

## THE TOWN OF BLEECKER.

Bleecker is the central of the northern tier of towns of Fulton county. It was taken from Johnstown on the 4th of April, 1831; a portion was re-annexed in 1841, and in 1842 a part was taken off and annexed to Caroga, on the west, leaving the town nearly square. The surface is a mountainous upland, with ledges of rocks cropping out in almost every section of the town. Some of the highest points rise to the height of two thousand five hundred feet above the level of the sea. Stony creek is the principal stream of the town, taking its rise in the south-western part, and running in a north-easterly direction into Hamilton county. It is fed by smaller streams, and is used by lumbermen for the purpose of floating logs to the Sacondaga, into which it empties, and by which they are carried to the lumber mills at *Glen's Falls* and *Fort Edward on the Hudson*. There are seven lakes or ponds in the town, the principal of which are Chase's lake, in the northern part, Woodworth's, in the south-eastern corner, and what is called Peck's Pond, in the south-western corner of the town.

For many years lumbering and tanning have been carried on very extensively, until at the present time the forests are comparatively stripped of valuable timber; two or three firms, however, still do quite an extensive business in both tanning and lumbering. There are at present eleven saw-mills and two tanneries in the town. There are also two hotels, four stores, and two small establishments dealing in wet groceries.

Six school districts, with competent teachers, comprise the educational department of the town. Its religious interests are cared for by the Methodist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and "Christian" denominations. A large majority of the population are Germans; for a few years past they, with a few others, have turned their attention to farming, which to-day is taking the place of the leading industries of former days. The town comprises an area of 36,898 acres of land, according to the assessor's report for 1877, and the assessed value of the real estate for the same year was \$55,155. The aggregate tax raised for 1877 was \$1,731.57. Bleecker derives its name from Barent Bleecker, who, in company with Messrs. Glen and Lansing, purchased a tract of land covering a large portion of this town, April 4, 1793. Chase's and Mayfield patents cover the rest of the town, the former dated March 23, 1792, and the latter June 27, 1770. Of Chase and his purchase Mr. Simms speaks as follows in his "Trappers of New York":

"Wm. Chase, the patentee, was in early life a sea captain, and in the Revolution became an American privateer. He was captured and taken to Europe, and while there visited France. After the war he removed from Providence, Rhode Island, to Hoosick, New York. At the latter place he built a bridge, by constructing which he was enabled to purchase some 12,000 acres of land in the western part of Fulton county. A large tract of land adjoining his, and which Chase intended to buy, was subsequently sold in Albany by auction, and was purchased by Barent Bleecker, Cornelius Glen and Abraham G. Lansing. It was known as Bleecker and Lansing's patent. Failing to secure this tract of land, on which he seems to have set his affections, Capt. Chase was heard to exclaim, with an oath, 'I would rather have lost my right in heaven than a title to this soil.'"

An Indian trail ran through the town, from south to north, passing through what is now Bleecker village, past Pine tannery in the north, and so on into Hamilton county. For a number of years Lindley's Corners, near the centre of the town, was also the business centre. Subsequently the Bleecker tannery, near the south line of the town, was built by a Yankee firm, Richards & Co., and gathered around it the hamlet known as Bleecker village, which attracted the business of the town to that point.

### EARLY SETTLERS.

The pioneers of Bleecker settled in the territory of the town while it was

a part of Johnstown. Among those who found themselves in Bleecker when the division was made were James Morse, William Rood, Hiram Lindsley, William Egan, Gad Hamilton and others, mostly from New England. They settled here about the year eighteen hundred. Soon after others began to make this their home, being the prominent men of the town in their day;—John Donaldson, William Bowler, Henry Lippart, and a few others, form the link between the first settlers and the present inhabitants of the town.

### INDUSTRIAL, RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL BEGINNING.

The first grist-mill was built by William Chase soon after his patent was granted. It was located a little east of Lindley's Corners, on a branch of West Stony creek, and went to decay many years ago.

At present there is no custom grist-mill in the town, and the inhabitants under the necessity of going to Gloversville for their milling. Mr. J. Peters, one of the principal lumbermen in the town, has a feed mill, run on his own accommodation.

The first house of unhewn logs in the town, according to tradition, was built by early settlers at Lindley's Corners. The first hewn log house was built by Martin Hopfield, on the old Caroga road, west from Lindley's Corners. The first frame house was built where John M. Peters now lives, at Lindley's Corners. The first brick house, and the only one in the town, was built in 1874, by Joseph Holler, in the western part of the town, near the Caroga line.

The oldest grave-yard in the town is on the flat just north of Lindley's Corners.

The first school-house in the town was built at or near Eastman's, on the line of Hamilton county, in 1824, chiefly through the influence of Joseph Eastman.

The first saw-mill was built on a stream that empties into Stony creek above Lindley's Corners, and called "Barlow's mill."

The town is divided into six school districts, and the school-houses are located as follows: number one, at Lindley's Corners; number two, at the hotel of Michael Heintz, south of the center of the town; number three, at Bleecker village, where the first teacher was Nancy Foot; number four, on the western side of the town—here the first teacher was Asa Greenfield; number five, at Pine Tannery, and number six, at Smith Deming's tannery.

The first tannery in the town was built by William I. Bellinger, near the western side of the town, at what is now called Bleecker village, and went to decay two years ago.

Burr & Co. built a cabinet-ware factory on the stream below the tannery at the village, and operated it for several years, when it was abandoned and fell into decay.

The first store in the town was built and managed by Richards & Lincoln, in connection with their tannery at Bleecker.

The first tavern was kept by S. S. Eastman, near the south line of the town, where Mr. Bussey now keeps a hotel.

The first blacksmith shop was built and operated by Gad Hamilton, north of Lindley's Corners.

Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. King, and Mrs. Whitney, were the first ladies in the town who made a business of weaving for their neighbors.

The first preachers in the town were Rev. Messrs. Goss and Hurd, who ministered to the old Northampton Methodist circuit, which is now in the Saratoga district of the Troy Conference. They preached at Lindley's Corners once in two weeks, alternating. They traveled on horseback.

at that date buggies, plank roads, and even turnpikes were not in fashion.

There is only one post office in the town; it was established about 1844 at Bleecker village, with E. A. Campbell as post master. Hiram Vandenberg is the present incumbent.

#### VILLAGES.

Bleecker is the only village deserving the name. Mr. Isaac Van Nostrand formerly owned the land upon which it stands. The village contains a hotel, a brewery, a church, a school-house, two saw-mills, a store, a broom handle factory, six blacksmith shops, and twenty-three dwellings. The men who have lived here longest are, John Donaldson and Hiram Vandenberg.

There is a little hamlet at Heintz's, near the center of the town, and another at Smith & Deming's tannery, in the northeastern part of the town. Pine tannery, and Smith & Deming's, are the only ones now doing business in the town.

#### CHURCHES IN BLEECKER.

The "Christian" denomination owns no church property in the town, but its members hold their services in the school-house of district No. 1, at Lindley's Corners. The society is very small, and depends largely upon assistance from the outside for support. Rev. Mr. Styles is the present very efficient pastor.

The "Evangelical Methodist church" is the oldest in the town, having been organized in 1850. The church edifice is a frame building, about thirty by forty, and located some three miles north of Bleecker village, on the old plank road. The society is composed of Germans, and is self-supporting.

A Presbyterian church was built in 1855 at Bleecker village, with Rev. Abijah Green as pastor. The church edifice was of wood, about thirty by fifty, neatly and substantially finished, and furnished in modern style. After struggling for nineteen years against obstacles and discouragements, the society, in 1874, leased the church property to Hiram Vandenberg, for a term of ninety-nine years, and for the sum of one dollar; it was soon turned over to and occupied by the Methodist Episcopal society.

A Roman Catholic church stands four miles northwest of Bleecker village. It was built of wood, 30 by 40 feet, in 1858. Services are held monthly.

The Lutheran church, located two miles northwest of Bleecker, on the old plank road, an edifice of wood, about twenty-five by thirty-five feet, was built in 1862. The society is small, and has preaching only once a month.

The Methodist Episcopal society which worships at Bleecker village owns and occupies the church property formerly held by the Presbyterians. It is valued at \$2,500. The membership is thirty-five. Rev. Edwin Genge was the first pastor, and was followed by Revs. Messrs. Coons, Powell, Taylor, and Amos Osborn, the present pastor. The Sunday-school connected with this church, under the lead of Hiram Vandenberg, is in a prosperous condition. The average attendance is about fifty; there are one hundred volumes in the library. Another school, at Lindley's Corners, under the auspices of this society, is largely attended both summer and winter.

#### TOWN RECORDS.

The records of this town are in a fair condition, and from them we cull a few items of interest:

September 8th, 1831, James Leslie gave a deed of one acre of land to Nicholas Stoner, John Mead, and Jacob Mead, trustees of school district No. 4, for school purposes.

Road district No. 1 was laid out to begin "at the west line of John Bovee; thence east to Briah Bierd's bars, in front of his house. District No. 2 begins at Briah Bierd's bars, and thence westerly, and ends at Elijah Lindsley's barn."

The first road laid out by the commissioners of highways was defined, November 12th, 1831, as beginning at the State road, "four chains northerly from Isaac Van Nostrand's, and running to the road laid out by Mr. Burr's house." This road changes its course about twenty-five times.

The expenses of the supervisor for the town in 1832 were \$7.42.

The record of the first town meeting held in Bleecker sets forth that: "at a town meeting held at the house of Gad Hamilton, on the first Tuesday

of May, 1831, in and for the town of Bleecker, pursuant to an act to erect the town of Bleecker, in the County of Montgomery, passed the 4th day of April, 1831, the following persons were severally elected to the following offices, to wit: To the office of supervisor, Isaac Van Nostrand; town clerk, Jonathan Dean; justices of the peace—Jonathan Dean, William Lindsley, John Mead, Joseph Eastman; assessors—Amasa Stevens, Ephraim Lindsley, Joseph Eastman; commissioners of highways—John Mead, Elijah Lindsley, Othniel Allen; overseers of poor—Richard Hart, Joseph Eastman; collector, Daniel Mead; commissioners of common schools—Lodewick P. Stevens, Rilas Eastman, Eli R. Burr; inspectors of schools—Amasa Stevens, Joseph Eastman, Elijah Lindsley; constables—James Leslie, jr., Daniel Mead, Elijah Lindsley, Adam Long."

It was resolved that fence-viewers have 75 cents per day, and that \$30 be raised for school money. This opening record closes as follows: "Given under our hands the first Tuesday of May (being the third day), in the year 1831. Jonathan Dean, town clerk; Aaron Hasing, justice of the peace of Johnstown."

The following is a full list of supervisors and town clerks, from the organization of the town to the present time.

#### SUPERVISORS.

1831, Isaac Van Nostrand; 1832-4, Artois Hamilton; 1835, William J. Bellinger; 1836-7, Garret A. Newkirk; 1838, Jonathan Dean; 1839-41, Garret A. Newkirk; 1842-4, Benjamin K. Eaton; 1845, David Foote; 1846, William Bowler; 1847, David Foote; 1848-9, William Bowler; 1850-1, Samuel W. Odell; 1852, Truman Enos; 1853-4, Eugene W. Enos; 1855, Robert Campbell; 1856, Zachariah J. Smith; 1857, Eugene W. Enos; 1858, Theron A. Hamlin; 1859, Eugene W. Enos; 1860, Joseph C. Zeyst; 1861, George A. Burr; 1862-4, Marshall G. Hunt; 1865-7, John M. Peters; 1868, Marshall G. Hunt; 1869, John M. Peters; 1870-1, M. G. Hunt; 1872-4, Hiram Denning; 1875-8, Charles Bowler.

#### TOWN CLERKS.

1831, Jonathan Dean; 1832, Jacob Spaulding; 1833-4, William J. Bellinger; 1835-6, William W. Collins; 1837, Jonathan Dean; 1838, James McKinlay; 1839-40, William Conine; 1841, Willard C. Wright; 1842, Robert A. Van Nest; 1843, W. C. Wright; 1844-5, Ephraim A. Campbell; 1846-7, W. C. Wright; 1848-9, John D. Yenney; 1850, W. C. Wright; 1851, Z. J. Smith; 1852-3, John Rychen, jr.; 1854, P. O. Belding; 1855, M. Van Steenburgh; 1856, John Meyer; 1857-8, Isacher R. Ford; 1859, Joseph Zeyst; 1860, M. Van Steenburgh; 1861, Hiram Vandenberg; 1862, John H. Smith; 1863, John Meyer; 1864, Daniel Doice; 1865, M. G. Hunt; 1866-9, John Meyer; 1870-1, Hiram Vandenberg; 1872, Wallace Yost; 1873, J. H. Smith; 1874-5, August Ernst; 1876, John Meyer; 1877-8, Francis Unger.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL.

HIRAM VANDENBURGH is a native of Northumberland, Saratoga Co., N. Y., and was born in the year 1832. He is now the largest lumber dealer in this lumber district. He employs a large number of men and teams the year round. He has two mills near his residence in Bleecker village, where he manufactures nearly or quite one and a half million feet of lumber and timber annually, which is nearly all drawn to Gloversville, and shipped to different parts of the State. He also manufactures large quantities of lath and broom handles, which find ready sale in the districts where they are used. He pays cash, thereby giving his men the advantage over credit customers at the stores. He has held important town offices, among them the supervisorship of the town. He bears a large share of the burdens of the Methodist church, to which he belongs.

HIRAM DEMING was born in the town of Day, Saratoga county, about the year 1840. His early education was limited to the common schools of that day. In 1867-8 Mr. Deming located in Bleecker, and engaged in lumbering and tanning. He is doing a very large business, especially in the tanning of sole leather. Against his wishes he has served three terms in the board of supervisors of this county, to the entire satisfaction of his constituents.

WILLIAM H. BOWLER is a tanner by trade, and was born in Bleecker in or about 1841. He has worked his way up through all the grades of tanning, until he has become an expert in the business and has a high reputation in the art of converting the raw material into first class sole leather.