

SARATOGA COUNTY AND ITS TOWNS

Compiled by: Henry J. Kinns

Ardis Anderson, Clerk

Board of supervisors

Saratoga County, N.Y.

Made Available by

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**Supervisors
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STATISTICS RELATING TO SARATOGA COUNTY

On the first day of November in the year 1683, all of the territory embraced in what is now the State of New York, was divided into ten counties, by order of James, Duke of York, the sole proprietor of the provinces, and brother of Charles II, King of England.

The ten original counties were named as follows: Albany, Dutchess, Kings, New York, Orange, Queens, Richmond, Suffolk, Ulster and Westchester.

Albany County included all of the vast territory northerly and westerly of the county of Ulster, hence embraced the county of Saratoga.

On the 24th day of March, 1772, that portion of Albany County, now constituting the county of Saratoga, was divided into two districts viz: "The District of Sa-ragh-to-ga" and the "District of Half-moon," and were known as districts of Albany county.

On the first day of April, 1775, the district of Saraghtoga, which then embraced all the territory of the county excepting the present towns of Halfmoon, Waterford and Clifton Park, and that portion of the city of Mechanicville formerly within the town of Halfmoon, was divided and a new district organized, called the "District of Balls-Town."

Thus divided the three districts embraced the following territory:

The district of Halfmoon, the present towns of Halfmoon, Waterford and Clifton Park.

The district of Saraghtoga, the present towns of Saratoga, Saratoga Springs, Stillwater, Malta, Northumberland, Moreau, Wilton, Corinth, Hadley, Day, and a part of Greenfield, and that portion of the city of Mechanicville formerly within the town of Stillwater.

The district of Balls-Town, the present towns of Ballston, Milton, Charlton, Galway, Providence, Edinburgh and the remaining part of Greenfield.

On the 17th day of March, 1788, the name "district" was dropped and Balls-Town, Half-Moon, Saraghtoga and Stillwater (the latter being that day set off from Saraghtoga, and embracing the present town of Stillwater and all but the north part of the present town of Malta), were organized as "towns of Albany county."

On the 7th day of February, 1791, Saratoga county was set off from Albany county, by an act of the Legislature of the State of New York, passed that day, which enacted that the county "shall be one separate and distinct county, and be called and known by the name of Saratoga."

The towns of Half-Moon, Balls-Town, Saratoga and Stillwater were left in extent and boundaries as organized March 7, 1788, and thus formed the four mother towns of the county. According to history the county at that time contained about 17,000 inhabitants.

Since the organization of the county in 1791, other towns have from time to time been set off from the original four towns and subdivided until the county contains its present number of twenty towns, as follows, viz:

Charlton, Galway and Milton were formed from Balls-Town March 17, 1792, and the line of Charlton changed in 1795.

Greenfield was taken from Saratoga and Milton March 12, 1793.

The first town meeting was held April 1, 1794. There is a tradition that the name of Fairfield had been used before passing of the act creating the town of Greenfield.

Providence was taken from Galway February 5, 1796.

Northumberland was formed from Saratoga March 16, 1798.

Hadley was formed from Greenfield and Northumberland February 27, 1801.

Edinburgh, first called Northfield, was set off from Providence March 13, 1801, and its present name given April 6, 1808.

Malta was taken from Stillwater March 3, 1802, and that part of Saratoga lying south of the Kayderosseras creek annexed March 28, 1805.

Moreau was taken from Northumberland March 28, 1805.

Waterford was set off from Halfmoon April 17, 1816.

Halfmoon was changed to Orange April 17, 1816, but the original name was restored January 16, 1820.

Wilton was taken from Northumberland April 20, 1818.

Corinth was taken from Hadley April 20, 1818, and a portion of Moreau annexed January 28, 1848.

Saratoga Springs was set off from Saratoga April 9, 1819.

Day, first called Concord, was taken from Edinburgh and Hadley April 17, 1819, and its present name adopted December 3, 1827.

Clifton Park, first called Clifton, was set off from Halfmoon March 3, 1828, and its present name given March 31, 1829.

According to history, written and unwritten, and the less reliable authority derived from tradition, the several towns of the county derived their respective names from the sources and in the manner following:

Ballston derived its name from Rev. Eliphalet Ball, one of its early settlers. Tradition says that he purchased the right to have his

name prefixed to the town from the earlier pioneers.

Charlton was named in honor of Dr. Charlton, a distinguished New York physician. Previously it had been called New Freehold by the settlers, many of whom were emigrants from Freehold, N.J.

Clifton Park was named from a tract of land within its limits, extending from the Mohawk River to Ballston Lake, patented by Queen Anne in 1708, and known as the Clifton Park, or Shanendaho-wa patent. Shanendahowa was the Indian name of Ballston Lake.

Corinth received its name in the following manner: A meeting was held early in the spring of 1818 at the residence of Washington Chapman at South Corinth, then called "Chapman's Corners," for the purpose of deciding upon a name for the town. Mrs. Chapman asked and was accorded the privilege of selecting the name, and thereupon she opened the Bible from which to make the selection. By chance the book opened at one of the epistles to the Corinthians and the lady said: "There it is; it shall be called Corinth."

Day was called Concord from its organization until 1827. In December of that year the name was changed in honor of Eliphaz Day, a former supervisor and prominent business man of the town who had died in the preceding April. As there was a town of Concord in Erie County, the change was made in furtherance of the policy of the Legislature in having no two or more towns in the State of the same name.

Edinburgh was called Northfield at its formation, but in 1808 the name was changed because another town in one of the counties of the State had previously adopted it. The present name was suggested by George Bradford, a Scotchman, residing in Hadley, who wished it named after the capital of his native land.

Galway was originally known as New Galloway. The name as given it by the early Scotch settlers in honor of their former home, the shire town of Galloway in Scotland. By an error or oversight in the act creating the town the name was Hibernicised to Galway, a town in Ireland.

Greenfield was probably named from Greenfield, Conn., the native home of the earliest pioneers.

Hadley. Neither history nor tradition furnish the origin of this name. It undoubtedly was so called after the birthplace of some of the early settlers.

Halfmoon retains the name originally given it in 1609, but authorities differ as to its origin. One account says that the crescent shape of the land at the junction of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers,

now Waterford, suggested the name; another that the greater curve in the Mohawk near the village of Crescent in this town, gave rise to the name. Of these two theories, the latter seems more probable, as in the olden times the territory at and adjacent to Crescent was called Half-Moon, while the land at and surrounding the junction of the rivers was known as Half-Moon Point. An evidence of this is found in an ancient deed, executed June 6, 1677, wherein the widow of Goosen Gerritse Van Schiack conveyed "about seven morgens of land" to Jan Jacobus Van Noorstrant, extending from the Hudson river on the east, up the Mohawk to the lands of Rollef Gerretse Van Derwerker on the west, and in which the widow reserved the right to have a free passage for her cattle through the lands thus sold, "up to Half-Moon for pasturage." History and legend combined furnish another and as exceedingly interesting explanation of the origin of this name, as follows: It is asserted by historians that on the 12th day of September, 1609, Hendrick Hudson discovered and entered the mouth of the river which now bears his name; that he explored the stream as far up as the old Indian hunting-ground called Nach-te-nak, which embraced the islands that cluster among the "sprouts" of the Mohawk at and below its junction with the Hudson river, arriving there on the twenty-second day of the same month, and that he ascended the river no further than the junction in consequence of the shoals. A proof of this terminus is obtained in the quaint language of Hudson's own narrative of the voyage, where he says: "The two and twentieth day faire weather. In the morning our master's mate and foure more of the companie went up with our boate to sounde the river further up. This nighte, at ten of the clocke, our boate returned in a shower of raine frome sounding of the river, and founde it to bee at an end for shipping to goe in. For they had beene up eight or nine leagues and founde but seven foot water and unconstant sounding." History further relates that the ship in which the discoverer explored the river was named the Halfmoon, and that the bold navigator landed at the junction of the rivers at that time and took possession of the country. The latter seems corroborated in the same narrative, and in the record of the same day, for it is there added: "Soe at three of the clocke in the afternoone the people of the countrey came aboard and brought tobacco and more beades, and gave them to our master, and made him an oration; and shewed him the country all arounde about." The junction of the rivers being the highest point up the stream that Hudson sailed, his landing there, and the suggestive name of his vessel, together furnish the ground work of the legend to which reference has been made - which is, that on the 22nd day of September, 1609, the great explorer himself formally gave the name of Half-Moon to

the territory after and in honor of his staunch little ship. When Waterford was set off in 1816, the name of the town was changed to Orange, but by an act of the Legislature the old name was restored January 16, 1820.

Malta. The origin of this name is vague and uncertain. The only explanation attempted is by an old resident of an adjoining town that in early times a malt brewery was erected at or near the present site of Maltville, and that the cluster of buildings around it gradually became known as "Malt-ville," and hence Maltville, the village, and Malta, the town. With this effort to account for the name, the question is passed on to the next "historian."

Milton. This locality bordering on the Kayaderosseras creek, was first known as Mill-Town, on account of the numerous mills erected on the creek. This soon developed, or rather, consolidated, into Milton, by which name it was incorporated.

Moreau was named in honor of the celebrated and brave French officer, Marshal Moreau, who was an exile in this country about the time the town was erected.

Northumberland. No special reason is assigned for the adoption of this ponderous but substantial English name. Who had the honor of proposing it and the causes that led to its suggestion, are unsolved problems of history. The strong presumption is, however, that it was taken from the early home of a pioneer.

Providence was named after the city of Providence, R.I., by the act of the Legislature erecting the town.

Saratoga took its name from one of the famous hunting grounds of the Mohawk branch of the Iroquois Indian, located on both sides of the Hudson river, along the eastern boundaries of the present towns of Stillwater and Saratoga. In 1684, the tract was sold by the Indian chiefs to Peter Philip Schuyler and six other citizens of Albany, and thereafter it became and was known in history as the Saratoga Patent. Historians differ as to the orthography and signification of the word. One gives it as Sa-ragh-to-ga and its meaning "the place of the swift water," in contradistinction to the "Still-water" of the river for several miles below; another, that it is Sa-ra-ta-ke, and means "a place where the track of the heel may be seen," in allusion to a spot near by where depressions resembling footprints may be seen in the rocks, and another that it is Se-rach-ta-gue, and means "the hillside country of the great river," being description of that portion of the hunting-grounds where the outlying hills crowd down to the river banks. On some old maps it is called Sa-roe-to-gos land.

Saratoga Springs. History is conflicting in its accounts of the origin of the name of this town. It seems, however, that the

locality did not suggest the name, as the former is in no way connected with the Saraghtoga of early times, no part of the territory of the town being embraced within the old hunting-grounds of that name. The most defensible explanation seems to be that the first half of the name was borrowed from the town of Saratoga, from which this town was set off, and that the latter portion was suggested in consequence of the famous mineral springs in the town.

Stillwater was so named from the still water of the river for several miles above the village of Stillwater. This locality was formerly called Uptown, and that was shortened to Upton, but that name never extended beyond the settlement at the lower end of Stillwater village, near the rapids.

Waterford. This name, as a name for the town, was taken from the name of the village of Waterford within its limits, which was incorporated by that name in 1801, fifteen years before the town was set off from Halfmoon. The village was named after an ancient ford over the Mohawk river a little above the site of the present railroad bridge and extended from the mainland to Haver island. It is a very old crossing famous in Indian history, and in the exploration of French and English adventures. It will be seen elsewhere that this town was formerly called Half-Moon Point.

Wilton had no little difficulty in selecting its name. The Legislature was petitioned by the residents of different sections of the town, some proposing one name and some another. The dispute was finally settled by the Member of Assembly from this county, who suggested that they take the name of Wilton, his old home in New Hampshire. The proposition was accepted as a compromise. In colonial times this town was called Palmertown, which name, tradition says, was given it by a band of Indians who came there from the east soon after King Philip's War, and settled at the base of the mountains which still retain the ancient name.

SUPERVISORS

At the organization of Saratoga County in 1791 there were only four towns, viz: Balls-Town, Halfmoon, Saratoga and Stillwater. There is no record extant, showing the names of the Supervisors of Stillwater previous to that year. The remnants of early records preserved in Halfmoon give the Supervisors' names for 3 years previous to 1791, and the record of Saratoga, the names of the Supervisors of that town for four years prior to that year. The town records of Ballston are complete from 1779.