

Tales of the Past

by Frank Connor

1930

Chapter 1

The East Lake Road of Hemlock Lake

The year 1930 marks the sixty-third anniversary of the Hemlock Lake Union Agricultural Association, which for the past fifty-three years has been held at the Whitney and Ackley driving park. Records tell us that this fair grew out of race meets held on the road running south from Divon place at Livonia about 1850. Running races were also held on the road at Livonia Center which comes out at the Union Cemetery. Here horsemen from Conesus, Livonia, South Livonia and other nearby places gathered to train, time and race their horses. These meets eventually attracted so many people that in 1859 it was voted to hold a town fair and the "Green" at Livonia Center was chosen for the location, the race track being the roads that surrounded it. Irving Salsich of the Center is one of the few remaining jockeys who drove this track and he says many very exciting races were pulled off on it, the distance being one-quarter mile. A horse race was a race then, best horse won and feelings ran high as horses were owned and handled by local men.

About 1857 fairs were started at Honeoye and Hemlock. Richmond was noted for its sheep and this fair was practically a sheep exhibit. Here many records were made and broken, shearing. The fleeces were weighed and rivalry was great between the sheep men for sheep shearing the heaviest. The Hemlock Fair was both a sheep and horse exhibit; several farmers around here were owners of very fine horses. H. D. Kingsbury's history of the Hemlock Fair says, "Hemlock Lake, then an active rival of its sister villages, established a union fair that was laughed at to start with". This fair passed out of existence along with the neighboring fairs in 1861 when the Civil War broke out, but after the war was over in 1866 fairs were again started at Livonia Center and Hemlock.

Records of these fairs are not now in existence, but it is recorded that in 1866 a large crowd met in front of the Metropolitan Hotel and voted to hold a fair at Short's driving park. There seems to be some confusion among older people as to the location of these early fairs. H. J. Wemett said the first fair after the war was held at Short's, others say on land owned by William Bowen. I am inclined to believe that those held previous to 1866 were at Bowen's and those held between that date and 1875 were at Short's. In 1876, it moved to its present location. At the meeting held in 1866 when it was organized, George Fitzgerald was elected president, E. N. Carrol vice-president. H. J. Wemett secretary and Peter P. Barnard marshal. Ruel L. Blake was the second president (We have his leather bill-fold in the museum), and Allen Sylvester of Lima was the third.

From then on records have been lost until 1876, when the Gazette printed the first premium list of which we have a record. At that time Daniel Short was president, R. C. Beach and George J. Ray secretaries. Albert Swan and S. S. Doolittle treasurer. This premium list of 1876 carried advertisements from nearly all the business places in Livonia. Brown & Hulbert were advertising millinery and fancy goods, E. C. Long boots and shoes, Swan & Ganung a general feed and coal business as well as butter, eggs, pork and hides. Hemlock was represented by H. P. Hoppough, machinery; and J. C. Shardlow at Hamilton Station was selling lumber, giving ten reasons why it should be bought of him and also informing those who had lost planning mills by fire, and who were without insurance, that he would insert advertisements for rebuilding them in the "Socdloger" at half-price.

Chapter 2

The East Lake Road of Hemlock Lake - Continued

In 1881, the fair was incorporated and was in very good financial condition. In 1890 things were not going so well, they fell behind and reported a deficit for the first time, not large, being only \$14.50. This year had the first free attraction when they advertised that Professor M. A. Allen would make a balloon ascension and parachute jump. They paid him for this \$115.00. Evidently this helped to draw a crowd, for they made \$6.58. A very good year was 1893, for they came out with over \$600.00 to the good.

It was in 1894 that the famous Wheeler steers were on exhibit and they were advertised to be shown at the fair. It was reported that these steers were so large that a bushel of grain could be dumped on either of their backs and not spill off. They were exhibited at the World's fair at Chicago that year and then sold there.

In 1896 appears the first record of state appropriations, this fair drawing a little over \$500.00. The Lehigh Valley railroad had completed their extension into Hemlock and the fair voted to donate to them the sum of \$50.00. The railroad was giving reduced rates to the fair and operating special trains. The special attraction for 1899 was an automobile which was operated around the track and rides in it were given for 25 cents. Several people took advantage of their opportunity and I imagine that they had somewhat the same feeling come over them when they got in that as one does now in taking his first airplane ride.

A story of a country fair would not be complete without mention being made of the fakers. They were a class distinct from all others and in about 1900 they were going strong. People, especially in the country, did not get around so much as they do now and it did not take as much to keep them interested as it does now.

It was about 1909 that, "Brutus, the wild man", put in his appearance. He was a shoemaker from Rochester and in dull times he exhibited himself as, "the only wild man in captivity". He had abnormally large feet and hands and with his make-up on and chained down to the floor of his pen he was an awe-inspiring sight for a boy. His roaring could be heard for some distance, especially when they cast in a piece of raw beefsteak for his lunch.

There was the lady who was buried alive and to whom you could talk for 10 cents; the fellow with the den of snakes who, when the tent was filled, let the rattlesnake bite him on his arm; he had consumed such large quantities of "refreshments" that it was remarkable that the snake survived the bites. Outside of the grounds alongside of the road, before the anti-gambling laws went into effect, there generally was a shell game operating and men would stop, look, listen and take a chance with \$5.00 or \$10.00, but they never were lucky enough to locate the pea, and departed sadder and wiser men. The "Three-card Monte" player usually took his stand outside Morton's hotel, and many a fellow bet his hard-earned money on the ace only to find that it was something else.

Chapter 3

The East Lake Road of Hemlock Lake - Continued

E. H. Westbrook, who has been connected with the Fair association for the past forty years, hired the first free attraction, which was the balloon previously spoken of. He has the longest continuous record of any officer in the history of the association.

The first merry-go-round used around here was hired for the fair of 1876. It was a small affair with ten horses and was operated by two men turning a crank from the center. In 1881, an improved machine appeared. This one was considerably larger. It ran on a track and was operated by a cable from a horse tread. In 1885, a steam-driven machine was brought in. This machine was also operated on a track and run by cable. The mechanical organ appeared about this time.

William McLeod owned the grand stand and ran it until 1901, when the society purchased it from him for \$675.00. Records do not show when it was built.

In 1905, there were eighty-eight fairs listed in New York State. A large percentage of them have gone out of existence in the past few years. Not being operated for profit they had no reserve to tide them over lean years.

The following is a list of presidents of the society from 1876 to date:

Dan Short 1876 - 1877

F. A. Wicker 1899 - 1900

H. P. Hoppough 1878 - 1879

J. H. Adams 1901 - 1902

Andrew Kuder 1880 - 1881

E. E. Coykendall 1903 - 1904

F. B. Francis 1882 - 1883

E. H. Westbrook 1905 - 1909

S. D. Short 1884 - 1885

Edward Dwyer 1910 - 1911

S. Bonner 1886 - 1887

W. W. Hoppough 1912 - 1914

R. H. Wiley 1888 W. A.

Miller 1915 - 1919

H. P. Hoppough 1889 - 1891

J. M. Huff 1920 - 1921

E. N. Jenks 1892 - 1896

E. H. Westbrook 1922 - 1930

F. D. Short 1897 - 1898

While the society has had its share of hard luck, weather being against it on several occasions, it has never failed to pay its premiums which in late years have run into thousands of dollars. Its reputation has been good, it has meant much to the surrounding territory and we hope it can exist years yet to come.

Chapter 4

The East Lake Road of Hemlock Lake - Continued

In as much as the county fair originated from meetings of local men interested in horses and racing, it might be of interest to mention a few of the jockeys and their horses who were native to this locality.

There was "Wheel" Hoppough with St. Elmo, a brown stallion, with a mark of 2:25, and a brown mare whose name is forgotten, with a mark of 2:17 1/4. Henry Gravel, of Livonia, with Honest Bob, 2:28. This horse weighed ordinarily around 1500 but raced at 1200. He was in his prime about 1890 when first money was twenty-five to thirty dollars. A. M. Bailey owned Dexter H, who had a mark of 2:19 1/4. This horse was generally driven by Bill Haggerty. These two were a familiar sight on all the local tracks and never failed to get in the money. A son of Dexter H., known as Jr., started a few times but failed to equal the mark of his sire.

For forty years Bill Haggerty has been king of the local horsemen. Owner, trainer, driver and starter, he never missed a meet. His hotel was a favorite gathering place of visiting horsemen. Evenings they met with him for the "post- mortems", and what might have been - "ifs". Bill knows the pedigree of every horse, whether race or farm, within a radius of several miles. He has seldom been without a horse to race and has owned some good ones: There was Maude D. at 2:30; H. D. B. at 2:15 1/4; Unna Belle at 2:10 1/4; Trilby at 2:08 1/4; Magic Pride at 2:14 1/2; and the team James D. and Pilot with a pole record of 2:28. In 1910 when Edward Dwyer was president of the society he put on a Stake Race with a purse of \$1000.00, the most money ever put up on the local track. Several good horses came in for this event which was postponed on account of rain.

Chapter 5

The East Lake Road of Hemlock Lake - Continued

In 1910, when Edward Dwyer was president of the society he put on a Stake Race with a purse of \$1,000.00, the most money ever put up on the local track. Several good horses came in for this event which was postponed on account of rain until the 12th of October when it was raced on a frozen track and during a snow storm. The Lehigh ran an excursion train up to this race and it brought in a good crowd. The race was really between two horses, June owned by Turner of Horseheads and Lottie Hal, owner unknown. The latter won and was protested; Turner claimed that she was outlawed by the N. T. A. Late that afternoon the two owners had a heated argument in the waiting room at the depot. Evidently a satisfactory adjustment was made as things were again peaceable between them when they left town.

Horse trading was an important business and sport before the days of the automobile. It was no uncommon sight to see two men with horses stop in the road, hold an earnest discussion, look over each other's horse and unhitch and swap. The horse traders' fraternity was noted for the gameness of its members. When beaten they took it and did not complain but waited patiently for a chance to return the beating and pass it on. A peculiarity of theirs was, the winner always returned to the scene of his triumph to receive recognition of his ability to put it over. One old trader used to tell of a convention, as he called it, which was held near here every Sunday during good weather. This meeting started Saturday afternoon and broke up Sunday evening. It was no place for a novice. One young fellow who boasted of his knowledge of horses called one Sunday morning driving a perfectly good horse and walked home much wiser. A trader's statements were guarded; if he lied (which sometimes happened) he told it to that there could be no come-back. To lie and get caught at it was bad. It is related by one trader, whom we'll call Jack, that he had a wind-broken horse to get rid of, so one morning he started out to swap it off. He stopped at a gathering place in Conesus to let his wants be known. The proprietor had a horse to trade, they looked the horses over and made the trade, Jack guaranteeing his horse to be, "The soundest legged horse in the county". About two weeks later Jack stopped to see how things were and was greeted with, "I thought you said that horse was sound". "No - I didn't say that - I said he was the soundest legged horse in the county". "Oh", the fellow said, "That's different, I didn't get the legged part of it."

Chapter 6

Historic Site Markers and the Hemlock Museum

The Sullivan sesquicentennial celebration in 1929 and the designating of General Sullivan's route through New York and Pennsylvania by the erection of markers aroused much interest in historical matters in our section. The unveiling of the marker at Hemlock Lake and the interest shown in its building influenced the starting of a small museum in the school at Hemlock so that personal papers and belongings of the early settlers could be preserved.

Even though the most of us are more liable to destroy such things than to save them, not realizing their historical value, it is astonishing the amount of material which was brought into the school in a very short time to start the museum, and if the section in and about Hemlock is fairly representative of the township and surroundings there would be no difficulty in filling a building the size of the school. It is regrettable that something in the line of a museum could not have been started before, because much valuable stuff has been destroyed that would have given us more facts about the lives and activities of the settlers who followed General Sullivan into this section.

At the annual meeting of District No. 4 in 1929 a small appropriation was voted to start the museum, and in October a meeting was called at which time John P. Coykendall was elected president, Ernest Short secretary, B. R. Beach treasurer. The museum was opened to the public February 16th, 1930, at 1 p.m., and nearly 500 visitors have registered to date. This shows that people are interested in undertakings of this kind and the response to requests for loan of articles more than exceeded the expectations of the sponsors, the room being nearly filled in five weeks. It is impossible to arrange the articles so that they can be shown to advantage. It has grown so fast that it is contemplated moving it to a room 33 ft. x 100 ft. in the basement which will give a better opportunity to display the exhibits and it is hoped will give space enough to house a kitchen, living room and bedroom of colonial times. The necessary furniture has been offered to accomplish this and it is expected work will start on it soon.

Much encouraging comment has been received from state department inspectors and officials. The high school faculty has found it of value in their work of instruction as it contains many things closely connected with the history of our country and state. Many of the school children are steady visitors each Sunday, finding each time some new thing of interest to them and they have contributed no small part to its enlargement.

Things must not necessarily be of great age to be eligible for a museum. We find that some things which only a score of years ago were considered the last word in their line are today hard to secure and would be interesting for comparison. Some twenty-five years ago an "Edison" phonograph with the large "morning glory" horn and cylinder records were very common and the privilege of spending an evening listening to one of them was considered a treat, an excellent entertainment. Today, while there may be scores of them stored away in attics, we cannot find one for exhibition.

Likewise, ten years ago each "radio fan" was searching for brass nuts from old dry cells and empty salt cardboard containers, or having found them he was busy with soldering irons, tin snips and pliers building a one-tube radio which, when completed, promised wonderful results. When the set did work, the fan was well repaid for his labor. When he called in his neighbor to listen it invariably emitted squeals and static instead of music until the neighbor went away in disgust. One would think these one-tube home-made sets would be common, but after diligent search we cannot find one, perhaps the cause for it being that they were overhauled and added to so many times that they didn't survive or else completely lost their identity.

In the spring of 1920 Wallace Bennett, electrician at the lake, built the first radio in the town. He had it in a room by itself and was somewhat crowded at that. "B" batteries were then unknown around here and he used twenty-five old worn-out dry cells to get the required voltage for the tube, and a couple of telephone receivers for a head set. KDKA was the only broadcaster and by very strict attention to your listening you

could hear the announcements and music very faintly. Even at that, with the material he had it was a real accomplishment and sufficiently interesting to set several home builders at work. After he had improved it somewhat he invited the Editor of the Gazette over. Results must have been fair for shortly after that the Gazette ran a radio column for a time. The Rochester Times-Union was our first near broadcaster. Our world moves so fast in this twentieth century that the things which are common today may in a few years be real curios.

Chapter 7

School Data and Records

Among the records and old documents on file at the school are the records of District No. 3 of Livonia. This was the Gulburg district later known as No. 12 and was united in 1911 with No. 4 to make the present district. The records date back to 1840. At that time, the State of New York was not giving much aid to the districts, the only entry of aid being \$12.00 for library in 1844 - 1845. Otis Presbey was trustee and his financial reports show that he collected and handled during the years 1844 - 1845 a total of \$99.99 for all school purposes. Some of his expenditures are as follows: "one broom, 25 c; plastering school house, 75c; attorney's fee for defending trustee in suit brought by Colby Short against him, \$1.50; fuel expense during winter 1844 - 1845, \$4.68." Total expenditures for the four years to 1848 were less than \$400.00.

In the latter part of 1845 appears the first entry of public money which amounted to \$7.99. Harriet Payne received \$50.00 for six months services as teacher instructing sixty-six scholars. One scholar attended one day, several only three days during the term which commenced April 28th and ended October 28th, 1845.

The first record of school meeting in this district is dated in 1853 and was called for the purpose of authorizing the purchase of six cords of wood from A. Archer at \$2.08 per cord and vote a tax of \$10.06 for contingencies. The first annual meeting of which they have left us any record was in 1859 and reads as follows: "Livonia, October the 11th, 1859. John Wells was appointed trustee. F. B Northrup Clerk. William White Collector. Chester Adams Librarian. Voted to buy 4 cords of wood, one half hickory, one half good sound oak to be delivered by the first of December next and fitted to the stove. B. L. Northrup takes it at 21 shillings per cord. Voted. Adjourned. Franklin B. Northrup, Chairman". Their budget for the year was \$18.20. This does not compare very well with the present one of \$23,000. "Those were the happy days" when John Wells' tax was 9 cents. For several years, they voted at the annual meeting to "buy four cords of wood, fitted to the stove", and then adjourned. State aid at that time seemed to be an amount equal to the teachers' wages and so this item of expense was not taken into consideration in preparing their estimate of yearly expense. In 1865 cost of administration went up from \$12.00 to \$25.00.

In 1879 and 1880 there was talk of a new building and the records show the following: "September 18th, 1880 - special school meeting called by the trustee for the purpose of building a school house. Meeting called to order by the clerk. Voted that Jasper Short act as moderator. Voted that the meeting adjourn until Tuesday evening, 21st September, 7 o'clock". They met September 21st and promptly adjourned. A battle started here, a question of procedure arose. Evidently the clerk neglected his duties, as they do once in a while now, because at the annual meeting October 19th the following resolution was passed. "Resolved: That notices for special meetings in District No. 3 shall hereafter be by written notices posted in public places in said District". It was also voted to buy a Code of Public Instruction. They had their troubles then much as we do now. Taxes were coming in slowly and no doubt the burden of a new school house seemed big.

Chapter 8

School Data and Records - Continued

District No. 12 came into existence in 1881 by the following order: "It is hereby ordered by Foster W. Walker School Commissioner of the 1st District of Livingston County and G. S. Preston, School Commissioner of the 2nd District of Ontario County, that the joint School District lying partly in each of the towns, Livonia, in Livingston County, and Canadice in Ontario County, the school house of which is situate in said Town of Livonia, and here-to-fore known as District No. 3, Livonia, also commonly known as the Gulburg District, shall hereafter be known and designated as Joint School District No. 12 in each of said towns, Livonia and Canadice. Dated December 9th, 1881".

Glenville is here first mentioned as Gulburg. Bert Westbrook was generally credited with originating the name "Gulburg", but he apparently only revived it.

A special meeting was called by Alfred Kendall, trustee, December 27th, 1882, at which time the following resolutions were unanimously adopted: "Resolution - Whereas the school house in this district has become so dilapidated so as to be unfit for school purposes - therefore resolved - that we will take measures to build a school house during next summer. A Kendall, S. Miller." "Resolution: Resolved that we appoint a committee of three to make estimates as to cost and size for a new school house in this District No. 12, towns of Livonia and Canadice and report the same to the next adjourned meeting to January 17th, 1883." Alfred Kendall, Dennis Connor, Frank Schneck, Nathan Short were appointed the committee. The names of those voting for these resolutions are, Alfred Kendall, Warren Green, Dennis Connor, Frank Schneck, Nathan Short, Lewis Short, Nathan Jones, Mathew Scidmore, Myron Short, Russel Jacques and Edson Daniels. Of these people two are yet living, Lewis Short and Edson Daniels.

The next special meeting was held January 17th, 1883. Russel Jacques acted as moderator. (Webster says, "Moderator - one who or that which restrains." I imagine they needed one.) A. Kendall offered a resolution to erect a building 24 ft. x 34 ft., which was carried. The building committee was then ordered to report on January 31st at 7 p.m., on the cost. Nothing happened January 31st, but on February 14th by resolution carried they were authorized and instructed to proceed and build a school house in said District No. 12 of Livonia and Canadice within the year of 1883 and that the cost shall not exceed the sum of \$900.00, and not exceed 23 ft. x 34 ft. in size. This resolution was not carried without a battle; Canadice and Gulburg were not agreeing any too well just then. Canadice offered a resolution that the cost be cut from \$900.00 to \$800.00. This was lost by a vote of 16 to 6. It was then voted to raise this \$900.00 by tax in 1883 which was done. The building was erected that summer by Earl and Wicks of Livonia Center.

Some to these same taxpayers were called upon in 1911 to vote on a proposition to bond District No. 4 for \$17,000 to build the school house that burned July 19th, 1928, and again in 1928 to vote to bond the district for \$100,000 to build the present structure.

A few comparisons might be of interest. In 1846 Caroline Parks taught twelve weeks for twelve shillings per week, total \$18.00; in 1930, this district will pay its teachers \$12,000. Fuel in the "forties" was costing from \$5 to \$15, now between \$500 and \$600. In 1852, a teacher's chair was purchased for 38 cents. Chalk cost 6 cents per box. It was about this time that black boards came into use in district schools. Teacher's wages went up in 1852 - Chamberlain Annis received \$27.00 per month for four months for his services; he had fifty-six scholars. At that time, there were two terms per year, the first term commencing in November and ending in March and the second from the middle of April till the last of August. There did not appear to be any hard and fast rule as to when a school term should commence; it was at the convenience of those interested, as is shown by the following letter of April 27th, 1870: "Mr. Owen, Sir - Will you please write me as to when you wish school to begin? I should like to commence as late in the season as practicable on account of my work here. Also, what arrangements you can make to meet me at the depot (Livonia). Would it be more convenient if I came to Hemlock Lake? If so please write me how I can reach there by R. R. and stage. Also, the day. Respectfully, Mary E. Clymer, Lima, N.Y."

Chapter 9

Information About the Countess of Bath and About the Short Family Trunk

The town of Livonia was formed from Richmond, formerly called Pittstown, Ontario County, February 12th, 1808. It was named by Col. George Smith, the name taken from that of a Russian province. It originally contained a part of the town of Conesus, which was formed from Livonia and Groveland. Livonia was contained in lots 9 and 10, range 7 of the Phelps and Gorham purchase.

These people purchased from the state of Massachusetts, which originally owned a large part of western New York, about six million acres for which they agreed to pay one million dollars in Massachusetts script. This land they had surveyed into townships six miles square. They sold a considerable portion of this land to early settlers and then in 1790 they sold for 30,000 English pounds to Robert Morris, Philadelphia, merchant and financial backer of the Revolutionary war, their entire purchase, excepting those portions which they had already sold.

Morris sent agents to Europe to dispose of his holdings, which his agents did at a profit to Morris of 5,000 pounds. The English capitalists disposed of their purchase to various parties, one of whom was the Countess of Bath, who purchased a large acreage in Livonia and south. Some of the old deeds go back to that time. After Morris had sold out he discovered that he had practically given away 100,000 acres owing to an error in his survey. Shortly after this he became bankrupt, spent several years in a debtors' prison and died a pauper.

After the Revolutionary war closed settlers began coming in from the New England states, attracted by the stories told them by returning soldiers and neighbors who had visited the country. After working the rocky land of the New England states the sight of the fertile acres of the Genesee country must have made a wonderful appeal to them. Thousands of acres of the country's best at a few shillings per acre, streams to furnish power, beautiful lakes well stocked with fish, the woods filled with game of all kinds, these would have appealed to most any man.

And yet I often wonder, "Why the pioneer"? What was it that made him travel to new lands that made him leave friends, relatives and possessions behind, that made him brave the dangers of his travel through hundreds of miles of wooded land filled with none to friendly savages? Surely the hardships he went through after arrival here equaled those he would have endured had he stayed in New England. Many of these early settlers walked from Vermont and Massachusetts carrying a few belongings; those fortunate enough to own a pair of oxen came through in an ox-cart, a slow way but sure.

We have in the school museum several articles which made the trip by ox-cart from the New England states, among them a small jug and set of table forks brought in by the Coykendalls about 140 years ago, a small trunk which the original Phillip Short brought from England in 1623 and which another later Phillip brought here in about 1790, a calf yoke and set of harnesses hames, spinning wheel and other possessions.

Can you picture in your mind a cabin built of freshly cut logs; the crevices are filled with clay; its roof is thatched with bark laid over poles; it has two openings, one covered with oiled paper and serving as a window, the other larger and in it a door made from small logs split in two and fastened together. Perhaps the door is hinge less, though it may be held up by pieces of leather. Inside, the floor is made from logs hewn flat on one side. At one end of the cabin is a fireplace built from logs and sticks and plastered with clay. Over the fireplace hanging on pegs is the flint-lock rifle loaded and primed, and beside it is the powder horn and bullet pouch. Inside the fire-place a fire is burning under a couple of kettles hanging from a crane. Before the fire-place sits a woman spinning by the light of a candle. The man is busy with a few tools, making perhaps a wooden plow or some other agricultural implement. These two persons have no time to waste. From the roof of the cabin hang a quarter of venison and some herbs and corn. In the corner on the floor are some boxes or bags containing a little grain. These supplies are all that stand between them and starvation, and enough of the grain must be saved to plant in the spring. The furniture of the cabin is home-made and not too plentiful. Outside the wind is blowing the snow around the cabin and the wolves are howling.

Chapter 10

Derivation of Place Names, Stories of Early Settlers and a Visit by the Exiled King of France

Each township having been surveyed off into a block six miles square, the early settlers of that township went to a point very near the center and established a church and school house. You will generally find that where these were established was the first village of that township. It was from this that we get the name, "Center", Livonia Center being the first settlement in the town of Livonia takes its name from this. Many of the villages have dropped this part of their name, especially where there was no other community near them of a like name. Conesus was originally Conesus Center; Mendon, Mendon Center; Canadice, Canadice Center.

Livonia Center being the oldest settlement in the town we will attempt to give a part of its story first.

Shortly after the arrival of Solomon G. Woodruff other settlers came in: George Pratt, 1808, who operated a tannery on the Kinney Creek in the field north of where the concrete road crosses it; he ran this tannery until 1836 when he moved it to Springwater. Eldad and Ester Gibbs, 1801. Benjamin and Rhoda Gibbs, 1812. Captain Robert Dixon, 1814. Jeremiah Riggs, Benjamin Cook, Aaron Childs, Oliver Woodruff, Selah Stedman, Thankful Persons and Andrew Anderson came in between 1800 and 1814, the exact dates being unknown. The Beechers and Coys came in about 1806 according to records.

The first grist mill for this community was on the Hemlock outlet. It was a very crude affair, but no doubt served its purpose. It was made from a large stump which had a hollow burned in the top. In this hollow a large stone was raised and dropped by means of a lever, one end of which had a bearing on a tree. By this means the grain was broken up into what must have resembled whole wheat flour. This mill was not in use long before a stone mill was erected, about 1799. In 1801 or 1802 a mill was erected at Lakeville by a man named Bosley.

History of the times tells us that grists were carried to and from the mills on the backs of the settlers. Compare this with the modern means of transportation. "We could have more troubles." It is recorded that one settler, who had lost track of the day of the week, started out Saturday morning for Canandaigua with a grist on an ox-cart. It was an all-day journey and he arrived there late in the evening, when he was informed by the miller's wife that no grist would be ground on a Sunday and if he wanted flour he could come back Monday. It is not recorded what the settler said, but he went home without his flour.

February 19th, 1794, the first white child was born in the town of Livonia, Phillip Woodruff, son of Solomon. The same year Solomon opened the first tavern. It was here that Louis Philippe, exiled King of France, stayed overnight while journeying through this section. It is said that he cut a cane from the large elm tree which stands (what is left of it) near the road in front of the farm house on the Josiah Short farm, that this cane was taken by him back to France and eventually found its way into the national museum at Paris. This tree was used by the Weller family, the original owners of the farm, for a smoke house, the trunk of it being hollow. It was one of the largest trees in western New York.

The first store in the township was opened in 1804 by a man named Isaac Bishop and stood near where the Catholic church now stands.

The great-grandfather of Benjamin Coy passed through the Center in the year 1806. He left and bound out to George Pratt, the bootmaker and tanner, the grand-father who was then a lad 11 year of age, proceeded to Mount Morris and bound out another son 11 years of age and went on to Michigan with the balance of his family. "Ben's" grandfather was told by Pratt that when he could make a pair of boots he would be given cobbler's bench. He earned the bench at 11 years of age. The bench is in existence yet.

The first frame house in the township was built by David Benton, on the farm now owned by John Morrissey which is located on Big Tree Road (known generally as the Lightfoot road). This house was built

about 1801 and burned about twenty years ago. During the years, just previous to the Civil War that farm was owned by Harvey Blackmer, who was a strong abolitionist. He had the courage of his convictions, his farm being one of the stations of the "Underground Railway". Here the run-away slaves were kept hidden until a favorable opportunity presented itself to move them nearer the Niagara frontier. On his tombstone appears this epitaph, "A Friend of Humanity".

The first school house in the town of Livonia stood just north of the house on the Buell Woodruff farm. Records of this district go back to November 19th, 1817. This school house was little more than a shack. School was not held in it long before the house owned by George Pratt was converted into a school.

Chapter 11

Schools and Churches of Livonia Center

The minutes of the first school meeting held in the town read as follows: "November 19th, 1817. By order of the Commissioners of Common Schools a meeting was convened at William Bacons of District No. 5 and made choice of Oliver Woodruff, Chairman - Henry Pierce, Clerk - Samuel W. Spencer, John B. Parsons and Lester Kingsbury, Trustees - Leverett Dennison, Collector. Voted that the trustees shall repair the house of George Pratt and make it comfortable for the winter term. That thirty cords of wood shall be prepared for the school, then an average to be made on the scholars. That delinquents in wood shall pay 10S. per cord to the trustees. That the Instructors board shall be considered at 10S. per week. That the meeting be adjourned to this place on the second Tuesday of October next."

Meetings were held at the houses of the different persons who had children going to school. Some of these meetings were adjourned till "early candle lighting" instead of a specified hour.

The first regular school house was erected in 1819, the contract having been let to P. B. Ripley for \$369.00. The total cost of the building and equipment was \$392.54. There was considerable discussion during the building about the chimney. The Franklin stove was coming into use about then (a stove similar to this can be seen at the museum) and it was undecided whether they would use one of these stoves or a fireplace. It was finally decided to use the fireplace. This was used until 1822 when they voted to install a, "Brick Patent Fireplace". (Who knows what these were?) This method of heating did not prove satisfactory and in 1823 a stove was installed at a cost of \$14.02.

An interesting entry in the clerk's minutes shows that in 1830 they raised by taxation the sum of \$2.00 for administration and maintenance. It would be interesting to know how the teachers were paid at this time. There are no entries that show how the money for their wages was raised. It may have been assessed according to the number of scholars in school, each parent paying prorate. Fuel expense was paid in this way.

During the early times the school house was used for church and other community meetings. Rental was paid in wood. Each group had their own wood pile, which was used for their own benefit.

The legislature of New York passed on April 13th, 1835, an act requiring each school district to establish a library. A scholar had to present to the librarian an order, signed by the parent or guardian, before a book could be drawn. The book could be kept four weeks without charge.

It was voted June 24th, 1837, to build a cobble-stone school house at a cost of \$400.00. This building still stands, being located on the cemetery road across from where Lewis Jerome now lives. In 1839, it was made into a two-room school and the trustees were instructed by the voters to hire two teachers at a salary not to exceed twenty dollars per month. This building was used until 1853. That year the trustees recommended that the Academy building be purchased at \$400.00. This resolution was lost, but in its place a resolution to rent the Academy was adopted.

The Academy was a private school, built about 1830. The records of this school have been lost or destroyed and not much is known regarding it. It appears that it was operated strictly for those able to pay for private instruction and that they taught a number of subjects not covered by the district school then. Home economics was one of the subjects. The building was a two-story affair and stood near where the present school house now stands. A part of it is being used by Coy & Lindsley for a storage. Evidently the upper room was rented out for use as a village building. It is said that a Masonic and an Odd Fellows Lodge met here. I have not been able to discover any record or mention of these lodges in the various histories. This building was purchased in 1867 for \$200.00 and remodeled into a modern school for those times. The boundaries of the district took in a considerable portion of the present corporation of Livonia. The Center was the business place for the township previous to the coming of the Erie Railroad into Livonia.

Chapter 12

Members of the Presbyterian Church and the Trial of a Member for Gossip and Slander

The Presbyterian church at the Center is the oldest organization in what is now known as the town of Livonia. It was organized in 1806, December 29th, in the house owned by David Benton. This house stood on the farm now owned by John Morrissey; it is claimed that this house was the first frame one in the town. It must have been built about 1800. The church was organized with a Rev. Mr. Lane as pastor, who had been a licensed Methodist minister in England. The records covering the ministry of Rev. Lane are very few; he could not have stayed long with them.

Previous to the organization of the church and during the years 1802 and 1803 the Rev. John Rolph conducted whatever religious services were held.

When the church was started, it was known as the Second Congregational Church of Pittstown and was received into the Ontario Association on January 14th, 18007. The Ontario Association was dissolved May 35th, 1813, when the society assumed the name of the First Presbyterian Church of Livonia. It has continued under this name to date.

The original members of this church were: Jeremiah Riggs, Aaron Childs, Selah Stedman, Thankful Parsons, Lucy Childs, Dameron Blake, Mary Stedman, Irene Clark, Benjamin Cook, Oliver Woodruff (deacon), Rachel Gibbs, Anna Woodruff, Sally Farrand, Sally and Rebecca Blake, Nancy Benton and Lydia Gibbs.

The meetings were held in log cabins, barns and school houses, but principally in the school house, spoken of in a previous article, which stood on the Buell Woodruff farm. On May 30th, 1814, the society dedicated their first meeting house, which stood very near the site of the present church building. The cost of this structure was about \$3,000. The Rev. Aaron C. Collins was the minister in charge and continued his preaching until sometime in 1818. During this year, the Rev. Ebenezer Everett was ordained in this church and acted as its pastor for a few months. In 1819, he was succeeded by the Rev. Ezekiel J. Chapman. On January 5th, 1823, they adopted in full the "Presbyterian form of Government."

During the pastorate of the Rev. Chapman the members were very active in building up their society. It is recorded that they "labored" with back-sliding members to bring them back "into the fold". They took their religion and obligations seriously and any breach of faith was not looked upon kindly. They were troubled in those days with gossipers (same as we are now). Gossiping was an unpardonable sin and was effectively dealt with as is evidenced by the records of the "Trial of the Shirt", which took place in the school house in 1826. The record of this trial throws an interesting side-light upon the times and the characters of the people. It is quoted here as it is recorded, excepting that names have been substituted in place of those actually interested in the trial.

"THE CASE OF MRS. JOHN DOE"

"April 6th, 1826: The session met at the Center school house pursuant to the call of the Moderator and was constituted by prayer. Present Rev. Mr. Chapman Moderator, Messers. Mason, Clark and Stone Elders. A complaint was presented by Sister Ester ____, wife of ____, against Sister Mary Doe for slander which was found to be informed. Resolved that the Moderator be and hereby is requested to assist the Complainant in preparing a complaint in a form more agreeable to the Directory. Adjourned to meet at this place on Thursday next at 5 o'clock p.m. Closed with prayer. J. Stone, Clerk."

"April 27th: The session met according to adjournment at the Center school house and was constituted by prayer.

Present Rev. Chapman, Moderator, Messers. Woodruff, Mason, Doolittle, Clark, Beecher and Stone

Elders.”

“The complaint as amended of Ester ____ against Mary Doe was presented which being found to be in form was accepted and is as follows viz: To the Judicatory of the First Presbyterian Church in Livonia. The undersigned being a member of the said church doth hereby exhibit the following charges against Sister Mary Doe.

Viz: Charge 1 - Slander.

Specification No. 1: That the said Mary did say or insinuate last October and since that a certain garment to wit a femal shirt sent by one Lucy ____ of Williamstown, Mass. to Widow ____ who then resided in the family of your complainant (it being in the fall of 1823) was exchanged by your complainant's family or in other words was exchanged in the family and that instead of the original one which was a good fine whole shirt a poor, old coarse brown or yellow shirt with one or more holes in the lap or knee was given to said Widow.

Specification No. 2: That the said Mary in the month of September and October last and since did by publishing contents of a letter said to have been written by her brother Harvey ____ to her in answer to a letter which was written by the said Mary to the said Harvey and by her insinuations endeavor to make it appear that your complainant and your complainant's husband had ill-treated and abused their mother the said Widow thus endeavoring to injure their reputation.

Specification No. 3: That the said Mary did in the month of October and since by presenting said letter and by her insinuations and remarks that the said time or times accuse L ____ some of your complainant of defrauding the said Harvey and Elijah ____ of the said Williamstown by exerting or unjustly taking money from them in a settlement which took place between the said Harvey and Elijah and the said L --- in the fall of 1823.

Specification No. 4: That the said Mary did last October insinuate and declare that the said ____ did take property from her unjustly or that the said L --- did take property from her unjustly or both.

Specification No. 5: That the said Mary in the month of December last and since did endeavor to injure the reputation of your complainant and your complainants family by insinuating and saying that the shirt above named was sent by her sister the said Lucy to her mother the said Widow for the express purpose of laying her out at her decease and also at the said time publishing a letter said to be written by one Rachel ____ of said Williamstown in which a pretense is made towards giving a description of said shirt, said letter written to the said Mary.

Specification No. 6: That while the said Mary allows that the one shirt shown by some member or members of the family of your complainant is the same that was sent by her sister the said Lucy to the said widow, she has since the month of December last said that they have shown two meaning thereby that your complainant has represented them both or each of them as the same one by the said Lucy to the said Widow. Witnesses names as follows: Rev. Chapman, Jonathan Kingsbury, Elisha Clark, Charles Mason, Lois Mason, Oliver Woodruff, Sally Ford, Thomas Ford, William Godfrey, Polly Godfrey, Clarissa Sanford, David Gibbs, Benjamin Gibbs, Rhoda Gibbs, Susan Nixon, Mary Stedman, Dorcas Beecher and a notice to produce the letters referred to above.

Viz: Charge 2 - Lying:

Specification No. 1: That the said Mary has in or since the month of October last said that the said shirt was exchanged by your complainant or any member of your complainant's family.

Specification No. 2: That the said Mary has since that time last above named said that she never said there was a hole or holes in the lap or knee of said shirt. Witnesses same as above named.”

“And your complainant having as she hopes in Christian love and meekness and according to the

*directions in the 18th Chapter of Matthew endeavored to reclaim the said Mary and she not hearing your complainant nor those others whom in the second step she took with her, she does now agreeably to the directions in the 17th verse of said Chapter tell it unto the Church. Livonia March 15th, 1826.
Signed ____."*

"A true copy. The complainant being in order was accepted. Resolved that a committee be appointed to converse with the accused agreeable to the 9th section of the 4th chapter of Discipline. Resolved that Rev. Chapman and Messers. Mason, Stone be this committee. Adjourned to meet on the 1st Thursday of May at 4 o'clock p.m. at the meeting house. Closed with prayer. J. Stone, Clerk."

Chapter 13

Members of the Presbyterian Church and the Trial of a Member for Gossip and Slander - Continued

“May 4th: The session met agreeably to the adjournment at the meeting house and was constituted with prayer. Present Rev. Chapman, Moderator, Messers. Woodruff, Mason, Beecher and Stone Elders. The committee appointed to converse with Mrs. Doe on the subject of the complaint of Mrs. ___ reported that they had not been able to affect a reconciliation and that in their opinion a trial cannot be avoided. Where upon resolved that the Moderator be and he hereby is requested to issue citations to all concerned to appear at the next meeting of the session to have the matter fully heard and decided.”

“Resolved: That the Moderator be requested to invite the attendance of Rev. Messers. Whittlesey, Barnard and Day to counsel and advise with Judicatory and in case of their failure to solicit the attendance of Rev. Messers. Fitch and Steele, one or both. Adjourned to meet at the meeting house on Tuesday the 23rd instant at 10 o'clock a.m. Closed with prayer. J. Stone, Clerk.”

“May 23rd: The session met at the meeting house agreeably to adjournment and was constituted with prayer. Present Rev. E. J. Chapman Moderator and Messers. Woodruff, Mason, Doolittle, Clark and Stone Elders. A letter from Ester ___, the complainant, against Mrs. Doe was read which stated that she should not be ready to prosecute the complaint at the appointed time and requested that it might be postponed for about three weeks and that she wished for liberty to insert the names of other witnesses in the complaint. Resolved that the request be complied with and that there be another committee appointed to see if reconciliation cannot be effected and trial avoided. Resolved that Messers. Woodruff and Mason and the Moderator compose the committee. That they report at the next meeting of the Judicatory. Adjourned to meet at the meeting house on the 1st day of June at 4 o'clock p.m. Closed with prayer. J. Stone, Clerk.”

“June 1st: The session met agreeably to the adjournment and was opened with prayer. Present Rev. Chapman Moderator, Messers. Woodruff, Mason, Doolittle, Clark and Stone Elders. The committee appointed at the last meeting of the session reported that in their opinion there is no probability of reconciliation and that trial cannot be avoided. A letter was presented by the complainant containing the names of the witnesses which she wished to be added to the complaint and also a request that certain letter and other papers may be used as testimony. Resolved that the request be granted subject to the control of the Judicatory. Resolved that the Moderator be requested and is hereby requested to cite the parties and furnish them with citations for their witnesses to appear at the next meeting of the session to have the matter fully heard and decided. Adjourned to meet at the meeting house on Tuesday the 27th of June instant at 10 o'clock. Closed with prayer. The list of the additional witnesses and of the papers and letters: Rev. Chapman, Oliver Woodruff, Joel Stone, Lucinda Stone, David Doolittle, Charles Mason and wife, Samuel Daniels, Elisha Clark, Augustus Gibbs and wife, Betsy Obediah Banks, Fred House, John Burleigh, Hiram Hawley, Prudence Woodruff, William Waldron, Thomas Ford and wife, Betsey Ford, William Godfrey and wife, Clarissa Sanford, Mary Stedman, Eli Stedman, Selah Stedman, John Kingsbury, John Pratt and wife, Eldad Gibbs, Esther Gibbs, Jeremiah Gibbs, Leman Gibbs and wife, John E. Nixon and wife, Reuben Coy, Delilah Coy, Ebenezer Everett, John Adams, Harvey Riggs, George Potter, David George and wife, Docas Beecher, Nathaniel Beecher and wife, Harvey Woodruff, David Gibbs, Orlando Hastings and a notice to be given to the defendant to produce certain letters referred to in the complaint.”

“THE TRIAL OF MRS. MARY DOE. LIVONIA JUNE 27TH, 1826”

“The session met agreeably to adjournment and was opened with prayer. Present Rev. E. J. Chapman Moderator, Oliver Woodruff, Charles Mason, David Doolittle, William Trichnor, Elisha Clark, Alfred Beecher and Joel Stone Elders. Rev. Warren Day of Richmond being present was appointed Clerk Pro. Tem. The minutes of several late meetings were read by which it appeared that the trial of Mrs. Doe was the order of the day. At the request of Mr. Chapman the Rev. J. B. Whittlesey of Avon who was present

was appointed to act as Moderator during their attendance on the business before them. Messers. Stone and Beecher were appointed a Judicial Committee to recommend the best method of proceeding in the case who advised that should the trial go on it would be proper that the testimony to support each charge and each specification be heard separately. The parties were then called to say whether they were ready for trial. Mrs. _____, the complainant, was not present and could not attend during the trial on account of ill health, but her son, L _____, said that he would represent his mother in the case so far as to give the names of the witnesses to support each charge and to suggest the questions to be put to the witnesses on the part of the prosecution. Mrs. Doe desired that she might first see the accuser face to face before the trial should commence and time was allowed her in which to call upon the complainant. Mrs. Doe was then asked what plea she made to the charge and she plead, not guilty.”

“On motion it was resolved that no witness afterwards to be examined except a member of the session shall be present during the examination of another witness on the same case.”

“Charge 1 - Specification 1: Benjamin Gibbs was called on the part of the complaint and sworn, who said as follows: I have heard Mrs. Doe say within the year past that she believed that a shirt sent to her mother by Mrs. _____ of Williamstown was exchanged, but that she did not pretend to say by whom it was exchanged. There is a wrong, said she, somewhere. I recollect that I said that I did not think that L _____ has done this and she replied that she believed so too. Read to witness and approved. Mrs. Doe here admitted that she said that she believed that the shirt was exchanged but contended that she never meant to say that she supposed the family of the complainant was guilty in the matter; but that she supposed that people have judged this to be her opinion from some of her words.”

“Rhoda Gibbs was sworn but could testify nothing to the subject of the charge.” “Oliver Woodruff sworn, same as last.” “Dorcas Beecher sworn, says, I heard Mrs. Doe say that there was a hole in the shirt as large as an egg.”

“Sally Ford sworn, says, I heard Mrs. Doe say that she supposed that the complainant’s family changed the shirt. I told her in conversation once that I did not think any of the complainant’s family had exchanged it and I think that she said she should not unless she had known worse things of them. Read to witness and approved.”

“Mary Stedman sworn, says, I heard the accused say that she thought that some of the females in the family of the complainant had exchanged the shirt before it went into the hands of the widow; I heard her say that it was a mean shirt, yellow and with a hole in it as big as a hen’s egg and afterwards that it was very thin and needed patching. The family once showed me the shirt and it had a break in it on the shoulder where one of the draw strings was fastened. Mrs. Doe told me that the shirt which she saw had draw strings on it only about half way around and Mrs. D. said that when the young S _____’s came up she asked Mrs. O _____ who went with them to see the shirt whether it was the same that the family showed before and that she replied that she could not tell for she had not her specks on. Read to witness and approved.”

Chapter 14

Members of the Presbyterian Church and the Trial of a Member for Gossip and Slander - Continued

“Deacon Mason sworn, says, I heard the accused said that there was a hole in the shirt, of that there was a thin spot that would have made a hole in it as big as a hen’s egg? Read to witness and approved.”

“Mrs. O ___ sworn, says, I have seen two shirts. The first had a hole in it as large as a cent on the side of the shoulder. It was poor and yellow and it was shown to me that day after L ___ came home. Last fall another shirt was shown me which was a better one, whiter, finer and no holes in it. The first shirt was shown by Mother; the second by the complainant who asked me if it was the same one which was shown me by Mother. I said nothing, but the complainant said What if the shirt was exchanged? All Mother’s things are to be ours.”

“Question by Com. When you were asked whether that was the same shirt did you not reply that you did not know because you had not your specks on?”

“Answer. No, I never made that answer. The shirts were a little differently made. Saw no hole in the lap of the first, did not take the second into my hands. The accused was with me the second time and no person came into the room that I remember.”

“Question. Did you have access to your mother’s linen the second time?” “Answer. Yes, this was then shown me; saw no other supposed to have been sent from Williamstown. Read to witness and approved.”

“Dr. French sworn, says, the accused has resided in my family and is intimate in it and I have never heard her say that she supposed that the complainant’s family had made the exchange. Read to witness and approved.”

Editor’s note: The session then proceeded to hear the testimony on the second specification. The records of the second, third and fourth specifications cover matter of a personal nature and have no bearing on the case as started.

“5th Specification was then taken up; when the accused admitted that she had said as therein stated but not to injure the family. She said that she did so in consequence of her cousin’s telling her so and writing a letter to her to that effect, an extract of which was read and is as follows: Mary wrote as her Mother directed; she says the garment she sent was good, never had been worn more than two or three times, it was white, all linen, a as fine as forty. She says it might be a straight shirt as she designed it for no other use than to lay out Grandmother. She thought that the form did not matter.”

“6th Specification: Mrs. G ___ again sworn says that she did not know that the complainant has shown the right shirt.”

“Mr. Godfrey sworn, says, I heard Mrs. ___ say that she did not know but that the family of the complainant had shown the right shirt, but I never heard her say that they have shown two shirts.”

“Mr. Mason sworn, says, I have heard Mrs. ___ say that the garment which they showed her was not the one which her Mother showed her. I knew nothing of the matter until I was called to attend to it.”

“2nd Charge - Lying - 1st Specification: John Kingsbury again, Mrs. ___ said to me when I went to converse with her on the subject that she believed that the family had exchanged the shirt. Mrs. ___ also said that I did not know as well as others what was done in the family, but that the exchange may have been made at Mrs. ___.”

“Mrs. G___ again: Mrs. ___ said to me that she had no recollection of ever telling any person that she believed that the family had exchanged the shirt.”

“Adjourned to meet tomorrow morning at 8 o’clock a. m. Closed with prayer. Warren Day, Clerk, Pro. Tem.”

“June 29th, 1823, 8 a. m. The session met agreeably to the adjournment and opened with prayer. The trial of Mrs. ___ was resumed, the 1st specification of the 2nd charge being under consideration.”

“Mrs. Stedman again: I have heard Mrs. ___ since the 1st of October say that she believed that some of the females of that family had changed the shirt. I have since heard her say that she did not know that she had said that the females had exchanged the shirt. I would not say anything on this subject except when I had gone to see her and to converse with her on the matter of difficulty between the two parties.”

“Mrs. Stedman again: Mrs. ___ said to me the same day that the complainant took the second step of labor with her that she did not know that there was a hole in the shirt but only that there was a thin place in it large enough for a hen’s egg to be pushed through.”

“The testimony was generally read to each witness and approved. The result: All the testimony having been heard and the parties having no remarks to make they retired and each charge and specification and the testimony in its support was read separately and the opinion of the Judicatory taken upon them and it was resolved concerning each and every charge that the accused is not proven guilty of what therein is alleged against her. There were no two witnesses that testified to the same specification excepting that some of them testified to what she said to them when they went as members of the Church to converse with her in a private and confidential way and after the complainant had felt herself aggrieved; of which the session think that Mrs. ___ cannot complain as it was said in confidence and as no steps of previous labor had been taken in the case concerning them; and also because in the case of some of the specifications there were facts to justify the accusations.”

“The session would not say, however, that they think her innocent in the sight of the heart-searching God. They believe that she has said things against the complainant and the complainant’s family which the law of love and Christianity forbid, but they are not of such a nature as to draw upon her the censure of the church. The Judicatory would therefore exhort her to be on her guard with respect to her speech concerning them, to do nothing to widen the breach between them, but rather to heal and be tender of their reputations, to be forgiving of any supposed injuries conciliating in her behavior, and, in short, to do unto others as she would be done by.”

“The result was read, accompanied by an affectionate admonition from the Moderator, and the business was concluded with prayer. Warren day, Clerk, P. T.”

Editor’s note: When the head of the Ontario Presbytery examined the records of this trial he was very much dissatisfied with the result and recommended that parts of it be retired. This was not done, however, as haying and other farm work had been neglected too long already.

Chapter 15

Settlement of Hemlock, Information About Pitts, Information About Distillery Operations

The first settler to arrive in Hemlock was Phillip Short who came to Pittstown about 1790 and the following year purchased from Peter Pitts 120 1/4 acres. This farm is known as the Short Homestead and remained in the family until 1929 when it was sold to settle an estate. The original deed covering this property is in the museum and reads as follows:

“Know all men by these presents that I, Peter Pitts of Dighton, in the County of Bristol, Gentlemen, in consideration of Five Hundred Fort One Pounds, two shillings and six pence a lawful money paid me by Phillip Short of Taunton, the County aforesaid, Yeoman, the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge, do hereby grant, give full and convey to the said Phillip Short, his heirs and assigns forever, One Hundred twenty acres, and one quarter acre of my homestead farm with all the buildings, privileges and appurtenants there unto belonging, situate in the Dighton, bound as follows, Viz: Easterly on the road leading from Captain Jacob Winslows to Sylvester Pitts, Northerly on Simon Williams and my own land, Westerly on my own land and Southerly on the lands belonging to the Heirs of Constant Simmons, late of Dighton, deceased.

To have and to hold the same to the afore said Phillip Short, his heirs and assigns to their use and behoove forever and I do covenant with the aforesaid Phillip, his heirs and assigns that I am lawfully seized in fact of the premises, that they are free of all encumbrances that I have good right to sell and convey the same to the said Phillip and that I will for myself, my heirs and assigns, warrant and hand the same to the said Phillip Short, his heirs and assigns forever against the lawful claim and demand, of all persons, also Abigal Pitts, the wife if the said Peter gives up all her right of dower or third, in said premises, in testimony where of we have here unto set our hands and seals this Ninth day of May in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety one. N.B. The said Peter Pitts reserves liberty for myself, my heirs and assigns to pass and repass from my own land yet unsold thru the above bargained premises if I do my proportion toward mending said way. Signed: Peter Pitts, Abigal Pitts. Signed, Given and Delivered in presence of Francis Codding and George Codding-Bristol May 9th, 1791. Personally appeared Capt. Peter Pitts, Mrs. Abigal Pitts, signers to the within instrument and acknowledge the same to be their act and deed before Georg Codding, Justice Peace. Bristol - S. S. May 25th, 1791. Then record this Deed and recorded the same in Book 69, Folio 473 - Attest James Williams Reg'r.”

In 1795, the first saw mill in the township was built near the foot of Hemlock Lake by a man named Higby. He arrived in Livonia in 1794. In 1797, he lost one of his children. This was the first death in the town of a white person.

The first real gristmill was erected during the winter of 1799 - 1800 by Seth Simonds, of Bristol, for Thomas Morris, of Canandaigua. This mill was of the stone type and stood near where the present mill owned by the Beam Milling Co. now stands. The “Burr” mill came a few years later. Stones from these old mills are becoming very scarce. They originally came from France and it is said that the stones were brought back from there by sailing vessels without charge as ballast. Mr. Kunze, at the lake, used several of these stones in building the Sullivan marker. This was an excellent way of preserving them.

The mill mentioned above was not used long by the builder. In 1805 or 1806, or about that time, Levi Van Fossen rebuilt it and in 1811 he improved it. He also built and operated a distillery on the lot where J. P. Coykendall now lives. Levi came to an untimely end in 1811 by falling into a vat of whiskey mash in this distillery. He left a widow and four children. Darius Jacques married the widow about two years later and by this union there were two children, a girl and a boy, Russel, who built the Jacques House at Hemlock Lake which was the first summer hotel in the country. (More about this place later.)

Phillip Short owned and operated a distillery near where the house on the Judson Smith place stands. It is

said that a part of this house was built from the old distillery. This distillery was in operation in 1817 under a permit. The original of this permit is in the museum and reads as follows:

“License to work a Still for distilling Spirits from Domestic Materials. Whereas Phillip Short of the Town of Richmond in the County of Ontario of New York, possessor of a Still of the capacity of one hundred and eighty two gallons, including the head thereof, at this time erected and intended to be used in the Town of Richmond in the County of Ontario in the District aforesaid, hath duly applied for a License to distil Spirits from Domestic Materials, during the term of one month, to commence on the 26th day of March 1817, and to end on the 26th day of April 1817: NOW KNOW YE, that the said Phillip Short is hereby licensed to work and employ the said still in distilling Spirits from Domestic Materials, for the said term of ONE MONTH, as above defined, in conformity with the laws of the United States. Signed: Walter B. Beal, For the Commissioner of the Revenue. Countersigned at Canandaigua in the Collection District aforesaid, this 3rd day of March 1817. Leo S. Bates, Collector of the Revenue for the 24th Collection District of New York.”

These towns about here were well supplied with distilleries. There was another one down the outlet further where Holdenville was later to be built; another one stood on Kinney Creek a short distance from the mill now operated by Mr. Salsich at the Center. Whiskey was used by nearly everyone in those days. It is related that one fellow who used it to excess was approached by a minister who asked him if he was not drinking more than was good for him. The fellow replied that it was necessary for him to drink it so that the distilleries could be busy thereby affording him a market for his grain.

Chapter 16

Timber, Tannery, Charcoal Burning, Coming of the Railroad

The Kinney Creek in early times was a good-sized stream furnishing power to several industries. It rises on the Caleb Purdy farm at South Livonia and empties into the Hemlock outlet west of the village of Hemlock. The cutting off of the timber has dried it up until now it is practically dry during the summer months. It received its name from John Kinney who lived where Howard Jones does now. Not much use was made of it in early times till it reached the Center. Here the power and water was put to work. George Pratt's tannery was the first to use it. Further down it was used to operate a grist mill, built in 1825 by P. B. Ripley, who operated it until sometime in the early thirties when it was sold to Irving Salsich's father. He converted the grist mill into a saw mill, which it continues to be. The turbine wheel in this mill is the one that used to be in the old grist mill at Dixon Hollow.

Across the road from the Salsich mill stood a distillery, and east of that an ashery where lye and potash were made.

The burning of ashes during early times was an important industry, the ashes being barreled and sold to make payments on the farms and purchase the few necessities of life which the settlers could not grow or make. It is said that Oscar Woodruff, grandson of Deacon Oliver, drew ashes to Rochester, by team, to make the payments on his farm. Several farms in and about this locality were pretty much paid for in this way.

In later years' charcoal pits were made and the charcoal hauled to Rochester and sold for ten cents a bushel, fifty bushels being a load. Charcoal was made from the soft woods. The tree trunks and large limbs were cut into 10 or 12 foot lengths, stood on end in a cone-shaped pile, then earth was shoveled on about 12 or 18 inches deep all around and the pile set on fire from the center and allowed to smolder until all the wood was thoroughly charred. The pit was then opened and the charcoal taken out. It meant many tedious hours of watching in burning a pit. If the fire was allowed to blaze and got beyond control all of the labor was lost; nothing but ashes remained. I am told that a pit produced from 50 to 100 bushels; a lot of labor for five or ten dollars.

Records of business at the Center during the years from 1800 to 1850 are not very plentiful, hence a complete story of it cannot be told. The Center was the business place for the township for many years, changes were constantly being made, no records made of them so it is impossible to tell much. A store stood where the Catholic Church is now located, owned and operated by a man named Parmalee. Another one stood where the present one is and burned in 1832 along with the Presbyterian Church. The stone shop at the top of the hill was built about 100 years ago as a blacksmith shop for William Thurston. Robert Thurston ran a harness shop near there. Martin Murphy had a boot and shoe shop on the lot where John Dooley lives; he employed three or four men. Simon Risdon had another boot and shoe shop near Murphy's. The hotel or tavern was the house in which Charles Miller now lives. This was the first hotel in the township and was operated until after the Erie Railroad was built.

In 1849, the New York and Erie Railroad was brought into existence. When it was determined by the builders to put the road through the town of Livonia an effort was made by Center business men to have it come up through the Center Valley (along the Kinney Creek). They were unsuccessful. It came through the next one west, where it is now, and in 1853 trains were running into Livonia Station and the Center and Hemlock were "Out-O-Luck".

Chapter 17

Early Settlers and Where They Lived, Jacksonville

Shortly after the arrival of Phillip Short in Hemlock other settlers started coming, most of them locating at the foot of the lake along the outlet. In a few years, the village extended from the lake to the corner where Samuel Collins lives.

Phillip Short built the first cabin a short distance east of the homestead farmhouse. He died a few years after his arrival here and is buried in the old family lot in the woods east of the farmhouse. Darius Jacques located northeast of the village, Ruell Blake west of the village on the farm known as the Clancy farm. At one time, he was the wealthiest man in Livingston County. He owned a large amount of land and also dealt in wool, produce and livestock.

He was a peculiar man in many ways and many stories are told of him. It is said that it was not uncommon for him to carry several thousand dollars on his person in the billfold that we have in the museum. He made business trips to New York City often and it is said invariably would refuse to pay his fare on the train, saying he had no money, until he would be threatened to be put off the train when he would pull out his billfold and pay. He died in the County Home at Geneseo.

De Rastus Hinman located in the village, where he opened a store. Richard Hudson, a licensed preacher of the Methodist denomination, located farther down the outlet in Jacksonville, where he built a residence in 1826. He built and ran a store in 1807, upon his arrival, somewhere near Collins corner. He discontinued the business in 1809 for some unknown reason. The store building is now the north end of Mr. Collins' barn, which stands on the east side of the road. This is the oldest frame structure in the village. The account book of this store is in the possession of Mr. C. W. Hudson, grandson, who lives in Honeoye Falls. Entries in this book show that Levi Van Fossen, John Walker and Ben Farnum opened the first accounts on June 9th, 1807.

About this time (1807) Austin Woodruff was doing a general trading business. Nearly everything handled in a store then was hauled from Albany by ox-cart. Grain, fur and ashes were hauled there and exchanged for salt, spices and other necessities.

There are many stories as to where the name, "Hemlock", came from. The one I think most likely is that it was named from the lake which received its name from the amount of Hemlock timber growing along its shores.

In the early days, there were several saw mills located at the lake and along the outlet. Of course, a great many slabs were made by these mills and from this the nickname of "Slab City", came. This nickname has stuck well; several people never heard of Hemlock but had heard of Slab City.

In 1829 another village was planned, to be known as Jacksonville. It was to be located down the outlet northeast of Hemlock at the foot of Holden Hill, now known as the "White Bridge". This place had a woolen mill, grist mill and distillery. A man by the name of Holden planned to make it the business center of the locality. He had it surveyed and great were the things he was going to do. Time and events changed his plans for him and afterwards the place was known as the "Lost Village". When the supporters of Jacksonville saw that they were too far off the main road to ever grow much they considered moving the village up on the corner (Collins). A tavern was built on the land now owned by James Wood but was not operated very long. The site where it stood can be identified from the remains of the old cellar wall in the corner of the field. The place might have grown and united with Hemlock in forming a fair-sized village, but the coming of the Erie Railroad destroyed all prospects.

Chapter 18

Glenville, Gullburg, Erie Canal, Plank Road, Metropolitan Hotel

Another village of quite some importance in the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century was located along the Canadice outlet south and east of Beam's mill at Glenville. I find that this is where the name Gullburg originated. This village extended pretty much from Glenville to Dixon's Hollow, where there was another village. In Gullburg there was a woolen mill, grist mill and paint mill, also a small store. A few years ago, the only evidence of this village that remained were a small shack in which was stored a few remaining pieced of Hart's paint mill. This mill manufactured a red paint made from a clay found up there which seems to be partly rock. (A specimen of this clay is in the museum.) There are not many records left of this village so not much information can be given regarding it. Changing conditions were responsible for its going out of existence along with many of its kind.

Each of these small villages that sprung up with the arrival of the settlers was a potential city or permanent business place for the inhabitants. Geographical location determined which should live and grow. I don't suppose the possibilities of future growth entered much into the consideration of location, a few settlers gathered at a spot and a village sprung up, sort of mushroom growth, lived a time and vanished. The earning of a living was the all-important thing. The streams on which these villages were located furnished power for the water wheels, the only known power for mills then. Mills and machinery of those days were of simple construction and I imagine it didn't require much power to turn them.

With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 came new life and growth to villages fortunate enough to be located on its banks. People living in other small villages moved to those with better business prospects or offering more employment and so one grew and another passed out of existence eventually to be forgotten.

Rochester had more effect upon this locality than any other place. Located as it was on the Genesee river and the Erie canal, it grew fast and furnished a market for the country's products. Roads were built to carry this traffic to the city and to the canal to be shipped to points east and west. As roads were built business became better in the villages through which these roads passed and gave them a new lease of life until the early 1850's when the railroads were being built. The villages through which the railroads passed benefited at the expense of those located off-line and so it has continued. As a new form of transportation was developed its effect soon became apparent on village and city life.

Hemlock being on a direct line between southeastern New York State and Rochester it benefited by the traffic passing through it to the developing markets of Rochester and Buffalo. In the late 1840's Aaron Doolittle built the south end of the Metropolitan Hotel for a tavern of road house as Hemlock was the over-night stopping place for the increasing number of teams hauling lumber, wool and grain and other products of the southern tier.

In 1850, The Rochester and Hemlock Lake Plank Road Company was formed and financed by Rochester and local capital. It was incorporated under the General Plank Road laws of New York State. The company was to build twenty-eight miles or thereabouts, the road to be from Hemlock to Rochester. Stock was sold to help finance it and work was started in the spring of 1850. Philip Short II was one of the subscribers to this stock and a receipt for money paid into this company is in the museum. The road was built one track wide, constructed of heavy planks, laid on stringers imbedded in the earth. Plank and stringers were delivered on the job by the lumber mills for \$4.00 and \$4.50 per thousand feet. It is said that it was one of the roughest pieces of road ever built, the planks and stringers warped and curled up in places and it was almost impossible to stick on a wagon seat. (Perhaps these roads caused the spring wagon seat to be invented. It is said, "Necessity is the mother of invention"). The New York legislature on April 2nd, 1852, passed an act releasing the Rochester-Hemlock Lake Plank Road Company from their obligation to build more (they had built up to this time about 25 miles) as the building of the Erie Railroad took the traffic away from it.

When this road was started Aaron Doolittle, thinking that it was to mean big things for the village, built the large north end of the Metropolitan Hotel. The days that this frame was erected a celebration was held in honor of the event. The work on this building was done by a man name Walter Hanchett, the frame was hewed out by hand from the timber growing on the hills surrounding Hemlock Lake, and the square used in laying out the frame now rests in the school museum. This building has changed many times though the Haggerty family has owned it for the past 45 years.

The toll gate for this road was located on Collin's corner at first, a short time later it was moved north to near where the Eri Jenks farmhouse stands. After the plank road was opened to traffic without toll charge the gate was purchased by a man named Thayer and moved to the village where it was made into a dwelling. This is the Waldron house.

Chapter 19

The East Lake Road of Hemlock Lake

The road along the east side of Hemlock Lake, running south from Glenville corner to Springwater and which was closed a few years ago, was built by John Hill. Not much is known about the early life of this man except that he was born in Chemung County and as a young man drove mules on the Erie Canal. Later he bought a canal boat which he operated for some time, making some money at it. It is not known what brought him to Hemlock in the early 1840's. In 1851, he furnished the money to set W. B. Lemon up in business in the store now owned by C. E. Wemett & Co. This building originally stood on Mrs. Margaret Hoppough's lot, where it was used as a store; I don't know by whom. Lemon moved it to its present location. The firm was known as Hill & Lemon. After Hill's death Ruell Blake purchased his interest and the firm became known as Lemon and Blake. In 1862 Lemon was elected sheriff of Livingston County and sold his interest to L. W. Carrol which was not so good for Blake. But, to get back to Hill . . .

As mentioned in a previous article, there was a large amount of traffic going through Hemlock from the south for Rochester. All of this traffic had to come over Bald Hill, which was a hard pull for the horse teams up out of Springwater valley. Hill thought that if he built a road along the shore of Hemlock Lake eliminating the hills this traffic would come over his road in preference to the other route, and so he secured the right of way and built the road at an expense of \$5,000, completing the job about 1853.

He erected his toll-gate a short distance south of Glenville corner. (This gate is now the kitchen of the house where Roy Redmond lives). Hill's venture was not a financial success, sentiment was against him; people thought they should be permitted to use this road without toll. Hill, naturally, thought differently and one day in 1854 when he was in the blacksmith shop of Harry Millard (grandfather of Harry Rogers) he became engaged in an argument over the matter of tolls, became greatly excited and fell dead.

The road was used about fifty years or more after his death, up until the time that the City of Rochester secured control of the watershed of the lake.

Isaiah Stilwell used to tell that Hill never took in but one nickel from his road venture and that he willed this lone coin to his heirs for a keep-sake. But this, I guess, was but a story.

The greater part of this road has gone back to woodland now, Hill's tombstone has crumbled away so that now his burial place is not marked, and not much remains of his memory.

There has been some talk lately of a concrete road being built along the side of the lake from Hemlock to Springwater. If this is done it seems no more than right that a part of it, equal in mileage to the old road, be dedicated to the memory of John Hill, canal and road builder.

The Livonia Gazette

Twenty-five installments of "Tales of the Past" were written by Frank Connor of Hemlock, a former Town of Livonia historian. They were published in late 1930 and early 1931 in the Livonia Gazette. The tales were about people, places and incidents in the towns of Canadice, Conesus, Hemlock, Livonia, Richmond and Springwater.

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