained at Boston was only sixty cents. The crop has developed into a staple, particularly since the weevil began its ravages on wheat.
CHAPTER XIX.

PIONEER, INSURANCE, MEDICAL, LEGAL AND RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS—STATISTICS.

THE first settlers of Orleans county were in the main natives of New England. Hence they were similar in their faith, manners, customs, habits, and social character. They possessed the traditional puritan thrift and economy, and in their arrangements for their homes and dwelling places they went where by industry and prudence they hoped to acquire wealth.

These people came upon the Holland Purchase sometimes in companies, but generally in single families, in winter, snow being better to travel in than the mud of summer, and they got settled on their land in time to begin work in early spring.

Their first business generally was to build a log house to live in. A man alone could cut the logs, but the united strength of several men was required to roll them to their places in the house.

When a man was ready to have his cabin "raised," all the men in the neighborhood assembled and performed the work gratuitously, the owner furnishing the whiskey. Much of their chopping, logging, and other work was done by "bees," or occasions of donated labor by several together. The people were kind, generous, and friendly to each other. These interchanges of work and social intercourse made them generally acquainted for many miles around.

As the country grew older, more populous and wealthy, the mutual dependence of former days did not exist; the social gatherings of earlier time did not continue, but old settlers could not forget their early friendships, and the scenes of peculiar interest they had witnessed in common as the pioneers of a new country. To gratify this feeling and aid in preserving some of the local history of western New York, the pioneers residing in Orleans county called a public meeting, which assembled in Albion, June 25th, 1859, and organized the Orleans County Pioneer Association. All residents of this county who settled in western New York before 1836 were made eligible to membership.

The first annual meeting was held September 10th, 1859, when an address was delivered by Arad Thomas, a constitution adopted, and the annual meeting fixed for the third Saturday in June, at which time it has been held ever since.

At these meetings pioneers related their experience in settling the county, told their exploits in hunting, the difficulties they encountered for want of tools, teams, food, mills, mechanics, money, and the various conveniences and necessaries of life. These discussions were engaged in by many members, and were of lively interest to their hearers.

For several years at first these meetings were composed mainly of members of the association. Their interest to spectators seemed to increase every year, and the attendance became greater, until the pioneer meeting has become the largest annual assemblage held in the county, a kind of general holiday, which the people attend in crowds which the largest rooms in the county cannot contain.

At the last meeting an interesting exhibition of relics and curiosities was shown, and a committee appointed to consider the propriety of the association collecting and preserving a museum of such articles.

The constitution now makes all persons eligible to membership who emigrated here previous to 1840, or were born here before 1835. The present roll of members contains about 400 names.

Connected with the association is a drum corps of eight or ten musicians, who have played martial music together for more than fifty years, and a choir of singers, many of whom are pioneers, who sing at these meetings tunes used in old times, in old style, in a very effective manner.

The association has a register of names and brief history of the principal pioneers, and albums containing nearly 300 photographs of members.

They have a manuscript volume of local history of pioneers, written by themselves. All these records and things, when the association shall end, it is intended shall be deposited in some public building and kept as public property.

No term of existence is fixed for the association. It will probably continue as long as sufficient public interest in its affairs remains to keep it up.

Much of the historical matter collected by the association was published a few years since in a very valuable and interesting volume, edited by Judge Arad Thomas, and entitled Pioneer History of Orleans County.

FARMERS' INSURANCE ASSOCIATIONS.

In February, 1857, Mr. George L. Pratt, of Ridgeway, Orleans county, began publishing in the leading papers of that county and Niagara a series of articles on the subject of mutual insurance. This agitation of the topic resulted in a call for a meeting at Middleport on the 22nd of the following March. Only a few of the thirty-one signers of the call attended the meeting, and nothing was accomplished except an adjournment for two weeks. The second meeting consisted of three persons, among them Mr. Pratt, and was unanimously voted a failure.

The next move was to call a meeting for May 15th at the Orleans House, Albion. Six persons besides Mr. Pratt attended. Overtures for a union were made to the Farmers' Mutual Insurance Association of Orleans County, which was in session at the same time, but no response was made by the latter. The meeting adjourned to assemble at the American Hotel, Lockport, May 26th. When the hour arrived there were just enough persons present to fill the offices of chairman and secretary, to which they mutually elected each other. The effort to
FARMERS’ INSURANCE ASSOCIATION—COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY.

In 1875, the Legislature of the State had been to organize under the statute law of the State in force, but hope in that direction was extinguished by the repeal of that law as affecting such cases during the Legislature’s session of 1877.

About four months later Mr. Pratt opened a correspondence with the president of the Orleans association above mentioned, and was invited to attend a meeting of that body at the court-house at Albion in the latter part of January. Only five persons were present, however, and only three at a meeting November 10th, and nothing was accomplished.

Mr. Pratt once more renewed his efforts, and brought about a meeting at Ridgeway December 18th, at which seventeen of the twenty-two towns in Niagara and Orleans counties were represented by some of their most substantial farmers. The Farmers’ Mutual Insurance Association of Niagara and Orleans Counties was organized, a constitution and by-laws adopted, and the organization began to solicit patronage.

At a meeting of the directors at Ridgeway, February 19th, 1878, it was found that the association had applications for insurance for $129,500. It was voted that the first policies issued all bear the date February 20th, 1878. The association six months and ten days later, September 1st, had at risk $1,600,000. There were then sixty-one mutual companies in Pennsylvania and eleven in Michigan each of which was carrying less at risk than this association.

The officers are: George Bradley, of Somerset, president; A. P. Scott, of Ridgeway, vice-president; George L. Pratt, of Ridgeway, secretary; John P. Sawyer, of Royalton, treasurer. The board of directors consists of one member from each town in the two counties, holding for two years, or until their successors are elected.

The business of the association is confined to the insurance against fire and lightning of farm property and other property no more hazardous, within Niagara and Orleans counties. The association is organized on the co-operative or honor plan, there being now no State law for the organization of mutual insurance companies.

The officers of the association is at Ridgeway, where a stated annual meeting is held on the second Wednesday of January, to hear reports, elect officers, etc. The term of the officers is one year, and they are, ex officio, directors. The treasurer receives all moneys collected by assessment for the payment of losses, and pays out the same, by order of the secretary countersigned by the president, the fee for his services being one-half of one per cent.

For the payment at the rate of five or some multiple of five cents per hundred dollars of their respective policies; and members forfeit their policies so long as they refuse to pay any assessment after notification by mail, and permanently lose their membership by refusal to pay on personal solicitation by the directors. Any surplus in the treasury is used for the payment of small losses. Claims for loss must be presented within ten days of the occurrence of the loss, and within forty-eight hours in the case of death of live stock by lightning. The association may insure personal property for its entire cash value, and buildings for two-thirds. On live stock the limit is $100 per head for horses, $50 for cattle, $10 for hogs, and $5 for sheep.

The first loss incurred was $3317, July 18th, 1878, and the first assessment—five cents per $100—was made August 1st, on $1,180,000, the amount of policies then in force.

A similar institution is the Farmers’ Mutual Insurance Association of Orleans County, organized in the spring of 1878, with B. F. Van Camp, Esq., president, J. B. Winch, secretary and treasurer, and a board of directors consisting of one from each town in the county. It issues policies of insurance on farm property in Orleans county. The first of them bear the date March 4th, 1878, and by the middle of July they amounted to $370,000.

ORLEANS COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY.

The Orleans County Medical Society was organized January 8th, 1873, at a meeting in the office of Dr. J. W. Randall, Albion, who was the originator and chief promoter of the organization. Besides Dr. Randall, there were present Drs. H. W. Lewis, H. C. Tompkins, E. R. Armstrong, R. W. Smith, William McKenney, E. P. Squier, Thomas Cushing, C. S. Pugsley, J. H. Taylor, W. Noble, J. D. Warren, S. R. Cochrane, R. E. Coch­rane, and James Chapman.

Dr. Randall presided and Dr. Chapman acted as secretary. The name above given was adopted, and a committee appointed to report a constitution to a subsequent meeting.

At the second meeting, February 5th, a constitution was adopted, providing, among other things, for regular meetings of the society (at Albion, unless otherwise voted on the third Wednesday of January, April, July and October of each year, the first to be the anniversary meeting). Dr. Randall was elected president, Dr. Cushing vice-president, Dr. Chapman secretary and treasurer, and Drs. McKenney, Squier and Pugsley the executive committee. The official term was fixed at one year.

The meetings are largely devoted to professional essays, reports and discussion. The anniversary meeting of 1875 was held publicly in the court-house; previous meetings having generally occurred at the office of one of the members. It was largely attended by the public, and in connection with it the members enjoyed a ban­quet at the Harrington Hall of the Orleans House. The anniversary meeting of 1876 was also held at the court-house, has since been the place of gathering.

At the meeting of July 18th, 1877, it was voted that the meetings should thereafter be held on the first Thurs­
day of May and November, the latter being the time for the election of officers. Accordingly, on the 1st of November, 1877, the present officers of the society were chosen, viz.: President, Dr. C. S. Pugsley; vice-president, Dr. Thomas R. Bamber; secretary and treasurer, Dr. W. C. Bailey; censors, Drs. Randall, Taylor, Chapman, Cochrane and Jenkins.


THE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION.

March 12th, 1877, during a term of the county court, which had called together at Albion a considerable number of the lawyers of the county, the above-named organization was formed. The action was taken at the suggestion of John H. White, Esq., of Albion, who was a delegate from the 8th judicial district to a convention to organize a State bar association. Henry A. Childs, of Medina, and ex-judge Thomas, of Albion, supported Mr. White's proposal.

It was resolved to form a bar association, and the following lawyers were enrolled as members: Arad Thomas, John H. White, John G. Sawyer, I. M. Thompson, E. Porter, O. A. Eddy, Charles A. Keeler, Albert W. Crandall, H. A. Childs, George Bullard, John W. Graves, S. E. Filkins, Clark D. Knapp, Seth S. Spencer, Andrew C. Harwick, E. K. Reynolds, C. J. Church, D. N. Salisbury, H. S. Goft and John Cunneen.

Mr. White was chosen president; Mr. Childs first, Mr. Thomas second, and Mr. Eddy third vice-president; Mr. Bullard treasurer and Mr. Cunneen secretary.

The next meeting was held September 13th, 1877, at the Orleans House, Oak Orchard Harbor. A constitution and by-laws were adopted, and L. R. Sanford, H. A. Gildden, E. L. Pitts, George A. Newell, H. C. Tucker, W. P. Hovey and Edward Posson were elected members of the association.

The second annual meeting was held at the Orleans House, Albion, in March, 1878. H. D. Tucker was elected to membership and the association adjourned to meet at Oak Orchard Harbor July 13th. The original officers were re-elected, and are now holding their respective positions. The meetings have been well attended by the members of the county bar, including Chief Judge Church, and in some cases by their families, and have been occasions of much social enjoyment as well as of professional interest and profit, through the discussion of questions of importance to the bar.

THE PRESBYTERY OF NIAGARA.

The Presbytery of Niagara was set off from that of Geneva in February, 1817. It originally embraced its present territory, together with that of the presbyteries of Buffalo, Rochester and Genesee. The last two of these were separated from it in 1819, and the first in 1823.

The first meeting of the presbytery, as now constituted, was held at Gasport, January 27th, 1824. The ministers present were Revs. David M. Smith, of Lewiston, and George Colton, of Gasport, and the elders, Titus Penn, Gasport; Abel Tracy, Gaines; Daniel Holmes, Wilson; Luther Crocker, Cambria; Asahel Munger, Lockport; and Love Lewis, Lewiston. Rev. D. M. Smith was chosen moderator, and preached the inaugural sermon.

It was reported that the presbytery had within its bounds eleven churches besides the Tuscarora mission, and four ordained ministers, two of whom had charges. "Owing to the nearness of the country and the multiplicity of religious sects," not one of the churches was self-supporting. In 1846 a total membership of 2,514 was reported, the number having been raised by a series of powerful revivals to about that of the present members. Up to 1874 about 144 ministers had been enrolled by the presbytery. At that date the church edifices were estimated to be worth $200,000 and the parsonages $32,000, with but slight indebtedness on the property.

In 1833 thirty-four Sabbath-schools were reported in Niagara county, with 214 teachers, 1,818 scholars and 1,339 library books; and in Orleans county twenty-three schools, with 282 teachers, 1,671 scholars and 1,386 books; in the presbytery, fifty-seven schools, 496 teachers, and 2,919 books.

In a historical sketch of the presbytery, presented by Rev. E. P. Marvin in the latter part of April, 1875, from which the foregoing facts have been taken, he stated that the presbytery then numbered twenty-three ministers and eighteen churches, with a membership of 2,647 in the churches and 8,841 in the Sabbath-schools. The churches are those of Albion, Barre Center, Carlton, Holley, Knowlesville, Lewiston, Lockport, Lyndonville, Medina, Millville, Niagara Falls, Porter, Pendleton and Wheatfield, Somerset, Tuscarora, Wilson and Wright's Corners.

STATISTICS.

The following compilation from the last State census furnishes an interesting exhibit of the population and religious and agricultural status of the county in 1875:

POPULATION.

The total population of Orleans county by the census of 1875 was 29,937. Native, 24,863; foreign, 5,074; white, 29,689; colored, 239; male, 14,970; female, 14,967; voters, 8,541; of military age, 6,020; of school age, 7,917; land-owners, 4,924.

The increase from 1870 to 1875 was 8.12 per cent of the aggregate population; among the white population, 7.92 per cent; among the colored, 38.95; among the native population, 6.04 per cent; among the foreign, 19.30.

AGRICULTURAL.

There were 2,982 farms in the county, of which one contained five hundred acres and over; 928, one hundred acres and under five hundred; 1,135, fifty and under
one hundred; and 450 from twenty to fifty acres. The
improved land in the county amounted to 192,600 acres;
woodland, 28,393; other, 10,300. The cash value of the
farms in the county is calculated at $139,199,211; that of
buildings other than dwellings $2,158,469; that of stock
$1,846,175; tools and implements, $683,745.

The amounts of the staple products for 1874 were as
follows: Barley, 370,499 bushels; corn, 414,373; oats,
477,995; wheat, 366,722; beans, 256,604; potatoes, 418,182;
pounds of butter made in families, 981,329; pounds of
wheat, 166,372; tons of hay, 38,041. There are only two
cheese factories in the county, having a capital of $3,880,
using the milk of 160 cows, amounting to 421,443 pounds,
and making 42,215 pounds of cheese.

RELIGIOUS.

The number of organizations and members of the sev-
eral religious denominations in the county was represented
in the census report by the following figures:
Baptist, nine organizations, 1,413 members; Christian
Connection, three, 419; Congregational, two, 175; Free-
will Baptist, three, 305; Methodist Episcopal, nineteen,
1,190; Presbyterian, seven, 1,045; Protestant Episcopal,
two, 345; Roman Catholic, three, 510; Second Advent-
ist, one, 70; Union, one, 50.

CHAPTER XX.

A SKETCH OF THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY
OF ORLEANS COUNTY.

The surface of Orleans county is for the most part
nearly level, but with a general slope to
the north. To speak more particularly, it
consists of three levels, separated by the so-
called "lake ridge," on which the Ridge road
runs, and the "mountain ridge," which pass
through the county east and west. From the lake
there is a slight and pretty uniform rise to the Ridge
road, aggregating from 150 to 180 feet. Professor Hall,
as State geologist, reported in regard to the remarkable
lake ridge that "it bears all the marks of having been the
boundary of a large body of water, and of having been
produced in the same manner as the elevated beaches
bordering the ocean or our larger lakes. In some places
it is strongly defined, descending toward the lake twenty
or thirty and even fifty feet in a moderate slope. Its sea-
ward side is usually covered with coarse gravel, and often
with large pebbles, resembling the shingle of the sea
beaches. The top is generally of coarse sand and gravel,
though sometimes of fine sand, as if blown up by the
wind, similar to modern beaches, when the coarser mate-
rials are thus left as the waves deposit them, while as the
finer parts become dry they are carried to a higher eleva-
tion. It is sometimes so contracted upon the top as to
offer only space for a broad carriage road; and again
expands to a width of two or three hundred feet, being
scarcely defined on the inland side.

The second plateau is a gently undulating strip from
four to six miles wide, lying between the Ridge road and
the mountain ridge, being some three hundred feet above
the lake at the base of the latter. From the brow of the
diminutive "mountain," which is formed by the Niagara
limestone, the surface of the country rises gradually,
reaching within two miles an elevation of four hundred
and fifty feet—the summit of the county. Hence
southward there is a gradual descent to the Tonawanda
swamp. This upper section rests on the Niagara lime-
stone, while the well known Medina sandstone forms the
basis of the northern portion of the county, lying exposed
along the canal and creeks.

Hydraulic and quick lime have been made from the
limestone of the mountain ridge. Salt springs are found
in the Medina sandstone, some of which were worked
until the canal brought them into competition with those
of Syracuse. The product of the Holley springs was sold
for $6 a barrel about 1821. Clays of different colors,
available for brick-making, have been found in different
sections of the county; also shell marl and bog iron ore.
From the deposit of the latter in a swamp in Ridgeway
iron has been made. The Medina sandstone is exten-
sively quarried. This rock and the Niagara limestone,
aside from the practical uses made of them, have interest-
ing geological features, which are pointed out in the
scholarly contribution of Dr. A. W. Tyron, of Lockport,
to the History of Niagara County, published by Sanford
& Co. From that article we take the remainder of this
chapter.

THE MEDINA EPOCH.

The strata of this group are usually divided into four
different bands:
1. Red marl, or marly sandstone; 2. Gray quartzose
sandstone; 3. Lime sand; 4. The gray terminal portion.

The Red Marl, the first or lowest of these bands, is
sometimes mottled with greenish spots, and is readily
decomposed by exposure. It is the source of the red
clays throughout the county. No fossils are found in it.

The Gray Quartzose Sandstone.—This portion succeeds
the previous, and is twenty-five feet thick on the Niagara
river. It is the hardest portion of the group, and is
extensively quarried. Red bands and motlings
frequently intersperse the gray color. This band contains
many valves of Lingula and a few other shells. It is
ripple and wave marked and bears indisputable evidence
of its deposition in a shallow, broken sea.

Red Shale, or Sandstone.—This is a red, shaly, or marly
mass, mottled with circular spots of greenish gray, or is
frequently marked with bands, parallel with the strata.
The oxidation of the iron, which gives color to the rocks,
has been altered by the presence of carbonaceous matter.
As we ascend the shaly matter diminishes, and the sandy
character increases, until the whole is terminated by a
The minerals of this period are not available for economic purposes. Iron is largely diffused throughout the rocks, but only sufficient to give coloring. Salt springs abound, and in many places in the county salt water is obtained in digging, but it is too impure to be worked advantageously. Muriate of lime and iron constitute these impurities, and give to the salt obtained its sharp, brackish, unpleasant taste.

**Niagara Epoch.**

This group terminates the series of rocks found in the county. In many respects it is one of the most remarkable of all the geological formations. It clearly marks vast changes in this great inner continental basin, lying between the Appalachian range on the east and the Rocky mountain range on the west. The uniformity of its structure, and the regularity of its occurrence, point to a vast ocean lying between these mountain ranges, and extending at least from Alabama on the south far into the arctic regions. Along the eastern portions of this vast inland sea the deposits of this epoch first occurred.

The limestone gradually increases in depth to the westward; in Wayne county it is 30 to 40 feet thick, at Rochester from 70 to 80, and at Niagara Falls 164 feet. Like the other groups of this period the Niagara limestone is very thick in the Appalachian region, through Pennsylvania and Virginia. In the former State its thickness exceeds 1,500 feet. To the Niagara limestone are indebted for the falls of Niagara, with all their wonderful scenery. Its great solidity and thickness protect the shale beneath, which being decomposed out, leaves the projecting strata of limestone to form the edge of the vast precipice over which the immense cataract pours. It is very plain to the geologist that there was a time in the past when the falls of Niagara stood at Lewiston. By the slow process of the decomposition of the underlying shales and sandstones, till the projecting mass of limestone was compelled to break away, by its own weight and that of the mass of water which poured over it, the river has cut its way to its present bed, and the falls have receded to the position which they now occupy.

**Minerals of the Niagara Group.**—This county abounds in certain fine mineral specimens, which are unsurpassed or scarcely equalled, by those of any other region of the world. These specimens are mostly obtained in the Niagara limestone. In the shale iron pyrites are abundant, but are never found in large masses. Their decomposition with the shale forms sulphate of magnesia, sulphate of alumina, and chloride of sodium. The water of wells sunk into the shale too far is sufficiently impregnated with these products to make it very unpalatable for drinking purposes.

In the limestone numerous geodes, or cavities, have been formed by dissolving out the organic remains deposited in them. Masses of corals, being porous, were readily removed in this way. The surfaces of the cavities thus formed were lined by the deposition upon them of beautiful crystals of dog-tooth and pearl spar, forming

silicious, or in some places argillaceous, light gray sandstone.

_Gravelly-Gray Argillaceous Sandstone._—This band differs from the 3d division more in its color than in any of its other features. It forms a marked line, contrasting sharply with the dark red of the preceding division. It is variable in thickness, at different points only one species of fossil is known in this division, _Dictyonites Beckii,_ Conrad. It was a remarkable seaweed, having curiously reticulated branches, and fine interlaced lateral rootlets. It often covers large spaces with its curvaceous branches, indicating that it grew abundantly during this period.

The Medina epoch affords many peculiar features worthy of special study. The intercalation of the gray quartzose band, abounding in fusoids and low orders of mollusca, between the red shaly bands that lie above and below it, is an interesting fact, showing the great changes which occurred in the midst of a single period. The lowest or first division appears to have been rapidly deposited; the material, as it was of a uniform nature, was probably furnished from the same source. It was a marly mud, charged heavily with iron, and nearly void of organic life, and it was deposited in moderately deep water. An upheaval occurs, or some change takes place, by which the depth of the water is greatly lessened, and an entirely different sediment is washed into and deposited over this shallow ocean bed. Organic life becomes abundant. In the siliceous sand the curious brachiopod _Lingula cuvata_ flourished. Long, jointed, fusoid seaweeds, floating in the water, became stranded on the beaches. So near the surface, in places, lies the sandy 'bottom that ripple marks and wave marks are distinctly impressed on the sand; and so free from heavy winds or storms was the period, that those delicate shiftings of the sand are left undisturbed, and to-day we behold this rippled and wave marked ocean bed permanently preserved in the solid stone of this ancient Silurian age. There were places where the sand was entirely exposed at times, for rain drops have marked the surface, and sun cracks, the result of shrinkage from the drying of argillaceous sand in the sunshine, are plainly discernible. Again the scene is shifted, and nearly the same conditions prevail as at first. A red, marly mud, mixed with sand, is now washed into a deeper ocean basin, and the remains of organic life again disappear, except here and there a mass of peculiar seaweed still exists.

The extent of the Medina group seems quite limited, when compared with the remaining rocks of this period. It occurs throughout western New York, thinning out to the eastward; it is not found beyond Utica. Southward of the Appalachian region, it extends through to Pennsylvania and Virginia, where in places it attains a thickness of 1,500 feet. It is from 350 to 400 feet thick on the Niagara river, and passes into Canada, and has been traced to the northwest as far as the straits of Mackinac. Everywhere it presents the same features, indicating a quiet, shallow sea, fed by streams which for ages brought down the same sediment.
crystal grottoes of wondrous brilliancy. Fine pieces of snowy gypsum, of selenite, celestite, and rarely of anhydrite and fluor spar, are also found in these geodes. Small crystals of zinc blende, also of galena, or lead ore, prevail, more especially in the higher and darker portions of the limestone. Occasionally fine specimens are obtained, where several kinds of these minerals are most wonderfully blended and intermingled. Little pools of selenite have their depths lined with exquisite crystals of spar. Fine silvery bars of celestite lie imbedded in the transparent selenite; masses of the snowy gypsum are crowded with crystals of spar, and perhaps over a clear layer of glassy selenite is spread. These combinations make beautiful and desirable cabinet specimens.

Fossils of the Niagara Epoch.—The organic remains found in this group, and particularly in the shale, are very interesting. Six species of trilobites and nine species of crinoids, with as many species of shells, characterize this epoch, and occur in no other rocks found in this State. Corals abounded in great profusion, but are small and mostly branching forms in the shale. In the limestone period reef corals prevailed, with delicate crinoids of wondrous beauty. These last named creatures were rooted in the mud of the sea bottom, from which arose a long, slender, jointed stem, which suddenly expanded into a cupped, lily-like summit, made of many neatly fitting, embossed plates, and around the summit of which many long, slender jointed fingers extended. These it probably used for gathering in its food. On the top of its head, and amidst its delicate fingers, was situated its mouth, surrounded by five petal-like lips. Such a creature was Carcinosaurus ornatus, the finest, most abundant, and characteristic crinoid of this shale ocean. In and out among the various forms of these fairy crinoids there crept and crawled a still more unique and strange form of life; these were the trilobites of this ancient sea, a form of life which has passed entirely away. They were a crustacean with three-lobed, jointed, expanded flat bodies, with many-lensed eyes, a sort of prophecy of the butterfly, which should flit in the air of after ages, as they crawled through the mud of this ancient sea. Some of them were 12 inches long and several inches broad; others were scarcely an inch in length. Besides these quaint creatures many curious and exquisite mollusca dwell in this old ocean. Orthocercæ—straight-chambered shells, the forerunner of the coiled ammonites of after ages and the pearly nautilus of our day, found its home in this Silurian sea. The spiral shells, a bivalve shell, were particularly abundant, and Sphegifer Niagarae is the characteristic shell of the group. Rhinocera caulata and Rhinocera neglecta marked another class. Atya reticularis, a shell of wide distribution, being found in the upper

Silurian deposit of England as well as here, flourished in the Clinton epoch and passed through all the changes of that formation, through all the vicissitudes of the Niagara epoch, to find its highest development in the Hamilton group, ages after the completion of the Niagara county rocks. A singular feature of this survival is that this shell continually increases in size. The specimens found in the Niagara group are larger than those of the Clinton, while in the Hamilton it attains a size that has made naturalists hesitate to call it a reticularis, believing that it must be a new species; but a careful study of a large number of them confirms the naturalist in the opinion that this species is the same through all these periods, and that it continued to find more favorable conditions of growth till the Hamilton period closed, when it was destined to pass away. Several species of orthos, a most exquisite and delicate shell, are found in the Niagara shale.

Though this ancient ocean teemed with a curious life, yet it was a silent, lonely waste of waters. As yet no fish sported in its deeps, no reptile crawled amid its soft ooze. No bird sported over its bosom, or dipped its crest in its slumbering surface. No animal haunted its lonely, barren shores. Many fresh water streams must have been busy carrying sediment from the land above its surface; yet no traces of any fresh water creatures are found. Not a trace of any land plant has yet been discovered. Barren and desolate indeed must have been the lonely coast which surrounded this paleozoic sea. Not a plant, not a bird, not an animal or creeping thing on the land.

Yet in these mysterious waters the processes of laying the foundations of a vast continent were going on. Slowly beneath that wide spread sea, corals, crinoids and mollusca were creating the rocky material of a vast tract that after the lapse of an almost infinite period of time, was to teem with life and an activity immensely superior to the creatures which laid the stepping stones on which we tread to day. Yet such are the ways of the Infinite Creator. More than 2,500 feet of solid rock, deposited out of a sea teeming with lower forms of life, and preserving in its rocky strata the petrified forms of their existence, contain God's record of what has been, and which lies beneath the feet, and the line of ascent of him who proudly treads above them now.

If we are filled with wonder and awe when we gaze back through these aeons of the past and consider what has been, what should be our feelings when we contemplate the vistas of the future, and think of what is yet to be? We cannot rest in the belief that the consummation of animated nature is yet reached. Rather let us reverently look forward, and work on in the faith that as an infinite past lies downward behind us, so an infinite future rises upward before us.