

History of Berlin, New York
FROM LANDMARKS OF RENSSELAER COUNTY
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PUBLISHED BY D. MASON & CO. PUBLISHERS, SYRACUSE, NY 1897
CHAPTER XXIV.
TOWN OF BERLIN.

The town of Berlin is located near the centre of the eastern tier of towns. It is bounded on the north by the towns of Grafton and Petersburg, on the east by the State of Massachusetts, on the south by Stephentown and on the west by Poestenkill and Sand Lake. It is one of the largest towns in the county. The town was erected March 21, 1806, from Petersburg, Schodack and Stephentown; and June 19, 1812, a part was taken off, on the west, to form Sand Lake.

The topography of the town does not differ greatly from those of its companions on the north and south-Petersburgh and Stephentown. It consists principally of a narrow valley-the Little Hoosick-running about north and south, which separates two ranges of high hills, parts of which are very precipitous. As a rule the ground is fertile, especially on the lowlands and the gently sloping hillsides. The principal stream beside the Little Hoosick river is Kinderhook creek, the former flowing toward the north and the latter in a southerly direction.

Many of the towns of Rensselaer county were quite thickly settled, particularly those on the west and north, when the wilderness of the site of Berlin was first permanently settled by white men. A number of the family of John George Brimmer, pioneer settlers of Petersburg, subsequently took up their abode in Berlin, and as far as can be learned were its first permanent settlers. In 1765 Godfrey Brimmer, son of John G. Brimmer, journeyed southward through the valley of the Little Hoosick as far as the site of Berlin village, formerly called North Berlin. Finding the soil productive and easy of cultivation and the location highly desirable, he cleared a piece of land, erected a log house and began life anew. In all probability he was the first white man to found a home within the limits of the town. If he was not already married at the time he took a wife soon after, and when the couple died at an old age they left four sons-Jacob, John, Henry and George-and two or more daughters.

Mr. Brimmer had been located in Berlin only two or three years when Reuben Bonesteel built a home near him. Soon after Peter Simmons located about three miles south of him, at what is now Centre Berlin; and about 1770 Daniel Hull, a Yankee, located on the site of Berlin. Reuben Bonesteel is said to have been a Tory during the War of the Revolution, sending all six of his Sons to serve in the British army. Three of them subsequently deserted from the ranks and joined the patriot army, where they served for some time. At

the close of the war Mr. Bonesteel refused to recognize his three sons who fought in opposition to his wishes. He died in 1793 and was buried on what is now the highway between Berlin and Petersburg.

Colonel Caleb Bentley was another early settler, his home being a little more than a mile south of the site of the village of Berlin. He had three sons-Alexander, Melancthon and Rudolph. About the same time William O. Cropsey settled in the town. Others who came soon after were Hezekiah Hull, Paul Braman, Ebenezer Crandall, his son, Thomas Crandall, Thomas Sweet, James Dennison, Daniel Dennison, Abraham Simmons, Nathaniel Niles, Joseph Green, Peleg Thomas, Sirneon Himes (Hyams?), Joshua Whitford, William Satterlee, Samuel Sweet, J. H. Wheaton John Bly, Silas Jones and others. Among other prominent residents about 1805 were Thomas Babcock, Zephaniah Clark, James Mosher, Jesse Saunders, Phineas Stewart, James Young, Joshua Whitford, Ebenezer Weeks, Isaiah Hall, Joseph King, Stephen King, Joseph Reynolds, Samuel Shaw, Ebenezer Rhodes, Samuel Rhodes, Moses Hammond, Gideon Hall, Jonathan Hakes, Daniel Arnold, John Aylesworth, John Adsit, David Burdick, Ebenezer Bentley, Benjamin Bentley, Eliphalet Johnson, Benjamin Stiliman, Augustus Sheldon, Arnold Davis, David Davis, Paul Maxon, Stephen Maxon, jr., Samuel Phelps, John Rathbone, John Ostrander, James Denison, John Green, Thomas Green, James Green, Jonathan Green, Samuel Green, Silas Jones, Daniel Gray, Joseph Taylor, Joseph Doty, Jonas Odell, James Main, John Westcott and David Kendall. These are but a few of the many householders in the town at that period.

Among the prominent later inhabitants of the town may be mentioned a few: Alonzo G. Hammond was a son of Dr. Burton Hammond and practiced law in the town for some time. He subsequently removed to Brooklyn, became a lawyer of prominence and was elected to the State Legislature. Rensselaer Bentley was a son of Joshua Bentley and eventually became an author and publisher of school text books. Samuel N. Sweet, who was born in 1805, became a prominent lawyer and politician, also an editor and publisher. In 1842 he was appointed professor of elocution in Auburn Female seminary and delivered scientific lectures in various parts of the country. His lecture tours were continued up to his death in 1875 and were uniformly successful. Russell Griswold was born in 1808 and became a prominent physician at Lanesborough, Mass., and Stamford, Conn. William F. Taylor, who died in 1896, was a member of the State Legislature in 1875 and 1876. Other representative men have been John Reeve, Horace C. Gifford, Zadoc T. Bentley, Henry D. Barron, George T. Denison, and John Green. The town of Berlin has produced many men who have attained great prominence in the various walks of life.

The first tavern in Berlin was kept by Daniel Hull and was located in the southern part of the town several years before the Revolution. About 1785 or 1786 another was established by Hezekiah Hull. Jonas Odell was proprietor of the first tavern at the village of Berlin. In 1781 one was established in the north part of the town by James Main. In 1806 the Niles hotel was erected by Dr. Burton Hammond and the Wadsworth hotel was

opened in 1843 or 1844 by Sheldon Morris. The town has always been liberally supplied with hotels.

The earliest physician in Berlin of whom there is any record was Dr. John Forbes, who located in 1775 at Sweet's Corners. About 1800 Dr. Job Tripp located at the village of Berlin, and soon after the practice of that locality was shared by Dr. Peter T. Olds. Dr. Burton Hammond, Dr. Emerson Hull and Dr. Henry Brown were in practice in the town a little later. Dr. Hull was one of the most successful practitioners who ever made Berlin their home.

Alonzo G. Hammond was probably the first qualified lawyer to locate in the town, opening an office in Berlin village between 1815 and 1820. About the latter year Charles M. Davis began practice at the same place, and the two subsequently formed a copartnership. Later lawyers were Robert A. Lottridge and Leonard R. Saunders.

Among the residents of the town who served with the American army in the War of the Revolution were the Rev. Justus Hull, who became captain; Colonel Randall Spencer, John Green, James Green, Oliver Bates, Elias Bentley, Wells Kenyon, William Sweet, Charles Saunders, Joshua Smith, Samuel Sweet. William Bell, Bradick Peckham, Isaiah Hall, Samuel Rhodes, Thomas Crandall, Daniel Gray, M. Griswold, Wait Stiliman, James Shaw, Thomas Burdick, Job Taylor, Silas Jones, William Johnson, Jabez Burdick, Reuben Bonesteel, jr., Caleb Bentley, Daniel Hull, William Sweet, Simeon Bonesteel, Zacheus Burdick, Moses Hendrick, Paul Braman, Job Wilcox, Jehial Stewart, Gideon Simpkins, Samuel Hoard and Nathan Beebe. None of those who volunteered during the War of 1812 were called into active service.

The full quotas of men called for during the War of the Rebellion were promptly filled by the people of Berlin. Most of those going to the front served in the regiments organized in Rensselaer county, but some enlisted elsewhere. Those who died in the service of the United States were: Joel A. Greenman, Alfred. Vars, J. B. Parks, George B. Manchester, D. M. Brimmer, Joseph Reynolds, George Coon, J. N. Taylor, Charles Buckbee, Philip Brightmeyer, Lewis Eltaman, J. B. Sweet, Hiram Horton, Thomas J. Horton, E. B. Hull, Martin Thompson, George R. Conner, H. M. Tracy, W. H. H. Green, D. S. Lamphire, R. Northrup. A. Northrup, C. W. Judwin, J. Watson, D. A. Nicholas, Curtis Lookey, Adam Hiser, William Weibrant, E. L. Green, Marcus Merrill.

There are three villages in Berlin, each of which bears the name of the town-Berlin, Berlin Centre and South Berlin.

Berlin village was formerly known as North Berlin, and is sometimes still called by that name. It is the most northerly of the trio of villages, and like the others is located on the Hposick river and the Lebanon Springs railroad. The first signs of a concentration of settlers at that point appeared about the year 1800. Prominent among the founders of the

village were Dr. Burton Hammond, John Reeve and other men who saw that the site was an admirable one for the village they planned. The location is most picturesque on account of the precipitous mountains on either side of the verdant valley of the Little Hoosick. The Niies hotel, erected in 1806 by Dr. Burton Hammond, is the oldest hotel in the village. The post-office was established about 1830 or 1831, with Dr. Ebenezer Robinson as postmaster.

The principal manufactures in Berlin are the shirt factories of G. W. Maxon and the Manhattan Shirt company and the laundry of W. H. Whyland. The factory of G. W. Maxon was established in 1891 for the manufacture of shirts. At present in it are employed sixty hands and the output of the establishment is about 250 dozen a week. The Manhattan factory is a branch of the house of Levi Wechsler & Co. of Paterson, N. J., and is in charge of Superintendent H. N. Stillman. The business was first started in the village in 1890 in a building owned by J. Whelan, but the place was found inadequate and the present location in River street was secured. About eighty hands are employed and about 300 dozen of shirts are made in a week. The laundry of W. H. Whyland employs about sixty hands and was started in 1878. The capacity of the establishment is about 100 dozen a day. The work done consists chiefly of laundering goods for Cluett, Coon & Co. of Troy.

Little Hoosick lodge No. 578, I. O. O. F., was organized April 26, 1890. A meeting was held over Green's store in the G. A. R. rooms. There were five charter members- J. V. Nichols, S. C. Satterlee, Frank Crandall, L. S. Green and W. H. La Farge. The first officers of the lodge were J. V. Nichols, N. G.; S. C. Satterlee, V. G.; Frank Crandall, treasurer; Thomas Greenman, warden; L. S. Green, secretary; W. H. La Farge, inside guard. The lodge has about seventy members in good standing.

The Order of the Sons and Daughters of Rechabites of Berlin was organized by a man named Cross, who came from Pittsfield, Mass. The first meeting was held June 26, 1889, and the following officers were elected: W. M., E. J. Tufts; W. V. M., Evelina Satterlee; W. C., Charles Dufee; D. C., Eliza Vars; W. T., Cynthia Baldwin; W. F. S., Iva Merritt; W. R. S., Grace Vars; W. C., Nettie Lamphere; W. A. S., Nettie Wheian; W. I. G., Porter Lamphere; W. O. G., E. Reynolds. This lodge existed until 1891, when dissensions arose over the payment of the tax to the Grand lodge and it was decided to become an independent organization under the name of the Home Templars, which title it still bears. The meeting for the reorganization of the order was held November 23, 1891, and these officers were chosen: King, G. T. Lemon; Queen, Emma Reynolds; prophet, T. E. Greenman; high priest, H. F. Brown; chancellor, William Tubes; scribe, Susie Meeker; treasurer, Etta Barber; marshal, Adelbert Smith; collector, Porter Lamphere; sentinel, John Broderick; guard, E. W. Miller.

The Berlin Chess club was formed by a number of prominent young residents of the village for a purpose which its name implies. The first meeting was held January 18, 1894,

and the first officers were: President, A. C. Niles; secretary, W. H. Whyland; treasurer, W. H. Meeker. The club has pleasant quarters, in which is situated a library, the books of which are free to all.

Sheldon's Cornet band of Berlin is composed of twenty pieces and was organized in 1888. The officers are W. H. Sheldon, leader; G. D. Niles, manager; A. C. Niles, treasurer.

The Baptist church of Berlin, formerly called the Baptist church of Christ, was constituted December 30, 1783. Before that time services had been held, and the first Baptist preacher in the town of whom there is any record was the Rev. Joseph Barnes. Soon after his arrival a log meeting house was erected near the present line of Berlin and Stephentown, on what is called the west road. If there was any church organization at that time it became extinct. The first members of the Baptist church of Christ were Joseph Bates, Elisha Clark, Walter Rhodes, Roger Jones, Henry Case, Eleazer Arnold, George Baily, Sarah Baily, Euniõe Bly, Mary Rhodes, Silence Case, Lucy Case, Mary Bates, Henry Reynolds, Sarah Reynolds and Susannah Case. The first officers chosen were: Elder, Justus Hull; deacons, Joseph Bates, James Green, Elisha Berry; clerks, Eleazer Arnold, Edward Renbies and Benjamin Pierce. At this time the church was called the Little Hoosick church, afterwards the Stephentown church, and still later the Petersburg church. When the town of Berlin was organized the society took the name it still bears.. In 1798 a frame. building was erected for a house of worship. In 1830 the present edifice was erected. In 1794 a colony withdrew from this society and organized a Baptist church at Williamstown, Mass., and in 1814 another colony withdrew and formed a church at Sand Lake, now East Poestenkill. In 1827 and 1828 the Baptist churches at Grafton and Petersburg respectively were organized by members of the Berlin society. The first pastor of the Berlin church was the Rev. Justus Hull. Between 1836 and 1839 a number of members withdrew and instituted the Second Baptist church; but the differences between the two factions were subsequently healed and the Second church organization was dissolved.

The Seventh-Day Baptist church of Berlin village probably antedates the Baptist church first referred to, but the records are not quite clear on this point. Some authorities say the church was organized September 24, 1780; others say the formal organization did not occur until 1785. There is also a question as to who was the first pastor. The two pastors named for the office by different authorities are Elder Charles Saunders and Elder William Coon. The first meeting-house was built in 1800. This was demolished by a hurricane in August, 1821. February 8, 1824, the society was reorganized and steps were taken for the erection of a new meeting house. In December, 1824, the structure was completed and the pastor, the Rev. Alonzo Brown, was installed. Three years after, during the pastorate of Elder Hull, the building was destroyed by fire. A new church was built in 1831. The early promoters of the church were Charles Saunders, Thomas Crandall, Edward Whitford, Benjamin Vars, Robert Davis, John Green, Amos Green and George Maxon.

The Christian church of South Berlin was organized January 27, 1830, and the house of

worship, a chapel, was erected the following year. The first regular supply in the pulpit was Elder John Spoor, and the first regular pastor was the Rev. John H. Crum.

The Lutheran church of South Berlin was organized about 1841. The number of Lutherans in that section is small, and the membership of the church has never been large.

The Methodist Episcopal church of Berlin was erected on a piece of ground given by W. F. Taylor in November, 1875. At that time the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. Dr. Ford, who has since died in the west. Previous- to that time meetings were held Sunday afternoons in the church of the Seventh Day Baptists. When the church was built there were really but three families of Methodists in the village, the families of H. F. Brown, John M. Potter and William F. Taylor. The first pastor sent to this village by the conference was the Rev. William Appleman. In 1878 the Rev. A. H. Eaton was designated as pastor by the conference, and through the generosity of Mr. Taylor, who gave another piece of ground, a parsonage was built. During Mr. Eaton's pastorate the church was rebuilt and enlarged. - At present it has a large and growing congregation.

SUPERVISORS OF BERLIN.

1806-1810, John Reeve; 1811, B. Niles; 1812-1813, Daniel Gray; 1814-1816, John Reeve; 1817, Eliphalet Niles; 1818, Daniel Gray; 1819, Ed. Whitford; 1820-1821, B. Hammond; 1822, John Reeve; 1823, William H. Murrey; 1824, L. Stanton; 1825-1829, B. Hammond; 1830, John Vars; 1831-1832, B. Hammond; 1833-1834, B. Robinson; 1835-1836, Winter Green; 1837-1838, J. J. Murrey; 1839-1840, D. Babcock; 1841-1842, R. A. Lottridge; 1843, H. Hull; 1844, J. A. Culver; 1845-1846, Jonathan Denison ; 1847, Thomas N. Jones; 1848, S S. Streeter; 1849, J. W. Niles; 1850-1851, S. Greenman; 1852, J. B. Mooney; 1853-1854, A. G. Niles; 1855-1856, S. Green; 1857-1858, John Whitford; 1859-1860, S. Greenman; 1861-1862, H. D. Hull; 1863, S. Hewitt; 1864-1865, H. D. Hull; 1866-1868, E. W. Greenman; 1869, W. R. Jones; 1870, William A. Smith; 1871, W. R. Jones; 1872-1873, A. P. Hull; 1874-1876, W. F. Taylor; 1877, W. R. Jones; 1878-1882, Jonathan Denison; 1883, William R. Jones; 1884-1885, Malevin Cowee; 1886-1890, Daniel J. Hull; 1891-1892, George D. Niles; 1893, Russell H. Satterlee; 1894-1895, Daniel J. Hull; 1896-, A. E. Sands.

TOWN CLERKS OF BERLIN.

1806, Hezekiah Hull; 1810, John Green; 1812, Daniel Gardner; 1814, John Green; 1820, Stephen J. Brown; 1824, A. G. -Hammond; 1825, Joel Mallary; 1831, John Reeve; 1835, Charles F. Mallary; 1838, Thomas T. Gray; 1839, Squire L. Allen; 1841, S. S. Streeter; 1844, John Whitford; 1846, Samuel S. Streeter; 1847, Horace P. Jones; 1848, Job T. Wilcox; 1850, Albert G. Hall; 1851, Job T. Wilcox; 1852, Jacob K. Simmons; 1853, E. R. Green; 1856, Horace C Griffin; 1857, William F. Taylor; 1859, Job T. Wilcox; 1860, Albert P. Hull; 1861, Charles H. Taylor; 1867, N. J. Nichols; 1868, J. Bryan Whitford; 1869,

Harvey W. Saunders; 1870, Halsey B. Green; 1871, Alonzo B. Hull; 1872, Alanson B. Niles; 1873, Halsey B. Green; 1875, Harvey S. Denison, J. B.. Whitford; 1877, Thomas E. Greenman; 1879 to 1881, Isaac J. Gifford; 1882, Harris G. Hull; 1883-1884, J. Valancourt Nichols; 1885, A. E. Sands; 1886-1887, L. Sheldon Green; 1888, John H. Satterlee; 1889, L. Sheldon Green; 1890, W. H. Sheldon; 1891, W. H. Lewis; 1892, L. Sheldon Green; 1893, J. Valancourt Nichols; 1894-1895, Marshal J. Eldred; 1896, William H. Meeker.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE OF BERLIN.

1846, Rufus R. Allen; 1847, Schuyler Green; 1848, Harry B. Hewitt; 1850, Rufus R. Allen; 1851, Schuyler Green; 1852, Henry Hewitt; 1853, Henry B. Denison; 1854, R. R. Allen; 1856, Harry Hill; 1857, Henry' E. Denison; 1859, Henry Hewitt; 1860, L. R. Saunders, Schuyler Green; 1861, Alanson N. Green; 1862, Alanson G. Niles; 1867, Philander Woodward; 1869, Alanson G. Niles; 1870, William F. Taylor, Daniel J. Hull; 1871, Joseph D. Wells; 1872, William A. Smith; 1873, William J. Sheldor, jr.; 1874, Arra G. Harris; 1875, George Sering; 1876, Ebenezer J. Mattison, J. B. Whitford; 1877, William J. Sheldon; 1878, Horaëe P. Jones; 1879, Ebenezer J. Mattison; 1880, J. B. Whitford and A. G. Niles; 1881, W. J. Sheldon; 1882, Halsey B. Green and Frank S. Jones; 1883, Albert P. Hull; 1884, Halbert H. Jones and John Feathers; 1885, U. J. Nichols; 1886, H. E. Denison; 1887, H. J. Brown; 1888, H. H. Jones; 1888, George B. Niles; 1890, Halsey B. Green; 1891, Isaac J. Gifford; 1892, Halbert H. Jones; 1893, F. H. Munson; 1894, H. B. Green; 1885, Isaac J. Gifford; 1896, H. H. Jones.