

TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY.

THE TOWN OF AMSTERDAM.

The present town of Amsterdam was originally included in the town of Caughnawaga, a territory that embraced all that part of Montgomery county north of the Mohawk river and east of the bold hill spurs known as "The Noses." Formed in 1788, the comparatively young town of Caughnawaga was, five years after, itself subdivided into, or rather merged in, the new towns of Johnstown, Mayfield, Broadalbin and Amsterdam. Thus the formation of Amsterdam occurred on the 12th of March, 1793. At that date, no village of importance was within its bounds. Embryo settlements had come into being much earlier in the adjacent town of Florida—formerly Warrensbush; while Caughnawaga had its substantial stone church—built in 1763—and surrounding hamlet, and Johnstown, the shire town of Montgomery county, as it had been of Tryon county, was a village of considerable importance. The creation of Fulton county caused a division of this town, and the northern portion was set off April 18th, 1838, to form the town of Perth (Fulton county), which bounds it on the north. It is bounded east by Schenectady county, south by the Mohawk river, and west by the town of Mohawk. It contains 20,054 acres, three-fourths of which are under cultivation.

The soil of the Mohawk river flats and islands is exceedingly rich, and produces large and valuable crops, among which broom corn is, perhaps, the most important and remunerative. North of the bluffs and slopes that hem the river, the soil is of a lighter character, yellowish loam, yet affording fair returns to a varied agriculture, and is well adapted to grazing and the raising of most cereals.

No mountains rear their summits in the town, but the land is pleasantly undulating from the river to its northern bounds, affording many a landscape of quiet, pastoral beauty. Great ledges of gray limestone lie along the bluffs on the margin of the river; quarries of it are worked to a considerable extent in several localities, even some miles back from the general ridge, from which stone of most excellent quality is obtained for local use, which is also in good demand for canal locks, bridges, etc. A large quantity was furnished for the railroad bridge, and the new Capitol building at Albany.

The principal stream of the town is the Chuctenunda, which weds the Mohawk at Amsterdam village. The name is regarded as purely Indian (Ouc-te-nun-da in olden records), and said to mean "twin sisters," in allusion to a stream of similar volume and the same name emptying into the river on the opposite shore, the mouths being but a few rods apart. The northern Chuctenunda is traceable some fifteen miles, several small brooks falling into its channel. Its descent is rapid, and it has allured about fifteen manufacturing establishments to its banks. The supply of water being too limited and inconstant, a reservoir, covering one hundred acres or more, was constructed in 1860, about ten miles from the village, for the purpose of keeping up the supply. The increasing number of mills and factories on this stream necessarily increased the demand for water, and, in 1876, the enterprising mill-owners enlarged this reservoir, or rather constructed a new and more substantial one in the same locality, covering about seven hundred acres, which has proved a valuable adjunct in maintaining a regular and sufficient flow of water. The reservoir is in places

over thirty feet deep. It has an outlet tube three feet in diameter, and cost about \$25,000. It is soon to be in telegraphic communication with the village. East of the Chuctenunda two other streams, not considerable or constant, fall into the Mohawk; while the Fort Johnson creek (formerly Kayaderosseras, a large and valuable stream, flows across the western part of the town and murmurs close by the substantial walls of Fort Johnson. Evas Kil creek, flowing into the Mohawk at Cranesville, took its name from Mrs. Eva Van Alstyne, who was wounded and scalped by the Indians in 1755, while crossing this stream on her way from Johnstown to Schenectady.

EARLY PATENTS.

The first settlements in the town are supposed to have been commenced as early as 1710 or 1712, the pioneers being German Palatines, who were sent here under the patronage of Queen Anne of England, and Holland Dutch, from Schenectady and other parts, who settled along the Mohawk about the same time. But little, however, is known of them in connection with this town at that early period. The title to twenty acres of land lying in Amsterdam was issued to Geraldus Camfort, April 22d, 1703. This is probably the first patent granted by the English Colonial Government within the present limits of Montgomery county. Another patent was granted to Ebenezer Wilson and John Abeel, "one half to each," called the Chatsandackte Patent, which bears date February 22d, 1706; but there is no evidence that any of the patentees or their representatives settled on their lands at that early date. In 1716, Philip Groat, of Rotterdam, acquired the title, direct from the Indians, to a strip of land in the eastern part of the town. This was, without doubt, the earliest grant obtained from the dusky lords of the forest. It embraced the present site of Cranesville, and conveyed "all the land between the creeks" (about one mile), as far north from the Mohawk as the grantee might desire. When removing hither Groat was drowned in the Mohawk, near Schenectady, by breaking through the ice. He was in a sleigh, accompanied by a woman, who was also drowned. His widow and three sons, Simon, Jacob and Lewis, the latter being then only four years old, with several domestics, made the intended settlement. In 1730 the Groat brothers erected a grist-mill at what is now Cranesville. This was the first mill of the kind erected on the north side of the Mohawk, and for a time served the settlement at German Flats, fifty miles beyond. The first bolting-cloth in this mill was put in by John Burns, a German, in 1772. In the summer of 1755, Lewis Groat was taken prisoner by three hostile Indians, a father and sons, belonging to the Owenagunga tribe, who conveyed him to their settlement in Canada, where he was forced to run the gauntlet. He was soon after sold to a French Canadian, named Louis de Snow, with whom he remained as a servant until the declaration of war between Great Britain and France, when he was claimed as a British prisoner, and for six months imprisoned in St. Francis Way, near Montreal. He was finally liberated, and returned home after an absence of four years and four months.

FORT JOHNSON.

Sir William Johnson, in the year 1742, purchased a lot of land on the Kayaderosseras (now Fort Johnson), creek, about three miles north-west from the mouth of the Chuctenunda, in the town of Amsterdam, "for the purpose," as he asserts, "of securing a valuable water-power, on which he proposed to erect a saw-mill, that would be certain to yield a profit of full forty pounds per annum." He soon after moved from Warrensbush, across the Mohawk, to his new possessions. In 1744 he erected a valuable flouring mill upon the brisk stream, and also built an elegant stone mansion for his own residence, conferring upon the estate the name of Fort Johnson. This massive stone structure, still standing, is 35 feet deep by 60 feet front, and two stories high, with lofty attic, and large dormer windows. It was elegantly finished for that period, as is evinced by the richly ornamented carvings of oak and mahogany, paneled wainscoting, spacious halls and staircase. Standing, as it does, on the main thoroughfare from the East to the far West, on low grounds close by the creek, the hills rising abruptly in the rear, it bids fair, for many years, to be an interesting relic of earliest civilization. Here, after Sir William had built the "Hall" at Johnstown, and removed thither in 1763, his son (afterwards Sir John Johnson), continued to reside.



One mile east of Fort Johnson was the residence of Colonel Daniel Claus, a son-in-law of Sir William. This dwelling was subsequently burned and never rebuilt.

[The accompanying engraving of Fort Johnson was taken from Lossing's "Field Book of the Revolution," by permission of Harper Brothers, the publishers of that excellent and highly interesting work.]

Rev. Gideon Hawley made a journey, in 1753, from Albany to Oghkwaga (now Windsor, Broome Co.), by way of the Mohawk valley. Forty years later he wrote a narrative of the trip, from which we take the following:

"At sunset we were politely received at Colonel Johnson's gate, by himself in person. Here we lodged. His mansion was stately, and situate a little distance from the river, on rising ground, and adjacent to a stream which turned his mill. This gentleman was well known in his civil military and private character. He was the first civil character in the county of Albany at that day; and after this, by means of the war which commenced in 1755, and his connection with the Indians, of whom he was appointed sole superintendent for that part of the continent, he arose to great eminence. In 1756 he was made a baronet. It was favourable to our mission to have his patronage, which I never lost. In the year 1765 I found him at another mansion about eight miles from this, and four from the river. This last was a very superb and elegant edifice, surrounded with little buildings for the accommodation of the Indians when down upon treaties or conferences with him. Mr. Woodbridge and I took our leave of him in the morning, rode up to the ford and crossed the river, and came over to the south side, and rode to what was called the Mohawk castle, near which was a stone chapel and village of Indians, situate on Scoharry creek, not far from the place where it discharges its waters into the Mohawk."

GUY PARK.

Still another mile east—each domain a mile square—was the low, two-story, strongly-built stone mansion called, with the surrounding estate, Guy Park, where the nephew, as well as son-in-law, of Sir William Johnson, Guy Johnson, resided. The house continued to wear its stern, semi-prison appearance till 1846, when it passed into the hands of James Stewart, by whom it was considerably enlarged, its roof raised, and the whole building remodeled and converted into a handsome dwelling, still bearing the name of Guy Park.

These places were abandoned soon after the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, and were subsequently declared forfeited and confiscated by the Federal Government, and sold to other parties. E. Akin is now in possession of Fort Johnson, where he has resided for several years. A portion of the mile square originally belonging with it was first purchased by — Kyler, and afterwards transferred, successively, to Schuyler, Van Schoick, Maxwell, Smith, and, lastly, in 1840, to Lansing W. Sweet, the present occupant. Another portion, after passing through numerous

hands, became the property of Joshua Wilde in 1845, and from him it passed, in 1854, to his son, James L. Wilde, who continues to occupy it. Still another part, now owned by Abram Lingenfelder, was first settled by Nathan Wells, and afterwards owned successively by Alphenbreck Putnam and Benj. Turney, who, in 1863, sold it to its present owner.

The glove factory of James Finehout and the skin mill of Coughnet and Moore are also located on this square, near Fort Johnson. A grist-mill, the third in order, now occupies the site of the one erected by Sir William, the two former having burned down.

THE PIONEERS OF AMSTERDAM.

The farm at present owned by D. W. Ecker and I. Collins was first settled by Geo. Shuler, before or during the Revolution. For a long time Mr. Shuler kept the valuables and spare clothing of the family in an iron bound chest, secreted in a large stone pile, to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Indians and Tories.

Peter Van Wormer was among the first to settle in the valley. He located on lot No. 3, Kayaderosseras patent. Cornelius Dodds settled in 1793, on the farm now owned by his grand-son, C. Dodds. He was a soldier in the war of 1812.

The farm upon which Wilson Putnam is now located, was originally settled by Victor Putnam, some time previous to the Revolution. During the war Mr. P. often took his family across the river to Fort Hunter, for safety. He was at one time stationed there for the purpose of arousing the neighborhood, upon the approach of the enemy, by firing an alarm gun.

James Allen settled in 1792, where J. C. Chalmers resides. His original purchase also included the farm of James Donnan.

In the year 1794, Isaac and Samuel Jones, cousins, from Orange, N. J., purchased lands in the eastern part of the town. A small settlement had previously been commenced in this portion of Amsterdam, and five families were already located in as many log cabins near each other. Their names were Robison, Ellis, Glass, Allen and Olmsted. Isaac Jones, the same year, moved his family and settled here. In the following year, Samuel Jones came on with his family and located where his grand-son, J. V. Jones, now resides. A year or two later, John Jones, the father of Isaac, moved in and bought out Mr. Robison, and Joseph Baldwin, a relative of the Joneses by marriage, purchased and settled on the farm of Mr. Olmstead. Samuel B. Jones, a native of Massachusetts, settled in 1797, where his grand-son, Samuel Jones, now resides. The first school-house erected in this part of the town stood on "Olmstead Hill," near the present residence of A. Van Vrankin, and Samuel Jones was among the first who taught in it.

The farm now occupied by M. W. Clizbe, was originally owned by a Mr. Kennedy, who settled on it some time previous to 1800. He was an enterprising fruit grower and nurseryman, producing several new varieties of fruit, hitherto unknown. "The Kennedy farm" was purchased in 1807, by Joseph Clizbe, grandfather of the present owner.

Joseph Hagaman made the first settlement at Hagaman's Mills, as early as 1777. He came from Dutchess Co., N. Y., and was the son of Henry Hagaman, a native of Holland. He was the first to locate in the northern part of the town, having previously purchased four hundred acres of land, as follows: one hundred acres from Mr. Vischer, of Schaghticoke, for \$5 per acre, and three hundred acres of White and Palmer, of Saratoga Co., for \$2.75 per acre. The country at that time was very sparsely settled. At Vedder's mills there were only the grist and saw mills and a blacksmith shop, with small dwellings for each. The only road north of Manny's Corners, was an opening, cut through the forest, just wide enough to allow the passage of a wagon. Mr. Hagaman at once commenced improvements on his new homestead, the erection of a saw mill being among the first made. It is related that here the name of "Amsterdam" was first adopted for this part of the then large district of Caughnawaga. The scattered settlers had assembled for the purpose of raising the frame of Mr. Hagaman's saw mill, when it was proposed to give a name to this section, whereby it might be known and more definitely distinguished. A vote was taken, and "Amsterdam" was almost unanimously agreed upon, the name being retained at its organization as an independent town.

A relic of those early times, now in the possession of David Cady, Esq., Cashier of the First National Bank of Amsterdam, reminds one of the days when negro slavery existed by constitutional right even in free and

independent New York, and the barter and sale of a human being was a legitimate transaction. It is a deed executed Aug. 13th, 1791, by Samuel D. Wenner to David Cady, (grandfather of the present David Cady), which, "in consideration of 50 pounds, current money," conveys the "negro wench named 'Cate' aged 25." The grantor also affirms "said wench to be honest and sober."

It is reported that in 1802 there were "five mills upon the Chuctenunda," (Amsterdam at that time included West Galway). Eleven years later, it is recorded that, upon the same stream "there are in all 5 grain and 4 saw mills, 2 carding machines, 2 fulling machines, 2 oil mills and a trip hammer," besides "the extensive iron manufactory of S. & A. Waters, where mill-saws, mill-irons and grass scythes are annually manufactured and sold to the amount of 8,000 to 10,000 dollars. This establishment cost \$6,000, and its enterprising proprietors have obtained a high reputation for their wares. They sell about 6,000 grass scythes annually."

MINOR VILLAGES OF THE TOWN.

HAGAMAN'S MILLS is a small village situated on Chuctenunda creek, in the northern part of the town, about four miles north-east of the village of Amsterdam. Besides the "Star Hosiery Mills," it contains a post-office, two churches—Methodist and Reformed—a grist mill and saw mill, and two stores. Various other industries are also represented. M. V. Herrick became proprietor of the grist and saw mills in 1875. He is a native of this State, and has lived in the town since 1840.

The Star Hosiery Mills of H. Pawling & Son., is the oldest establishment of the kind in the county. The hosiery business was commenced in 1857, by Pawling & Jackson, on a small scale at first, in connection with wool carding and the manufacture of woolen goods. The business subsequently merged into knit goods exclusively, under the firm name of H. Pawling & Son, who are at present running four sets of machinery, giving employment to eighty hands, turning out sixty dozen shirts and drawers daily, manufacturing about \$150,000 worth of goods annually.

TRIBES HILL is located on the western border of the town, just north of the N. Y. Central Railroad, on the brow of a considerable elevation. A portion of the village lies in the town of Mohawk. It received its name from the circumstance that, upon this elevation, the various Indian tribes were accustomed to assemble. The place contains a post-office, a Methodist and a Roman Catholic church, a store, school-house, and the usual number of shops, with a population of about 200. At the railroad station near the village, a suspension bridge spans the Mohawk, connecting it with Fort Hunter. The bridge was built by a stock company in 1852-3, at a cost of \$17,500. It is 536 feet between abutments and is supported by six cables, each three inches in diameter. The towers are constructed of heavy oak timbers, and the bridge will support a weight of 5,000 pounds per foot.

Rev. John Taylor, in the journal of his missionary tour through this region in 1802, made the following entry :

"July 23rd.—Tripes (alias Tribes) Hill, in the town of Amsterdam, county of Montgomery. * * * This place appears to be a perfect Babel

as to language. But very few of the people, I believe, would be able to pronounce Shibboleth. The articulation even of New England people, is injured by their being intermingled with the Dutch, Irish and Scotch. The character of the Dutch people, even on first acquaintance, appears to be that of kindness and justice. As to religion, they know but little about it, and are extremely superstitious. They are influenced very much by dreams, and apparitions. The most intelligent of them seem to be under the influence of fear from that cause. The High Dutch have some singular customs with regard to their dead. When a person dies, nothing will influence ye connections, nor any other person, unless essentially necessary, to touch the body. When the funeral is appointed, none attend but such as are invited. When the corpse is placed in the street, a tune is sung by a choir of persons appointed for the purpose—and continue singing until they arrive at the grave; and after the body is deposited, they have some remarks made—return to ye house and in general get drunk. 12 men are bearers—or carriers—and they have no relief. No will is opened, nor debt paid, under six weeks from ye time of death."

It may as well be remarked here that funerals were not the only occasions on which the ancient Amsterdammers and their neighbors in general got drunk. Christmas festivities were equally thirsty work; witness the following extract from a journal kept by the missionary Kirkland in 1789:

"The manner in wch. ye ppl. in yse parts keep Xmas day in commem'g of the Birth of ye Saviour, as ya pretend is very affect'g and strik'g. They generally assemble for read'g prayers, or Divine service—but after, they eat, drink and make merry. They allow of no work or servile labour on ye day and ye following—their servants are free—but drinking swearing fighting and frolic'g are not only allowed, but seem to be essential to ye joy of ye day."

CRANESVILLE, situated on the north bank of the Mchawk, about three miles east of Amsterdam village, is a small station on the N. Y. Central Railroad, containing a church, hotel, store, saw mill, a post office, and a cluster of comfortable dwellings, mainly of farmers. It was named in honor of David Crane, who settled there in 1804, and kept a hotel for many years.

ROCK CITY, situated one and a half miles north-east of Amsterdam, contains the Amity knitting mills of John Maxwell. In 1857 Mr. Maxwell formed a copartnership with Adam W. Kline, and the firm, converting a small saw mill at this place into a hosiery mill, commenced the manufacture of knit goods, with one set of machinery, to which was subsequently added the second set. In 1860 their mill was burned, after which Mr. Maxwell purchased the entire interest, erected a new mill, and in 1862 commenced manufacturing again with one set of machinery. He soon after added another set, operating them successfully till 1872, when this mill, also, was destroyed by fire. It was, however, rebuilt the same year, on a much larger scale. Mr. Maxwell is at present running four sets of machinery, with a capacity of eighty dozen shirts and drawers per day. He employs about sixty operators, and manufactures for the market about \$75,000 worth of goods annually. The stone quarry and lime kiln of D. C. and N. Hewett, are located at this place, where is cut and carved an endless variety of stone for building purposes, walks, bridges, etc.