

## THE TOWN OF CHARLESTON.

The town of Charleston, the third in point of age in the county, was formed from the original town of Mohawk on the 12th day of March, 1793. The early history of the town of Glen, given in another part of this volume, is in part the early history of this town, from the fact that during the year 1823 Charleston was reduced to less than one-half of its former proportions by the creation of the towns of Root and Glen; the former having been organized January 27, and the latter April 10. The list of the first officers of the town and much other interesting historical matter are lost, owing to the fact that in the year 1867 Schuyler Gordon, who was the town clerk, kept the records in his store at Oak Ridge, and in the autumn of that year the store was burned and the town records were consumed in the flames.

Among the early settlers in the town was John E. Van Epps, who located at the site of the present village of Fultonville, in the town of Glen. From his nephew, Charles, who came about the same time, the town received its name.

Charleston, the only town in Montgomery county which does not border on the Mohawk river, is about five miles distant from it, the nearest point being where the town line strikes the Schoharie creek. The latter forms its eastern boundary, and is the line of separation between it and the town of Florida, and also in part the dividing line between Montgomery and Schenectady counties. The surface is generally a rolling upland, descending abruptly to the beds of the small streams which flow in every direction; the principal one, Mill brook, flowing east and uniting with the Schoharie about two miles north of the village of Burtonville. In the eastern part of the town the land bordering upon the Schoharie consists chiefly of bluffs, varying in height from 50 to 100 feet.

When the first white settlers came into this section, the adaptability of the water of the Schoharie for milling purposes was at once seen, and numerous mills were erected along its course.

### CHARLESTON'S PIONEERS.

Among the early settlers prior to the war of the Revolution, were: Thomas Machin, Capt. John Stanton, Robert Winchell, Adin Brownley, Henry Mapes, David Kimball, Nathan Kimball, Ezekiel Tracy, Nathan Tracy, Abner Throop, John Eddy and Abiah Beaman; and these were followed later by Judah Burton, Abram Davis, John Butler, Charles Earling, Benjamin Beard, John Reimer, John Brand, John Hamilton, Isaac Conover, Peter Fero, Edward Montanye, Henry Shibly, John Schuyler, Garret I. Lansing, Alexander Hubbs, George Teeple, John Cochley, John Hoag, Elijah Herrick, Abram Guile, Ephraim Burtch, William Jamison, Joshua Tubbs, Christian Overbaugh, Sylvanus Willoughby, James Sutphen, Benjamin K. Kneeland, Elias Cady, Francis Hoag, Nathaniel Bowdish, Ira H. Corbin, James Jermain, Henry G. Staley, David Hamilton, James Petteys, Peleg Petteys, Cornelius Wiser, Sergeant Heath, Daniel Bryant, Clark Randall, Thomas Leak, Michael Winter, Jacob Weed, Jacob Smith, Ethan Eaton, Stephen Borden, Ezra Gordon, Richard Davis, Moses Pierson, Richard Clute, William Fero and John Onderkirk.

This town witnessed much of the distress suffered by the dwellers on the frontier during the Revolution, from the fact that the raiding parties of British, Indians and Tories usually chose the Schoharie valley as their route from the valley of the Susquehanna to that of the Mohawk. The road leading directly north from Oak Ridge was the old Indian road, and on one occasion, during one of the hurried marches from the Susquehanna to the Mohawk, the British and Indians were pursued by a party of Americans, and, a short distance north of the house of late occupied by

Noah Davis, built a barricade of their baggage-wagons, and for some time resisted the advance of the Americans, but were finally forced to retreat, burning the barricade as they left.

It was also on this road that the famous "stone-heap" was situated. There is a tradition that, long prior to the Revolutionary war, a white man was murdered at this spot, and the edict was issued that every Indian, in passing the spot, should throw a stone upon it. Who issued the command, and when it was issued, are questions whose answers are lost in the dim distance of time. The fact remains that every Indian who passed the spot did cast a stone upon it. One authority says: "Somewhere between Schoharie creek and Caughnawaga commenced an Indian road or foot-path which led to Schoharie. Near this road \* \* \* has been seen, from time immemorial, a large pile of stones, which has given the name 'Stone-heap Patent' to the tract on which it occurs, as may be seen from ancient deeds." Rev. Gideon Hawley, in the narrative of his tour through the Mohawk country, by Schoharie creek, in 1753, makes the following allusion to the stone-heap: "We came to a resting-place and breathed our horses, and slaked our thirst at the stream, when we perceived our Indian looking for a stone, which, having found, he cast to a heap which for ages had been accumulating by passengers like him who was our guide. We inquired why he observed that rite. He answered that his father practiced it and enjoined it on him. But he did not like to talk on the subject. \* \* \* This custom or rite is an acknowledgment of an invisible being. We may style him the unknown god whom this people worship. This heap is his altar. The stone that is collected is the oblation of the traveler, which, if offered with a good mind, may be as acceptable as a consecrated animal. But perhaps these heaps of stones may be erected to a local deity, which most probably is the case." On this, Ruttenber remarks: "The custom referred to had nothing of worship in it. \* \* \* The stone-heaps were always by the side of a trail or regularly traveled path, and usually at or near a stream of water. The Indians paused to refresh themselves, and, by throwing a stone or a stick to a certain place, indicated to other travellers that a friend had passed."

It was the custom of many of the early settlers, especially those who came from adjoining counties, to come to their new possessions in the spring and fell the trees, and in the fall burn them, and return to their homes to spend the winter months. After two or three years they would have sufficient space cleared to cultivate, and would then bring their families and build their log-houses.

The first woman in the vicinity of Charleston Four Corners was Elizabeth Caw. She occupied a log-house, with blankets hung in the doorways and windows to keep out the night air.

### CENTERS OF BUSINESS AND POPULATION.

**BURTONVILLE.**—Shortly after the close of the Revolutionary war, a tract of land, in the south-east end corner of the town, one mile square, was granted to Judah Burton and others. The date of the first settlement at this point is not definitely known, but it was probably very shortly after the close of the war, if not a year or two previous to that date, from the fact that Judah Burton in the year 1785, erected the first saw and grist-mill in the town. This building stood about half a mile below the location of the present mill at Burtonville, and was built by Felix Holt. A brisk business was carried on here, as it was for many years the only mill in town. The building remained until the year 1814, when a heavy freshet carried away the dam, and the business was abandoned at that point. In the same year

however, a mill was erected at the site of Burtonville, by Jonathan, Ebenzer and Abram Mudge, which remained until the year 1850. In that year, Judah Burton, the son of the original settler, built the fine structure at present occupied by J. W. & N. H. Meriness. Burton, after building the mill, carried on the business until 1854, when he sold out to Smith Colyer, who continued it for two years, and was then succeeded by Charles M. Sitterley, who sold out in the year 1876 to the present firm. J. W. Meriness came to the town in 1854, and was employed in the mill when it was in the hands of Colyer. He has been here in the business since that time, with the exception of four or five years.

In 1810, Joseph Blanchard erected a carding machine and fulling mill, where he carried on business for a number of years. In 1844, A. G. Randall commenced the business of manufacturing woolen goods at Burtonville, and four years thereafter built the mill now occupied by himself and his son, who are now doing a first class trade. In connection with the business of manufacturing woolens, they make grape, honey, and packing boxes, and also have a patent right for manufacturing spring beds.

In 1812, a nail factory was erected here, but the business was carried on only for a short time.

In 1817, a tannery was erected at this point by Benjamin Davis. He was succeeded in 1826 by Benjamin Palmer, who continued the business until 1863, when the tannery was abandoned.

The first blacksmith shop in the village of Burtonville was put up in 1812, by John Walker, although one had been built previous thereto, about a quarter of a mile outside of the village limits.

The first hotel at this point was established shortly after the commencement of the present century, by Captain Abram Mudge, and in connection with this business he kept a general store for the accommodation of the resident farmers. From him the settlement took its first name, Mudge Hollow, but when the post-office was established here, the more attractive name of Burtonville was conferred upon it.

In addition to these business enterprises, there are at Burtonville at the present time, a hotel, two stores, a saw-mill, a wagon shop, a harness shop, and two blacksmith shops. A sash and blind factory was formerly among the industries of the place, but was abandoned in 1862.

The first hotel at CHARLESTON FOUR CORNERS was kept by Philip Young, who began the business about the year 1810. Young also kept a blacksmith shop in connection with the hotel, and in this shop Isaac S. Frost, now of Canajoharie, established a store. Shortly after this Young built a hotel on the site of the one occupied by John H. Smith, but soon sold out to Captain Carl. The hotel thereafter frequently changed hands, among those who succeeded Carl being David Gordon, John and Andrew Frank, Edward Potter, Philip Rockafellow, Conrad Felters, William Hazard, and John H. Smith, the house at present being under the efficient management of the latter. Mr. Smith, although he has not the facilities for accommodating a large number of guests at one time, has the happy faculty of making every one who visits him feel very much at home.

Isaac S. Frost, who established the first store at Charleston Four Corners, was succeeded by Jesse Eaton. Eaton then took in a partner named Lovell, the firm name being Lovell & Eaton. Jas. Frost was the next occupant of the store, and he was succeeded by Charles McInstrey. The establishment was carried on as a union store, and afterward James Ford kept it for a year. After Ford, Wm. Maxwell carried on the business for eight or nine years, and was succeeded by Judson McDuffee. McDuffee built up a large trade, and did a thriving business until the year 1876, when the store was burned down. A store was afterwards opened by H. S. Simmonds in the lower part of an old wagon shop.

There have been a host of blacksmiths at the Four Corners since Philip Young first swung the sledge. Alonzo M. Scott, "the village blacksmith" at the present time, is a native of the town of Root, and was born in the year 1842. He came to Charleston in 1857, and went to farming at the Four Corners, but two years ago abandoned the plow for the forge. Mr. Scott was a member of the 13th Heavy Artillery during the rebellion, and served until the close of the war.

The other branches of business carried on at the Four Corners, are a cheese factory, a wagon shop, and an undertaking establishment. Although it does not show on the surface, there is quite an active business prosecuted at this point.

The first hotel at CHARLESTON, or, as it is more commonly known, RIDER'S CORNERS, was opened shortly after the close of the last century. It is not known definitely who was the first proprietor, but among the first was Wm.

Shaw, who was followed by a man named Wolverton. The hotel then passed successively into the hands of Elisha Wilcox, Richard Carley, Rowland Rider, Joseph Steel, Priest Rider, John A. Perkins, Daniel Schuyler, Geo. Fero, John A. Perkins, Wm. J. Rider, and the present owner and occupant, C. D. Hall. Formerly quite an extensive trade was carried on at this point. At one time about 25 years ago, there were two stores, a hotel, a millinery establishment, a blacksmith shop, two shoe shops, and a tannery. The tannery was established before the commencement of the present century by a man named Pierson, who was succeeded by his son, and the latter by Jacob Van Duysen. Jacob died and left the business to his son Joseph, who carried it on until about two years ago, when he closed it up. The store at this place was given up about eight years ago. Jacob Montanye was the last store keeper, and the business was formerly conducted in the building now owned by Mrs. Rebecca Rider.

At OAK RIDGE a store has been established for a number of years. The present merchant, Wasson C. Barlow, has by strict attention to business, and his courteous bearing toward his customers, established a large trade. Mr. Barlow is a native of the town, and is well known for many miles around. He served his country in the civil war, having enlisted in the 13th Heavy Artillery in December, 1863.

Formerly the farmers of Charleston devoted their lands to dairying purposes, but the high prices obtainable for hay for several years past induced many of them to sell off their cows and devote their attention to the raising of hay. Two years ago, after his store had been burned, Judson McDuffee went into the hay business. He purchases the hay from the farmers and ships it to buyers in New York and other large cities. Mr. McDuffee handles from four to five thousand tons of hay annually. He was born in the town in 1846, and has always lived in it. His father, William, owns three farms in the town at the present time, comprising, in all, 290 acres.

#### BRIDGES OVER THE SCHOHARIE.

Previous to the year 1790 the only way of crossing the Schoharie creek was by fording it, and during seasons of high water communication between one shore and the other was necessarily interrupted. In that year the first bridge across the creek was erected at Burtonville. It was an ordinary wooden structure, and remained until the year 1814. In that year, while John Eaton and a boy named Raymond Barlow were crossing the bridge in a wagon, it gave way. Eaton had been warned of the dangerous condition of the bridge previous to driving upon it, but replied that he would risk it. When about in the middle of the bridge the accident occurred, and Eaton was caught by the timbers, forced under the water and drowned. Barlow escaped uninjured, and is now living in the town. It was not until the year 1820 that another bridge supplied the place of the one thus destroyed. It was a simple wooden truss bridge, and remained until the year 1841, when it was carried off by a freshet. Two years thereafter a fine substantial iron bridge was erected, and part of it is still standing; but in the year 1869, the western part, from the island to Burtonville, was carried away, and in 1870 the bridge assumed the form it now wears.

#### SCHOOL HOUSES AND TEACHERS.

The first school house in the town was located at the present site of School No. 8, and was built about the year 1800. Among the earliest teachers in the town was Andrew Biggam, the father of Dr. Biggam at Rider's Corners. The first school house in District No. 3 was built about the year 1805; and about the year 1808 the first school house in District No. 1 was erected. In the year 1810 the first school house in the eastern part of the town was built, about a mile and a-half north of the village of Burtonville. It was twenty feet square, and the roof came to a point over the centre of the building. The present building was erected in 1842. Squire D. C. Chase, the present teacher of the school, began teaching here in 1840, in the old building, and taught until the year 1855. He then ceased for ten years. In 1865 he commenced again, and taught eight years; since which time he has been teaching during the winter term only. Squire Chase also holds the offices of justice of the peace and postmaster, and at his fine residence in the village of Burtonville he has three acres of land which he devotes to the purpose of raising grapes, pears and other fruit.

## THE SUCCESSION OF PHYSICIANS.

Previous to the commencement of the present century, Dr. Lathrope and Dr. Babbitt were the only practicing physicians in the town. Their district, however, covered a much larger field than the doctors of the present day find, as these two practitioners had patients throughout all that section embraced in the present towns of Charleston, Glen, Root, and Florida. It is true there were other doctors practicing here, but these two were the only resident physicians. About the commencement of the present century Dr. Wm. Smith began practicing in the town. He was living near Davis' Corners at the time, and when he was riding through the woods would cut a poplar switch for a riding whip, and when he arrived at home plant it. The row of poplar trees at this point is composed of Dr. Smith's old riding whips. Among those who in the earlier history of this town took their saddle bags and traveled about, restoring the sick and wounded to health and strength, was Dr. Alexander Sheldon. He came to the town about the year 1804, and shortly afterward erected the dwelling house occupied by him until his death, and which is now owned and occupied by Mrs. Rider. Dr. Sheldon had a large practice in Charleston, Glen and Root for about forty years.

Dr. Wm. Carlisle began practicing medicine in the town about the year 1823, and about seven years afterward Dr. Henry Belding moved here from the town of Florida.

In the year 1835 Dr. Burton opened an office here, but after a few years removed to the village of Fultonville.

About this time, or shortly after, Dr. Vine A. Allen, and Dr. Heath were located here, but neither remained longer than a year or two.

Among the present physicians of the town is Dr. W. H. Biggam, who began practicing at Rider's Corners, about the year 1842. Dr. Biggam is a hale, hearty looking man, 63 years of age, and is probably the best known man in the town. A skillful physician, and a kind, genial neighbor, he has by patient attention to business gained a name and a success he well deserves.

Dr. J. J. Miller, whose "Cottage Home" at Charleston Four Corners is well known to residents of the town, was born in Tompkins county, in 1835. During the early years of the war he was with the army, in the employ of the Christian Commission. He was at that time a minister of the Gospel, but eight or ten years after he took up the practice of medicine, and has been engaged in it ever since until the fall of 1877, when he started on a lecturing tour throughout the country. He has been a resident of Charleston for fourteen years.

Among the other physicians at present practicing in town are Dr. Henry Shibley, Dr. Palmer and Dr. Lumis.

## THE CHURCHES OF CHARLESTON.

## THE BAPTIST CHURCH AT RIDER'S CORNERS.

This is the oldest church in the town, and one of the oldest in this section. It was organized in 1793. The first building was erected on the site of the present structure. It was a frame edifice, and remained until the year 1833, when it was torn down and the present building erected in its place, much of the timber in the old church being used in the construction of the new one. Rev. Elijah Herrick was the first minister, and he was succeeded by his son Calvin. The present pastor is Rev. Alexander Mackey, and the membership numbers about 80.

## THE "CHRISTIAN" CHURCH OF CHARLESTON FOUR CORNERS.

This society was organized by an association of Free Will Baptists, on the 9th of December, 1813, with thirteen signers of the church roll. James Wilson was the first pastor. The society was without a church edifice until the year 1819, when a building was erected about a mile west of Oak Ridge, and was used freely by all denominations. Previous to this time the church meetings had been held in the school house. In 1822 Elder John Ross, then 28 years of age, was called to preside over the church, and for half a century this faithful man of God filled his important office. The present church edifice was erected in the summer of 1834. In the fall of 1872 Elder Ross resigned the pastorate, and Rev. Hezekiah Leonardson was called to occupy the place. He remained for two years, when the present pastor,

Rev. James Wright succeeded him. There are at present on the church roll the names of 165 members.

## BURTONVILLE CHURCHES.

The Methodist Church at Burtonville was organized in the year 1857. The membership is in the neighborhood of 100. The present pastor is the Rev. Mr. Browne.

The "Christian" Church of Burtonville was organized December 23d, 1865, and at that time there were eighteen names on the church roll. The membership at present is about 60.

## POST OFFICES AND POSTMASTERS.

The first post office in the town was established at Charleston (Rider's Corners), previous to the year 1807. In that year, which is as far back as the record extends, Levi Pettibone was appointed postmaster, his appointment bearing date October 1st. Since that time the names of the different postmasters and the dates of their appointment have been as follows: John Guernsey, January 1st, 1809. Adam Smith, January 10th, 1814. Moses Nash, October 1st, 1816. Adam Smith, June 3d, 1818. Benjamin Sheldon, November 2d, 1822. Peter S. Wyckook, December 18th, 1823. Wm. Carlisle, March 14th, 1827. Henry H. Belding, February 20th, 1834. Darius J. Hewett, March 19th, 1836. Thompson Burton, November 26th, 1836. Wm. H. Biggam, August 12th, 1845. Elisha H. Brumley, July 27th, 1849. Wm. H. Biggam, June 18th, 1853. Daniel W. Schuyler, March 29th, 1855. Wm. H. Biggam, November 3d, 1855. Charles H. Van Dusen, December 4th, 1862. Wm. H. Biggam, October 30th, 1867. Cornelius D. Hall, January 2d, 1873.

When the post-office was first established at Burtonville, it was named "Eaton's Corners," and Ebenezer Knibloe was, on April 13th, 1825, appointed the first postmaster. David Eaton was his successor, October 27th, 1828, and he was followed by Geo. E. Cady, May 23d, 1831. Isaac Brownell was the successor of Cady, his appointment bearing date October 20, 1837, and at this time the name of the office was changed to Burtonville. The postmasters and the dates of their appointment from that time to the present have been as follows: Judah Burton, May 18th, 1841. Stephen Hoag, August 12th, 1845. David M. Scott, October 15th, 1845. J. D. Bowman, February 5th, 1850. David M. Scott, July 6th, 1853. J. Rockwell, August 6th, 1857. David M. Scott, February 19th, 1858; and De Witt C. Chase, April 19th, 1861.

The post-office at Charleston Four Corners was established, and Isaac S. Frost appointed postmaster, March 5th, 1828. His successors have been as follows: Jesse N. Eaton, May 12th 1832. Isaac S. Frost, November 5th, 1833. Judson McDuffee, May 21st, 1874. Horace S. Simmens, May 22d, 1876.

## THE CLARKE LANDS.

In giving the history of the town of Charleston, it becomes necessary to speak of the great drawback to the advancement of the town in wealth and population, and the reason which in great part prevents it from taking a position equal with or in advance of other towns in the county. Naturally, the town of Charleston is as well adapted to the purposes of dairying or raising grain as any other in the county, if not better. As the traveller, however, passes through the town, over roads which, for the most part, are kept in much better order than those in adjoining towns, he sees in many places, notably in the central, northern and western portions, traces of destruction and devastation, which at first he would find difficult of explanation. He sees charred ruins and blackened chimneys where once happy families were accustomed to gather at the fireside. He sees fences thrown down, and the fine fields formerly enclosed by them laid waste and fast retrograding into their original state. If he should ask an explanation of these signs of desolation, the answer would be given that these farms are on "Clarke's lands."

The circumstances attending the acquisition of these possessions by the Clarke family, and the legal phases of the matter, have been discussed in the chapter on lands, and need not be here detailed. The raising of rents at the extinction of the original leases (which limited the rent to a shilling per acre), inaugurated a state of warfare between the proprietor and the

occupants, with the unhappy results above described. The tenants who are driven off by the increased rents, which they either cannot or will not pay, have no disposition to leave to the landlord the houses and barns which they or their fathers built; rather than do so they apply the torch to the homestead they have been forced to leave. For five years or more this work of destruction has gone on, and in the mean time the reputation of the town has suffered and its interests have languished.

#### SOME OF CHARLESTON'S THRIFTY FARMERS.

JACOB M. BAIRD has resided on the farm occupied by him for nine years. He was born in the town in 1822. His father, Benjamin Baird, was a native of New Jersey, and moved to the town of Charleston in 1794, with his father. He resided here until 1867, when he moved to Port Jackson, where he died four years ago. In 1846 he was a member of the State Legislature. His son Jacob now carries on a farm of one hundred and sixty acres.

JAMES P. BUTLER was born on the farm now occupied by him, March 26, 1811. He was married to Miss Mary Bell, December 15, 1831, and has now five children living, one of whom, Benjamin F., served in the navy for nineteen months during the rebellion, and was then taken sick and sent to a hospital. Mr. Butler has a fine farm of fifty acres, mostly under cultivation.

NELSON OVERBAUGH came into possession of the farm now occupied by him in 1850, purchasing it from Allen Overbaugh, who had received it from his father Christian, in 1847. Christian had owned it for forty years. The farm consists of 207 acres, located along Schoharie creek, the house being situated within twenty-five feet of the stream, which has frequently overflowed the grounds, and on one occasion covered the lower floor of the house with water to the depth of eight inches.

FRANCIS HOAG has lived on his place for thirty-five years. His father, Francis, moved into the town from Dutchess county about the commencement of the present century. At first he had 100 acres, but kept adding to his original purchase until his possessions amounted to 600 acres. He died in 1854. Francis, jr., was married in 1840, to Miss Nancy M. Gordon. He has two children, a son, Frank J., who is located in Toledo, and a daughter, who is living at home with her parents.

D. J. BOWDISH bought the farm now occupied by him in 1857, and has lived on it since that time. He has fifty acres in all, but four or five of which are under cultivation. His son, John M., is a fine specimen of the true farmer, and has several fine swarms of bees, which he makes a special feature of his business.

NATHANIEL BOWDISH moved from Dutchess county to the town of Charleston in 1806, and cleared his farm. Mr. Thomas W. Bowdish, his son, has always lived upon the place, and at the death of his father in 1853, he came into full possession. The farm consists of 98 acres, about 20 of which are wood land. Mr. Bowdish has a grandson named Doras E. Cass now living with him.

HENRY G. STALEY settled on the farm now occupied by his nephew, Eugene W. Staley, in 1803. He cleared the farm and lived on it up to the time of his death in 1837, when the property fell to his brothers George and Jacob. George bought Jacob's share, and in 1872 Eugene W. and Loduski Staley, the son and daughter of Jacob, bought the farm from George. It contains 127 acres, 100 of which are under cultivation. Eugene and his sisters Loduski and Josephine now occupy the farm. Their father Jacob is living in Marquette county, Michigan, where he owns a farm of two hundred acres.

HOSEA DAVIS was born on the farm now occupied by him, September 16, 1811. He was the youngest of fourteen children, twelve of whom grew to maturity. His father, Richard, was born in Milford, Fairfield county, Connecticut, and moved to Montgomery county in 1797. Hosea was married in 1832 to Miss Phoebe Wands, and has seven children, three of whom are living at home. The brick house now occupied by Mr. Davis was built in the year 1850, and the bricks of which it is composed were manufactured on the premises.

MOSES PIERSON came to Charleston in 1797 or 1798, and took up 150 acres on the Stone-heap Patent. His son, William N., was born on the farm in 1821, and came into possession in 1863, upon the death of his father. He has two children, a son and a daughter.

GARRET I. LANSING came from Cohoes about 1794, and took up 200 acres

on Corry's Patent. Garret G., his son, who succeeded him, has 240 acres, mostly under cultivation. His home is now on the newer part of the farm, where he has built a very neat and pretty house; but such is the force of old associations and habits, that Mr. Lansing spends most of his time on the old homestead.

#### REV. JOHN ROSS.

The biography of Elder John Ross, of Charleston Four Corners, is the record of a remarkably long and useful life. He was born in the town of Galway, Saratoga county, October 7, 1794. His early years were spent on the farms owned by his father at different times in that town and several other towns of the same county. His education, so far as it was obtained in schools, was confined to those of the neighborhoods in which he lived. The first which he attended—he being then a small boy—was one taught by a master named Spencer, some two miles from his home in the town of Charlton. The county had not then been districted for educational purposes, and school houses were built and schools assembled wherever they seemed to be demanded. While Elder Ross was still a boy, his father removed to Cooperstown, Otsego county, but shortly returned to Saratoga county, locating in the town of Ballston (or Ballstown, as it was then spelled), where our subject grew up to manhood.

He was living here in 1813, when the neighborhood was favored with a great revival of religion. Young Ross was among the converts, and in September of that year united with a church of the Christian denomination, which had just been organized at the "Burnt Hills" neighborhood in Ballston. He was at this time enrolled among the militia of Saratoga county. When they were summoned to the field in the war then being waged with Great Britain, many of them prayed the Government to have them excused; but Ross, fired with patriotic enthusiasm, promptly went forward with Captain Gordon's company of Col. Rogers' regiment, showing his interest by furnishing his own knapsack, which was made of tow-cloth and painted. Part of the regiment to which he belonged was sent to the northern frontier, but his company was ordered to Brooklyn to aid in the defense of the metropolis, which was threatened by the British, and where a number of American ships were blockaded. This company was employed in the construction of Fort Greene. They leveled a corn field for their parade ground, and for barracks occupied a deserted ropewalk. They were repeatedly called out in anticipation of an attack, but participated in no actual engagement. When young Ross had been in the service nearly three months he was disabled by typhus fever, and was honorably discharged. As soon as he could leave the barracks he embarked for home on a North River sloop, which consumed five days in the voyage to Albany. After a tiresome land journey of twenty-eight miles he reached home, where, under the tender care an invalid gets only at home, he entirely recovered.

The young soldier left the field of arms to enter upon a nobler warfare, whose weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. The converts in the revival of 1813 were encouraged to take part in the conference meetings of the church, and Mr. Ross's participation in these services showed gifts and devotion that seemed already to mark him for the sacred office which he subsequently exercised for such an extraordinary length of time. He himself was led to believe it his duty to enter the ministry, and not long after his conversion began holding meetings in his neighborhood. He was regularly ordained March 7, 1819, at a school house on the old "court house hill."

Seeing a chance for ministerial usefulness in Montgomery county, Elder Ross in 1822 removed to a point some two miles east of his present residence, where a small church had been built at an expense of not more than \$300, chiefly borne by one man. This building was used by whatever denominations wished to worship in it, but principally by the Christians. The ministrations of Elder Ross were by no means confined to this point, but he preached to congregations over a wide extent of country, from Florida on the east to Cherry Valley on the west. In spite of the abundance of his clerical labors he had no stated salary, but was obliged to support himself in part by secular work, among other things teaching quite a large school in which there were seven or eight children of one family.

In 1851 Elder Ross bought seven and three-fourths acres of land, on which his present house was built in that year, he himself doing part of the work, and his equally industrious wife making the carpets before the rooms were ready for them. Wise provision was made for the beauty of the place



ELDER J. ROSS.



MRS. J. ROSS.



Res. of ELDER JOHN ROSS, Charleston Four Corners, Montgomery Co. N.Y.

by the planting of the now large and handsome trees before the house, (to be seen in the accompanying engraving), which Elder Ross brought as saplings on his back from a neighboring swamp. Soon after the original purchase, he bought a small lot containing the beautiful grove to the west of his barn, and subsequently fifty acres more in the same direction. From the farm thus made up he has sold one acre for an addition to the cemetery adjoining his church, which is represented in the illustration on another page.

This church was built in 1834, though Elder Ross had been the pastor of a congregation here since his removal to this county. This pastorate he held for the extraordinary period of fifty years, when in 1872 he felt obliged by advancing age to resign it. This was reluctantly permitted by his people, with the condition that he should supply the pulpit until the choice of his successor. This he did, and also officiated from the removal of the latter until the arrival of the present pastor, a period of over six months. It would certainly be difficult, if not impossible, to match this record of more than half a century of ministerial labor by one man for one congregation. The value and acceptability of the pastor's services which are implied in it, need hardly be pointed out. It would be impossible to estimate in words or figures the fruits of these fifty years of pastoral work. As one item it may be mentioned that thirteen young men from among Elder Ross's parishioners have gone forth to preach the gospel of which he was so long a minister. The Christian church at Rural Grove has been largely recruited from this one since its organization in 1854, seventy-seven members from Charleston Four Corners joining it in 1865, as it was nearer their homes. Up to that time Elder Ross had pastoral charge at both places. As this faithful soldier of his country and the cross took up arms

in his youth to defend the nation from foreign invaders, so in his age he raised his voice against its destruction by domestic traitors. He took a firm stand in favor of the war for the Union, holding meetings in his church in favor of the cause. On the 7th day of October, 1877, he celebrated his 83d birthday by preaching in the evening to a large congregation.

Elder Ross was married Sept. 16, 1819, to Miss Lovina Ames, of Ballston, Saratoga county, where he was then living. Their son and only child, born June 25, 1821, went to Hamilton, Ohio, in 1843, where he was for some time engaged in teaching. He intended devoting his life to the ministry, and was a licentiate when the hopes of the church and his many personal friends were blasted by his untimely death in February, 1849, owing to a relapse after an attack of the measles from which it was thought he had recovered. He was a young man of high character and great promise. A cortege of eight hundred persons followed his remains to the grave.

The golden wedding of Elder and Mrs. Ross gave opportunity for those who, with their parents, had enjoyed his ministrations and her cheering and helpful presence among them to show their appreciation. This was done by a large and most interesting social gathering, at which feeling letters from distant friends were read, and valuable gifts presented to the loved and honored servants of God, who have done so much good in the neighborhood and made so many friends. They are nearing the close of their useful lives with intelligence unimpaired and a good measure of health and strength. Elder Ross still takes the necessary care of his livestock, and with his good wife receives the visitor with cheerful hospitality; the venerable couple are spending in comfort and honor, and with the best wishes of a wide circle of friends and acquaintances, the rest they have so well earned.