

HAMMOND HISTORY

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History of Hammond, NY

FROM OUR COUNTY AND ITS PEOPLE

A MEMORIAL RECORD OF ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY

NEW YORK

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THE BOSTON HISTORY COMPANY, PUBLISHERS 1894

THE TOWN OF HAMMOND - ORGANIZED IN 1827

THIS is the twenty-first town erected by an act of the Legislature passed March 30, 1827. It was formerly under the jurisdiction of Rossie and Morristown. The town lies in the extreme western point of the county, with the St. Lawrence River bordering its northwestern side, Jefferson county on the west, Rossie and Black Lake on the south, and Morristown on the east. The first town meeting was held on the first Tuesday of May following, when Sylvester Butrick was elected supervisor, and the balance of the town officers, whose names are not given. On the 2d of May, 1837, its line on the Morristown side was changed slightly, and on the 11th of April, 1842, a corner south of Black Lake was attached to Macomb; while on the 7th of February, 1844, the line bordering Rossie, which originally ran parallel with the original line of Somerville, was changed to its present course from the corner of the old township to the head of Mile Bay. The town contains 35,815 acres, and the surface is generally level, but broken on the northern and southern borders by ledges of gneiss and white limestone, which are now being extensively quarried. A level terrace of sandstone extends from the north shore of Black Lake through the center of the town. The soil is principally clay and is productive. It was formerly a great wheat growing country and for other grains and grass crops, but is now devoted

principally to dairying.

Hammond derives its name from Abijah Hammond, of New York, who owned the township previous to 1814. He was a New York merchant and a brother-in-law of David A. Ogden, but he never visited his northern property. On the 12th of September, 1814 David Parish purchased of Hammond 28,871 acres. On some of this tract beginnings of settlement had been made, but no titles actually passed to settlers until in July, 1818, when William Wiley took the first contract. On the 31st of July, 1818, Loren Bailey came in as agent and from that time, in July, 1818, the town was rapidly settled. Mr. Bailey was afterwards succeeded by David W. Baldwin. The first actual resident was probably William McNeil from Vermont, who was in the town previous to 1812, and lived on Chippewa Bay. The first clearing was made in that year by William Wiley, also from Vermont, on the site of the village. A Mr. Barker came in the following year and settled a mile south of Hammond, where he built and opened a tavern.

The War of 1812 affected the town only slightly, there being so very few dwellers at that time. The gang of pirates or horse thieves mentioned in the history of Rossie and Morristown during the War of 1812, was very conspicuous in this town also. We are under obligation to A. S. Partridge of Depeyster, who obtained the following incidents last summer from N. F. Swain, his neighbor. Mr. Swain is now upwards of ninety years old, and his memory of what transpired in his younger days is especially good, and the incidents, together with the dates, places and names were so impressed on his mind that they may be relied upon as authentic. Mr. Swain's father, Abner, kept a tavern at the time on the windfall that grew up to briers, and for this reason when the village started it was named "Brier Hill," now in Morristown. This was on the route of an Indian trail and was frequented by people from Ogdensburg, Morristown, Hammond and Rossie, many of whom were members of the gang alluded to. Young Swain, then a bright boy of some ten or more years, had a good opportunity to become familiar with the names and operations of the band of thieves. The names of the principal ones of the gang that operated in the vicinity of Chippewa Bay were James Patterson, the leader; his brother, Ned; John Hageman, Darius Carpenter and his son, John; and Zach Livingston. They had a

spy, one "Binette," a Frenchman, who was some way related to the Pattersons. and worked on the outside. The gang was wellrigged out with scows, bateaux and small boats. They had several places on the islands in front of Chippewa Bay to secrete their plunder. One island near the Canadian shore could not be reached only by a circuitous route and an obscure inlet, and there they kept most of their horses, as they could not be seen or heard when passing by on the water or from the shore. They had also several places up Chippewa Creek to secrete their plunder. Their plan of operation was to send Binette out through the Canadian settlements on a peddling tour. He being familiar with the English as well as the French language could easily learn where the finest horses, cattle or merchandise were kept, and that knowledge was cautiously communicated to headquarters and at the proper time a raid was made on the settlement thus spied out. Their plan was to start out well-armed, with several boats and a scow, and leave them in the bushes at different points near the place of operation, so in case they were hard pressed and their retreat cut off at one point, they could go to another and find a boat. Their plundering expeditions became successful and the band was a terror to the Canadians. The British had a garrison of reserves stationed in Kingston, commanded by one Major Carley, and the soldiers were paid every month in specie, which was sent up in two or three divisions, by land and water, so in case of an accident to one the other might be safe. Binette, through some of his French allies, learned that a bateau manned by three or Frenchman and an English officer would leave Montreal for Kingston with the specie, and would pass the Islands on such an evening following. This news was communicated to the Patterson gang, who went prepared and laid in wait until the supply boat came along, when they made a bold dash, overpowered the crew and took possession of the bateau and landed their prisoners on an island. With the bateau and contents they made directly, under cover of darkness, for the American shore, and thence up Chippewa Creek where the boat and specie were secreted for the time being. When this act became known at Kingston, Major Carley selected a squad of men and rowed down to these islands with the fierce intent of exterminating the gang. They soon discovered their rendezvous and every man was prepared to fire at a moment's notice. Suddenly they came upon the pirates who were in their boats, as they were passing around an island, and each soldier, taking deliberate aim, fired. Four of the six pirates were killed outright, and

James Patterson was mortally wounded. Zach. Livingston, who was in the same boat with Patterson, was unharmed, and rowed around the island and escaped. Patterson died soon after reaching the American shore. Mr. Swain states that on that night, which was late in the summer of 1814, his father had a beautiful mare, valued at \$150, stolen and he believed that Livingston stole her. His father also had eleven head of fine cattle stolen that summer.

The success of the British in breaking up this gang of pirates, encouraged them to follow up other depredators, and a party of fifty or more Canadians shortly after made a search for one or two refugees who had located in the town and had made themselves obnoxious to their Canadian neighbors by repeated depredations. The party landed in Chippewa Bay early in the morning, but in pursuit of their object they lost their way and did not arrive at Mr. Barker's inn until after sunrise. One of the men for whom they were searching was there asleep, but he was alarmed by the family and fled, half dressed, to the woods, narrowly escaping the shots fired after him. The Canadians returned home discomfited.

Most of the town lying west of the village was settled in from 1818 to 1821 by Scotch emigrants. They had come over and met the agents of Mr. Parish who induced them to locate on this tract, where they became substantial citizens. Many of them erected stone dwellings which are still standing. In 1818 there came John and David Gregor (the latter now living at the age of eighty years), John Baird, Peter Allen, John and James Hill. Peter Allen's son, Robert, was two years old when he came to town. He now owns the Allen's Park. He served three years in the war of the rebellion is now drawing a pension. He is seventy-eight years old, hale and hearty. In 1819 Thomas Caswell, William Nickol, James Rogers, Robert Morris, Robert and Andrew Shields, John Mercer, Thomas Dodds, and William Burke, an Englishman, came into the settlement; and in 1821, John Brown and Lewis Franklin, now living. Several of the latter were single men, and all became good and useful citizens. A few years later some others came, through the influence of those already located. To those of the first and second years who required it, Mr. Parish extended similar credit to that given to his settlers in Rossie, which had the effect of stimulating settlement and

advancing the prosperity of those who took up homes.

The southern part of the town, on the military road, was first settled by Samuel Webster and William Tappan from Vermont, in 1819. Jonathan King, from Herkimer county, came the next year and opened a tavern. The military road from Sackett's Harbor to Hammond had been cut through previous to the war, but had become impassable from disuse. It was reopened in 1823, and soon afterward was laid out as a highway and continued to be one of the principal thoroughfares from Watertown to Ogdensburg.

Settlement was begun at Oak Point by George Eliot, who was succeeded by a Mr. Cowan, who opened a small grocery in 1824 Earl Atwood, Abram Schermerhorn, a Mr. Mathews and others followed to that neighborhood soon afterward.

There are twenty five men living in Hammond at the present time whose ages range from seventy one to ninety-five years old.

Mr. Bailey, the agent before mentioned, settled at Chippewa Bay, and Abram Cooper soon afterward began improvements there. A substantial dock was erected at an early day, and for a number of years the shipments of iron from the Rossie mines, and of lumber and other products, were very heavy. A steam saw mill was erected there in 1844 by James E. Lyon, It was burned and not rebuilt.

In 1825 a wharf was built at Oak Point on a small island in the channel, communicating with the mainland by a bridge; this was rebuilt in 1838 and was enlarged in the winter of 1892-3. A post-office was established in 1840, and a custom house, which latter was removed to Chippewa Bay, but has since been taken back to the Point. W. C. Brooks is the present postmaster and merchant there. A light-house was built on Cross over Island in 1847, and refitted in 1855. It was rebuilt about ten years ago and James Hammond is the present keeper.

On the 19th of April, 1834, Loren Bailey, Azariah Walton and Elbridge G. Merrick were appointed commissioners to open a road from the line of Clayton

and Lyme to a road leading from Chippewa Bay to Ogdensburg. This road ran through the villages of French Creek and Alexandria Bay to Hammond.

The minerals of this town have in the past attracted attention, and in 1840 a vein of ore containing lead, copper and gold was discovered on the farm occupied in recent years by H. S. White, in the southwestern part of the town, and it was worked to some extent; but the shaft, which was sunk about thirty feet. showed that the vein became narrow, and it was discontinued. Again, in 1877, valuable ore was discovered in that vicinity, a quantity of which was sent to New York for assay, and was found to contain \$350 of gold and silver to the ton. Some effort was expended to organize a company for working it, but it was abandoned and at the present time there is no mining in the town.

The lower portion of the far famed and matchless group known as the Thousand Islands lies opposite the town of Hammond and lend their beauty and grandeur to that part of the St. Lawrence. Many of these islands are owned by individuals and occupied with attractive summer cottages. An incident connected with one of these islands in Chippewa Bay is entitled to brief reference. In 1838 Ezra Brockway, supposed to have been insane, settled on this island, where he lived for many years a sort of hermit life, believing himself a son of Napoleon Bonaparte. He imagined that he owned all of the land in the vicinity; that his mother had been murdered in Ogdensburg and he, while an infant, set adrift in a canoe on the river. The knowledge of his kingly connection he said was communicated to him in a dream and afterwards confirmed by spirits. He refused to, and never did, pay tax on his island. Early in February, 1886, he was found ill and half frozen in his little dwelling place by a party crossing the river on the ice. He was carried to the shore and a physician called, but he refused to take medicine, and after a few days of suffering passed away.

In October, 1860, the Buckeye, a steamer owned by the Northern Transportation Company struck on a rock in the channel near the village of Chippewa Bay. A large number of passengers was drowned the boat was afterwards raised.

During the summers of 1857-8 the people of the town and vicinity were greatly excited over the old tradition that a large amount of gold had been sunk with a

boat by the Patterson gang during the War of 1812 in Chippewa Creek, James Sterlin, a man of commanding appearance, weighing nearly four hundred pounds, pleasing address, and a good talker, secured the right from the land proprietors to search for this treasure. The place selected was about one and a half miles above the mouth of the stream at the foot of a hill, where a spring flows into a deep and pond shape part of the creek. Here Mr. Sterlin built a coffer dam around the deep water, leaving a sluice on one side for the current to flow by. He then placed several suction pumps around the dam to be worked by hand, and a rotary one to be driven by a small portable engine, then started them up to pump out the water in the basin. During all this time the people would gather around and eagerly watch the maneuvering. The greatest crowds gathered on Sunday afternoon, when Mr. Sterlin would preach to them and relate the old story how the money was taken and the incidents leading up to the secreting of the money. He had connected with him Mr. Thomas Hazelton, a clairvoyant, whom he would mesmerize, then question him concerning the treasures, also allow others to do so, and the answers elicited were usually a confirmation of the story. He also stated that he saw buried in the mud what had the appearance of a boat, and many other things, which was eagerly listened to by the excited crowd. Mr. Sterlin was bothered by the dam leaking, and spent a large portion of the time in repairing it, but after a time, having the pumps all worked by boys, changing every half hour (they receiving ten cents per hour), the water was sufficiently lowered one Sunday, so that a handspike and a rusty chain was recovered, but a heavy leak occurring at this point prevented further search until repaired. Mr. Sterlin claimed that he had spent all the means at his command, therefore consented on the solicitation of his friends to start a stock company. The books were no sooner opened than the farmers willingly came forward and took from one to five shares each at a \$100 per share, which amounted to several thousand dollars. During the time that the organization was being perfected and the repairs on the dam made, heavy rains raised the water in the creek, which prevented further operations that season.

During the winter and spring following the ice had injured the dam materially, when more money was called for, which was readily subscribed. The company commenced, under the direction of Mr. Sterlin, to repair the dam soon after low

water in the early part of the summer, when pumping was resumed, which proceeded at first slowly, owing to leaks in the darn. This soon being repaired, the water was lowered sufficiently one Sunday that a search produced a small rusty anchor and a tiller, but before any other articles were reached a break occurred and filled the basin with water. This find renewed the faith of the stockholders, when Sterlin called for more money to make up for the losses incurred, which was paid in and the leak repaired the stockholders now being desperately in earnest to push the work to completion, informed Mr. Sterlin that the dam was not to be tampered with, when the pumps were put to work, and shortly after the bottom of the creek appeared in sight of the watchful eyes of the members present. With fierce earnestness several jumped into the mud nearly up to their waist with crobars and shovels, thoroughly probing the bottom of the hole, but found only mud. The boys got a few dimes for pumping, the stockholders had a few pumps on hand, but Mr. Sterlin had several thousand dollars, when he suddenly left for other parts.

From the time which we have considered down to the War of the Rebellion the settlers of Hammond pursued their various avocations in peace and with a fair degree of prosperity. Upon the breaking out of that historic struggle the citizens of the town took prompt and efficient steps to not only to send out in support of the Union her full quota of volunteers, but, in common with other towns of the county, raised the necessary funds to pay the liberal bounties very generally provided for at intervals during the war. The town furnished to the armies of the Union 162 men, of whom nine were wounded and seventeen died of disease contracted in the service.

The first school in the town, it is believed, was taught in the Scotch settlement in the winter of 1819-20. The town is now divided into thirteen school districts, and a comfortable school-house is found in each.

In recent years a very large and prosperous quarrying business has been developed in this town. It was begun in 1874 by H. A. Foster. There are now five quarries being operated which employ 250 men and turn out twenty car loads of stone per day. The firms engaged in this business are H. A. Foster, John

Finegan, at Hammond; Fowler & Lugdon, at South Hammond; the Smithers Quarry, operated by Mr. Foster; and the Finnegan Quarry at Buck Ledge. The stone thus obtained is a building sandstone of excellent quality, also for paving streets, flagging walks, etc., for which there is an increasing demand.

The agricultural interests in this town, like those of most other towns in the county, have changed in recent years from grain growing to dairying. There are several successful cheese factories, the product of which is shipped from Chippewa Bay and by rail.

Following is a list of the supervisors of the town from its formation to the present time, with their dates of service

1827-28, Sylvester Butrick; 1829-31, Roswell Ryan; 1832, Allen Cook; 1833, Orrin Brown; 1834-35, Loren Bailey; 1836-37, George C. Daniels; 1838, Orrin Brown; 1839-40, Enoch Taylor; 1841, Ebenezer N. Demirk; 1842, Orville E. Wightman; 1843, E. N. Demick; 1844-47, William H. Wright; 1848-49, Henry Zoller; 1850, Sidney S. Wait; 1851, Josiah Zoller; 1852-53, Abel P. Morse; 1854, Sidney S. Wait; 1855-62, Jonas Moyer; 1863-64, Henry Fowler; 1865-66, Jonas Moyer; 1867-69, Anthony W. Sigourney; 1870-71, Jonas Moyer; 1872-78, James S. More; 1879-88, William Rodger; 2d; 1889-92, Samuel W. Tilton; 1893-94, G. L. Phillips.

Hammond Village.- The settlement at this point has been described and was known in former years to some extent as "Hammond Corners." It is a station on what was formerly the Black River and Morristown Railroad, now leased to the New York Central. There is no manufacturing in the place, but it is and always has been a trading center for most of the eastern part of the town. The following persons are in trade there now: D. E. Wilson, drugs; A. McGruer and W. E. Forrester & Son, dry goods; John T. Roger, clothing; E. J. Murphy and R. S. Woodside, boots and shoes; W. R. Wilson and I. Franklin, groceries; J. Frank Wilson, jewelry; W. T. Stiles and Evens Brothers, hardware and farm implements. William Soper came from the town of Theresa, and in 1889 built a steam saw mill and grist mill, which he is now successfully operating.

There have been public houses in Hammond for many years. One of the older hotels was the Taylor House, built about 1839 by M. G. Phylo, and was discontinued in the fall of 1892. The Franklin House was finished in October, 1884, and is now conducted by F. Franklin. The postmaster at Hammond is Benjamin Franklin.

North Hammond is a small hamlet in the northeastern part of the town. S. W. Tilton carries on a general store and is postmaster.

Chippewa is a small hamlet on the bay and near the mouth of the creek of the same name. Allen & Denner have a general store there, and Alexander Alien is postmaster.

A post-office is also located at Oak Point, with W. C. Brooks in the office.

A post-office was established at South Hammond in 1833 with Jonathan King as postmaster. A hotel was erected in 1848 and discontinued in 1860. The postmaster at present is D. D. Moyer.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES.

Early in the summer of 1827 the Rev. Hiram Johnson organized a Congregational church with twelve members. The society was under the pastoral care of Rev. Joseph Taylor, who served them a few years, when the church was placed under the care of the St. Lawrence Presbytery through the sickness of the pastor. Soon after they united with the Union Society (Presbyterian), which was formed a few months later, claiming to be second cousins, hence were called for a number of years after the Congregational-Presbyterian Society. Services were held in school houses for several years.

A Union Presbyterian Society was formed and incorporated December 14, 1827, with Luther Lanphar, James Hill, and Walter Willson, trustees. They united a few years later with the Congregational body, retaining the Presbyterian form, which was lost by a reorganization that took place August 1, 1831, under Rev. James Sanford, with eighteen members, and united with the Ogdensburg

Presbytery. They built a house of worship in 1838 of stone. In 1871 the old building was torn down and replaced with the present wood structure, costing \$8,000. They have been under the pastoral care of Revs. James Roger, John McGregor, James Gardiner, H. B. Swift, and Andrew Milne, and is now under Rev. D. A. Ferguson, who has served faithfully eighteen years past. The society erected a parsonage at a cost of \$3,000 some years since, and is now in a prosperous condition.

The first Methodist Episcopal church of Hammond was organized September 29, 1832. There had been Methodist services held in the town long before that. A small building for worship was erected on the military road about half a mile from Hammond village in 1835. This was taken down in 1873 and the present edifice built at a cost of \$7,000. The present pastor is Rev. Mr. Phelps.

A Free Will Baptist church was formed in this town in April, 1843, but no regular permanent organization was effected and no church was ever built.

Trinity church of Rossie and Hammond was incorporated December 16, 1846, with Henry W. Chapman, William Laidlaw, S. Ophir, William Welch, Robert Morris, John Burrows, and James Hill, vestrymen. The society was in existence for some years, but never built a church.

The Universalist church was organized by Rev. J. S. Lee in October, 1870, and the present building at Hammond Corners was erected in the same year; it cost \$3,200. The first pastor was Rev. D. R. Libbey, who was succeeded by Rev. J. M. Johns. At the present time there is a service held once in two weeks by Mrs. D. L. R. Libbey. The membership is a little over fifty.