

TRAVELS

IN THE YEARS 1791 AND 1792 IN

PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK
AND VERMONT

JOURNALS OF

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AND NOTES



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dagway has 43 Dwelling houses, the land good enough, but the water very bad, which is considered one of the principal causes which makes this country so unhealthy, the town is divided in Lots of 10 acres which sell at 6 £ (15 Dls) of New York, & back Lots of 30 acres at 12 £ (30 Dls.) The Lake is 16 miles long by one wide, the navigation is of no importance ; however, small bateaux can come from New York to within 5 miles of the place.

N. B. See notes at other end of book.

We rested our horses, dined at Mr. Gorham's son of Mr. Philips'¹ partner, he lives in Connecticut & passes only the summer in this climate, but Mr. Gorham expects to establish himself here altogether.

Detained by the rain, we resolved to go no further, on account of the bad roads & the swamps which prevent our crossing the woods to Lake Ontario ; we left

¹ Oliver Phelps was born in Windsor, Conn. He was in the Battle of Lexington. Like Adam Hoops he had close business relations with Robert Morris. and like Morris he closed his life in the midst of business reverses. He died at Canandaigua in 1809. See Turner, *Holland Purchase*, p. 328.

at noon on the same road for Geneva, where we arrived in the evening, having found an Indian family encamped in the woods, some pretty children painted red, squaws, etc.

We made acquaintance at Geneva with Dr. Adams,¹ a very polite man, who offered us a Bed & showed us every possible kindness.

Thursday
the 1st
Sept.

We left for Cayuga Lake after crossing the outlet of Seneca Lake in a pontoon, & passing through woods full of Mapple Trees, & lands excellent but without water ; crossed the Cayuga Lake which is more than a mile wide, & arrived on the other side at Harris,² a man who lives in the Cayuga Reservation Land. This tract still belongs to the Cayuga Indians & Mr. Harris has been obliged to make a contract with them to get permission to dwell there for several years, & pays them a certain sum of

¹ Dr. Adams was a physician in Geneva in the earliest years of its settlement ; he died there, and was buried where Trinity Church now stands.—Letter of G. W. Nicholas to Col. C. D. Miller, 1894.

² The Cayuga Ferry was kept by John Harris, from Harrisburg, Pa. (later one of the Cayuga Bridge Co.) and James Bennet.—See *Cayuga Co. Gazetteer*.

money yearly. The Indians have at 3 miles distance from his home a settlement of about 20 families.

We started through the woods, & by a bad road, but over very good land with much
 Friday Mapple, to Joseya Bock's,¹ living in
 2^d the woods 16 miles from Cayuga in
 the Military tract, thence to Major Danforth's²
 18½ miles, in the Onondaga Reservation.

As our horses had strayed off in the woods we could not set out till noon; we passed
 Saturday through woods entirely composed of
 3rd Mapple & beech, here & there plains
 covered with wild grass, all in the Onondaga

¹ "Josiah Buck settled on lot 82 a mile West of Elbridge in Onondaga County about 1790. He was the first settler on the old Genesee road between Cayuga Lake and Onondaga Valley and the only settler when John L. Hardenburgh first settled in Auburn in 1792. There is no doubt whatever on the question of the reference to this person. He was one of the Surveyors engaged on the Military Tract under DeWitt."—Letter of Gen. John S. Clark, Auburn, N. Y., to James Seymour, Jr.

² Asa Danforth was born in Worcester, Mass., was a Major throughout the Revolutionary War; having lost everything by Continental currency, he went to Mayfield in Montgomery Co., N. Y., thence to Onondaga, where he settled a little South of the Hollow in May, 1788, and in that year began making salt. He was a remarkable man, much looked up to, and was most hospitable to every one without money and without price.—See Clark's *Onondaga*, vol. ii., p. 115.

reservation, a tract of land 10 miles square, which has been kept by these Indians, they do not number more than 70 souls, a great part having perished & others having withdrawn to the lands near Lake Erie.

Mr. Boon & I having taken the lead—the horse of Col^l P. being lame—we found ourselves in the midst of the woods & in a swamp when the darkness no longer permitted us to see our horses heads; we resolved to stop & build a fire; after making vain efforts for 3 hours, & firing off our pistols without success, we had to lie down on the ground on our bear-skin, wrapped in cloak & blanket; having tied the horses to a tree, we at first resolved not to sleep, & to keep ourselves awake by telling stories, fearing the approach of bears & wolves, but weariness prevented, slumber took possession of us, & I slept till the break of day, when my comrade had much ado to waken me, we were on our horses at 4½ o'clock, & returned by the same road to find again an Indian village which we had left the evening before, & where no one could understand us,

we found there only women, the men being either still in bed or hunting in the woods, after many signs a Squaw put us on the road, & at 9 o'clock we reached the *Oneida Castle*,¹ an Indian town, where we found a white man settled, who gave us a good breakfast & some maize for our horses, some hours later we saw Col. P. & our servant arriving from another quarter, they had undergone the same fate, & camped in an Indian hut.

Oneida Castle is wholly inhabited by Indians of the Oneida tribe, who have kept a reservation of 20 square miles—they number 780, & have a Minister named Mr. Kitland² paid by the U. S., who instructs them in the Christian religion; we went to the Church where Mr. K. preached in their language—we were surprised at the attention with which all the congregation assisted at the sermon, singing as well & in as perfect tune as could be in any church.³ An Indian named *Good Peter*,⁴

¹ In the town of Vernon. See Appendix G.

² Rev. Samuel Kirkland. Jones' *Oneida Co.*, p. 205.

³ See Jones, *Oneida Co.*, p. 214, for a corroboration of this account of the native music.

⁴ Prominent at the Council held by Gov. Clinton with the Six

after the sermon explained more particularly what the minister had preached, he was eloquent, & his gray hair made him venerable.

There was there a certain *French Peter*,¹ son of an Indian woman & a Frenchman, the Marquis de la Fayette took him with him to Paris where he received education for 3 years. he speaks French & English very well & a little German, on coming home he married an Indian woman, has 2 children, & is 22 years old.

The Oneida tribe is the most considerable of the Six Nations which remain on the territory of the United States. The minister who has been among them for 26 years assured me that during that time they had diminished by half, but for 4 or 5 years, since they began to be civilized, to live in houses & raise grain, they no longer diminished, and he did not despair with care & encouragement, of their reaching a condition of prosperity & happi-

Nations at Fort Schuyler, 1788, and on many other occasions. See Turner, *Phelps and Gorham Purchase*, pp. 114-5.

¹ Peter Ot-se-quette. Died in Philadelphia, March, 1792, whither he had accompanied Mr. Kirkland at call of Gen. Pickering. Turner, *Phelps and Gorham Purchase*, p. 116.

ness. Till now they still lack the spirit of work, & a taste for sedentary life—tilling the earth is burdensome to them, so that often they allow Americans to settle on & work their lands, provided they give them $\frac{1}{3}$ or half the yield, even their grist mill is managed on this footing by an American. As to the rest they are governed by chiefs so far as it suits them, they have no laws, & people cannot even go to law with them before the U. S., so that contracts entered into between Americans & Indians have no other duration than the good pleasure of the latter, & it is even forbidden by the U. S. to make any contracts with them.

We left this morning from the mill by the Oneida Castle for Old Oneida,¹ another Indian town, being drenched by a torrent of rain; reached Whitestown in Herkimer Co. at Samuel Layard's,² & were obliged to halt on account of the rain.

¹ See Appendix G.

² Now Lairdsville, settled in 1788 by Samuel Laird, from Massachusetts. He kept a log tavern there.—Jones' *Oneida County*, p. 717.

Left at 9, & arrived at Whitestown. The chief article of exportation of this place & neighborhood is *Perlash*. A Mr. Jones makes 20 tons a year with 2 men. It sells in New York from 50 to 60 £ the Ton. They reckon from 60 or 70 to 100 bushels of ashes pr. acre, and it takes 700 bushels to make a ton of *Perlash*. Whitestown has been settled for 6 years, a mile from the Mohoc River—it has some very good houses, & the look of prosperity. Each family makes enough sugar for its own use, but the residue of the Mapple is burned for Potash. They value an acre of land in the neighborhood at 20 £, & 6 or 7 Miles distant it can be bought for 1 Dollar.

We left there for the Mohoc River passing very rich ground, & a number of quite neat settlements. We slept at the house of Mayer, a German.

N.B. All these settlements are made by Germans & pass by the name of German Flatts.

APPENDIX G.

ONEIDA CASTLE.

"FOR a number of months past I have been studying up the history of the Oneida Indians, and as to their locations, etc. The result of my investigations is to the following effect:— They located at first on Oneida Lake, at the mouth of the Oneida River, the boundary between Madison and Onondaga Counties. Later, they removed to the mouth of the Oneida Creek (on the same lake), the boundary between Madison and Oneida Counties. Their next move, centuries ago, was to what is now the town of Stockbridge, in Madison County, on an eminence overlooking the valley of Oneida Creek—a dozen miles, perhaps, South from Oneida Station, and a few miles from Oneida Castle (formerly and at times called Castleton). On that eminence was the 'stone,' the emblem of the nation, and where their councils were held and their council fires lighted; I do not find that the councils were ever changed from that place after their location there. There was quite a settlement of those Indians at Oneida Castle, also at Oriskany, also in Broome County on the Susquehanna; there was a mission church for them where Rev. Mr. Kirkland and Rev. Eleazar Williams¹

¹ At one time believed to be the Dauphin, son of Louis XVI. See Hanson, *The Lost Prince*, and Putnam's *Monthly*, 1853, 1868; also, *per contra*, Parkman, *Half Century of Conflict*, vol. i., p. 80.

officiated, between Oneida Castle and Vernon village, and near there a large butternut orchard, with a settlement near it. There was a burial place centuries ago, of 400 acres, in the valley below the eminence before spoken of—since mainly grown up to trees, but still later and now cultivated fields. All of this is said in explanation as to what is in the 'Journal' as to 'Old Oneida, another Indian town.'

"As to whether the old Oneida Castle was on the present site of Oneida Castle, my conclusion is, from my investigations, that 'Oneida Castle' was so named because it was in the vicinity or heart of the Oneida settlements, and near the 'stone' where the councils were held; and that the mention in the 'Journal' 'for old Oneida, another Indian town' has reference to the place of the 'stone.' Sir William Johnson, about 1763, in his report to his Government as to the Indians, speaks of the Oneidas having two villages, one some 25 miles from Rome, and another about 12. I think the one at Oneida Castle and the other on the eminence at the 'stone' are the ones referred to. Possibly there may then have been a settlement at the foot of Oneida Creek, on Oneida Lake, but history is silent on that point. Now I may be wrong in my inference, founded, however, on such historical accounts as I have, as to what or where 'Old Oneida, another Indian town' was; but the foregoing is the best light I have.

"I do not think A. VanEps was the white man referred to in that 'Journal.' He was a merchant,

and not a tavern keeper—a Gershom Hubbell kept a tavern—and besides I think (from Jones' *Annals*) that VanEps was not at Oneida Castle in 1791-2.

"On inquiry I learn that the 'ancient looking yellow house' stood on the hill at 'Heckla Works.' About 1800 the 'Westmoreland furnace' was built at what is now Heckla, and that the said 'yellow dwelling' stood there until about 1850, when it was removed or torn down by Jeff Olney, who erected the new building now there."

—D. E. Wager, Rome, N. Y., Dec. 31, 1894.

"Not long before the opening ceremony of our Forest Hill Cemetery, in 1850, I accompanied Mr. William Tracy and another of the trustees in an excursion to Stockbridge Hill, which, as Mr. Wager says, was doubtless the last resting place of the Oneidas before their departure for Green Bay. There we found the sacred stone, which, according to their tradition, had followed them in their previous migrations, and which has been visited and described by Schoolcraft, Stone and others. We obtained permission from the owner of the land on which it lay to remove it to the new cemetery. Thither it was transported shortly afterward, and on the day of the public observance of the opening of the grounds it was visited by delegations of Oneidas and Onondagas who conducted ceremonial rites about it, and in the course of the speeches made by them and their interpreter gave their con-

sent to its remaining in the perpetual custody of the Association. Some thirty or forty Indians were present and added much to the interest of the occasion. The stone occupies a conspicuous place near the entrance."

—M. M. Bagg, Utica, N. Y., Jan. 1, 1895.