

# Historical Sketch

1805---1923

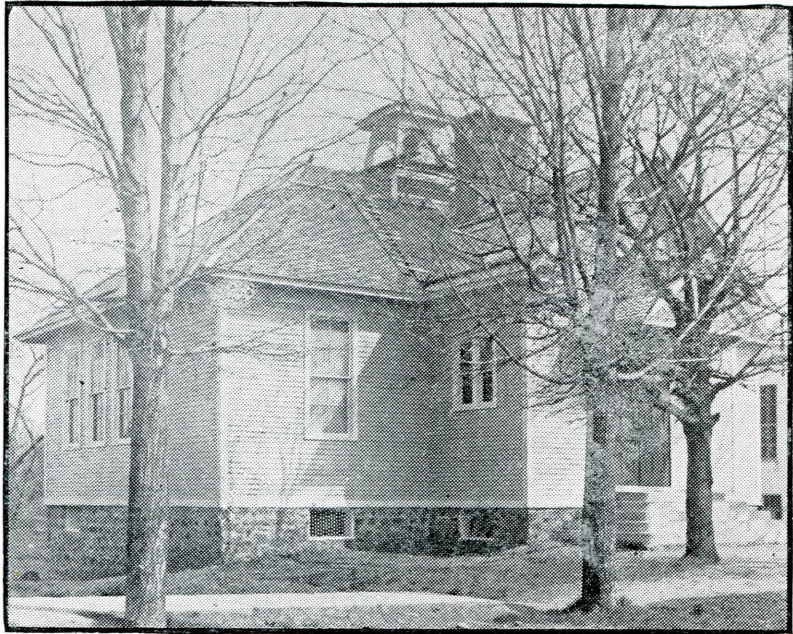
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West Walworth, N. Y.





SCHOOL BUILDING AT WEST WALWORTH

# HISTORICAL SKETCH

— of —

## WEST WALWORTH

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West Walworth is located in the western central part of Wayne County, being only one mile east of Monroe county line. The original name of the village was Birch Bridge, but when it was organized from Ontario, April 20, 1829, it was re-named Walworth, in honor of General Chancellor Walworth. The site of the village is the most elevated rolling upland in this vicinity. On the farm now owned by Charles Kuttruff is one of the highest elevations of the county. When anyone stands on the summit of this hill they are immediately impressed by the inspiring and picturesque scenery which surrounds one from every side, stretching out for miles. On a clear day the lovely valleys, the many fertile fields dotted with small farm homesteads, Lake Ontario with its many boats and steamers for a background, is surely an impressive sight and one not soon to be forgotten.

No historical sketch of our village would be complete without giving the names of a few of the early settlers. In 1805 the site of the village was established by Joseph Howe and family, Ira Howard, our pioneer shoemaker, and Nathaniel Holmes, the first carpenter. When these pioneers came, a dense forest covered the land, the timber on which consisted of beech, maple, ash, hemlock and basswood. In these woods were many wolves, bears, a few deer and many other wild animals. The value of the land at this time was from \$2.50 to \$3.00 an acre. These early settlers built a few log huts, with the bark of the trees used as a roof, for their dwelling houses, and a blacksmith shop. In 1806 the list of settlers greatly increased.

Jonathan Miller, accompanied by his aged father, and his wife, three sons and one daughter arrived. Then Horace, Harvey and Sylvester Lee, whose daughter later became the wife of Ransford Palmer, became members of this community. Nathan Palmer, coming from Granville, Washington county, settled on a large section of land to the south from the Baptist church, which later became the site of the first sawmill. To the north, Sidney Whitney, father of Eugene and Cornelius, built a small house on the site which is now owned by George Welker. Near this place, Daniel Gould, with a family of three sons and one daughter, located on a large tract of land, some of which extended to Atlantic Avenue. Amos Gould built two houses, one of which is now owned by Jack Lortz and the other is now occupied by Miss Nora Gould. To the east Considerate Stebbins bought about 600 acres of land. By the coming of several other families and by the children of the early settlers the village and surrounding country was rapidly built up.

But this is only half of the story of the origin and development of our village and surrounding community. Every interested reader wants to know more of the social, business and religious life of the pioneers and even up to the present days. Nathan Palmer built on his farm southwest of the village, (the tract now owned by Robert Stalker, Jr.) a sawmill which was run by a waterwheel. But on account of the great amount of sickness caused by the stagnant water held by the dam and also a wider area of flooded land, the people of the vicinity concluding that they could do better without the mill and its evil effects, secretly assembled one night, tore down the dam and burned the mill.

The first postoffice was established in 1840, in the place now owned by Mrs. Ella Freer. William D. Wylie, who was in charge of the postoffice was also Justice of the Peace. The building was then owned by Thomas Wilber, who used it also for a grocery store and a home.

Before the Civil war the town shoemaker was Mr. Niver-son, who went from house to house making and repairing boots and shoes. In 1842 Harvey Miller and Nathan Palmer



donated the ground for our attractive and convenient little cemetery. On the site now owned by Fred Wendt, a tannery was erected and opened under the management of Fletus Miller. Hemlock bark was used in the process of tanning the leather. At that time one big load of bark, all that two oxen could draw, even when delivered to Rochester and taking two days to make the trip and return, sold for only \$3.00. Lewis R. Lambert was the pioneer blacksmith for many years. His place of business was located near the present residence of Adam Schinster.

In those early days a journey even to Palmyra was no easy undertaking. Mrs. Miller, the wife of the pioneer, Jonathan Miller, attempted to go to Palmyra on horseback. Then the only indication of the right road to the traveler was the marked trees. On Mrs. Miller's return the following day, her horse became so tired that she could not force the animal to proceed. The shades of night were gradually being drawn. She dismounted her horse and proceeded on foot midst the terrifying noises of the howling wolves. In her distress and fright she cried aloud for help. She was heard by two men who kindly guided her safely home.

But what of the religious and educational life of our village throughout these years? In 1815 as the people began to feel the need of a church, our First Baptist church was organized by Rev. Jeremiah Irons. Our first pastor, commencing in 1816, was Rev. Daniel Palmer. The present church edifice was erected in 1832 by an extensive remodeling of the old structure. This new stone church was dedicated on January 8, 1833, by Rev. Daniel Palmer. The superintendent of the Sabbath School at that time was Thomas Williams. At that time, also, this was the second Baptist church in Wayne county. For many years the basement of the church was used as a school.

The oldest citizen in the town of Walworth is Mr. Edward Powell, who was born in 1835, in the house in which he now lives. Mr. Powell received his education at the Free-will school, and he also attended the Select school at West Wal-

worth for one term. His father David, and his brother Jonathan, came from Dutchess county about ninety years ago. They bought 160 acres of land at \$15 an acre. There was a small house on the farm consisting of six rooms with three fireplaces, which has since been remodeled. The barn is now past the century mark in age.

An interesting story in connection with the time when David Powell, father of Edward Powell, first came to the town, is related as follow: A man selling clocks was traveling through this section and stopped at the home of Mr. Powell, showed him a clock and tried to sell it to him. Mr. Powell did not think they needed a clock. But the man persisted and asked permission to leave it for a couple of weeks. Mr. Powell said he might do so and the clock was left for the time specified. When the man returned to get the clock Mr. Powell told him he would buy it, and it was in this manner that probably one of the first clocks in this part of the country was sold here. When Mr. Powell died the clock was willed to his daughter, so is still retained in the family.

When Mr. Powell was a boy most of the plowing was done with oxen, his father having a team of horses for work on the road. The main product in those days was wheat, for which they received 50 cents a bushel. The nearest market for their produce was Palmyra. He remembers hearing his father tell that the farms formerly owned by Charles Druschell, Harry Bell and Jack Freer, were at that time dense forests and wolves were numerous, the farmers going out in groups to shoot them as they molested and killed the sheep. At that time sheep were worth 75 cents and \$1.00 per head. When he was a boy he went with his father to Lake Ontario, to gather stones which were used in building the Select school, which is now the Evangelical church. They had a stone-hauling bee, making one trip a day. Mr. Powell now does most of the work on his farm which consists of 57 acres. He is enjoying good health in his old age.

About 1842, the cobble-stone part of the Evangelical church was built for the purpose of a select school. But on account

of insufficient financial and co-operative support it was used for a school only a few years. It was then rented to Mr. De-Long, the village shoemaker, for a residence. In the year 1865 as the Evangelical group of people increased and felt the need of a church of their own, they bought this structure from the Palmer heirs for \$130.00. It was then repaired and remodeled for the purpose of a church. It was dedicated the ninth day of September 1866. In those early days hemlock planks and blocks were used for seats. The first real school house was a small structure, erected in 1858, on the site of the present school building. The ground for this building was broken by Amos Gould, the father of Miss Nora Gould. In 1905 the Board of Education erected a new and more modern building. The old building was sold to the Baptist church and later remodeled into a parsonage. The first teacher who taught in the old school house was Wesley Manderville. In those days the teacher's salary was two or three dollars a week, with their lodging and board donated by the different people of the community.

This historical sketch would not be complete without mentioning some of the physicians (country doctors) who have so faithfully served our community. One of the first ones was Dr. William Hall, coming here in 1853, who lived in the house now owned by Frank Welker. In 1857 Dr. Christ Fuller located in the Bills block and after remaining ten years moved to Fairport. Dr. J. B. Cowles then came and remained about five years and moved to Fairport. Then for several months the village was without a doctor. In May, 1875, Dr. Robert Morris, a young M. D., just out of school, looked the ground over and concluded to remain here. His office was located in the house owned by Helen Dillon, now owned by Carl Lotze. At the end of the first year he moved to the next house to the south, where he boarded for four years with Elizabeth Bancroft. In 1880, he married, purchased the house and lived here for ten years. He then sold his place and moved to Lincoln, where he has continued to live until this day. He has kept his office in this place for more than forty-six years and through-

out this entire time he has only once been away from his office more than fifteen days at one time. Dr. Morris is "still on the job" and holds a high position in the esteem and respect of the community.

What about the present status or condition of our village, of which we have been giving you a historic sketch? The business institutions of the village are two general stores; one run by Chas. Stalker & Son and the other by Seibert & Everhardt, a postoffice, a barber shop, two blacksmith shops, garage and crate-making saw-mill, several fruit evaporators, Dr. Morris' office, and a general trucking business run by Fred Roland. There are now two churches in the village, an Evangelical and a Baptist. We have a good thriving public school.

The soil in this community is very fertile, consisting of sand, gravel, loam, and muck. Although the township cannot boast of any large farms, yet we have many acres of very valuable muck-land, which was practically worthless a few years ago. Our community is not only noted for products of the muck-land and dairying and general farming, but also for its abundant production of fruit. We market great quantities of cherries, berries, pears and apples. Most of the fruit is now delivered in Rochester by means of trucks, which, of course, affords the farmers better prices. The merchants of the village are agents for the canning factories in the adjoining towns and consequently buy much of the farmers' fruit.

Although the village has not grown much in population in the last fifty years yet, we believe, as the farmer is just coming into his own in the political and commercial world, the coming fifty years will mark a great progress and development along many lines.—J. A. H.

The writer is solicitous that this little book shall go forth not merely written for the gratification of sentiment without utility to the reader in a noble and generous sense, but that it shall be preserved as best we can in our homes.

Yours truly,

MRS. CHARLES PETERS,

West Walworth, N. Y.