

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CHARLTON SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK

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The original counties into which New York Colony was divided numbered twelve. This division was made pursuant to the Act of 1683. The twelve counties were then named Albany, Cornwall, Dukes, Dutchess, Kings, Ulster, New York, Orange, Queens, Richmond, Suffolk and West Chester. After the Revolution these counties were split up into smaller counties.

On Feb. 7, 1791 Saratoga County was formed, that time the Town of Charlton was separated from Albany County and became part of Saratoga County. The country of Saratoga was surveyed and was known as the Kayaderossesas Patent. The Town of Charlton is the XIII allotment of the patent and consisted of thirteen great lots, bordered on the north by the Town of Galway, Milton and Perth. Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 were later separated from this allotment to make up a portion of the Town of Amsterdam. This allotment was bordered on the south by the 5,080 acre tract. The so called 5000 acre tract was subdivided into 200 acre, small lots, except where they bordered the 4th Ward of Schenectady (now the Town of Glenville). The 5000 acre tract and the five mile square tract, known as the Town of Ballston, was set aside to be sold to defray the cost of the patent survey. The sale of the Patent was handled by Commissioners Dirck Lefferts, Cornelius Clopper, and Isaac Low, merchants of New York City. Benjamin Kissam was the attorney for some of the transactions. In 1774 Thomas Sweetman purchased 145 acres of great Lot 13. He is credited with having filed the first deed in the new county of Saratoga. His deed is recorded in Liber 1, page 1. The following spring, 1775, a group from Freehold, New Jersey settled and bought lands near Sweetman. They named the new community Freehold, in honor of their previous hometown. The present Presbyterian Church in the village still retains this name. The new settlers at that time were called Freeholders, or owners of land.

The origin of the name "Charlton" is clouded with an air of mystery. One historian states that it was so named after a famous doctor but in searching old records one cannot find a Dr. Charlton listed as a resident of Charlton. Another historian states that the name was derived from an itinerant. It is difficult to conceive that the new Freeholders would change the name to honor an itinerant. While researching we found mention of a Dr. Charlton who preached in the community in those early days.

Small lot 7, east of the hamlet of Charlton, is the only lot in the 5000-acre tract that has not been subdivided. The farm is operated by R. Nelson LaRue and family. The title to the land has remained in the LaRue family since the town was formed.

The homes on the south side of Charlton Road, at the east end of the village, are built on the land out of Small Lot 5. Small Lot 5 was purchased by Jesse Conde in 1774. The remainder of the village homes, on the south side of the road, are built on lands out of Small Lot 4. Jeremiah Smith purchased Lot 4 in 1774.

West of Lot 4 is Lot 3 purchased by John Holmes in 1775. John Holmes is credited with having the first grist mill in the new town.

Where Swaggertown Road crosses the Alplaus Creek, John Rogers built a grist mill and saw mill having purchased the land from Jeremiah Sweetman. In 1784 John Rogers purchased 100 acres of Small Lot 10.

Where old Stage Road crosses the Alplaus Creek there is a settlement called "Little Troy". In some early deeds it was referred to as "Slab Troy". At this location there were many business enterprises such as saw mill, grist mill, fulling mill, distillery, blacksmith shop and Chapmans Inn. It is logical to assume that the cloth made in the fulling mill was exported to the City of Troy and from this the residents named the community "Little Troy".

The name of Swaggertown Road is also clouded with mystery. From a copy of a field trip, filed in the Schenectady Historical Society archives, we learn that a peddler, wandering up this road from Scotia. He stopped at the Van Epps home at Spring Road. After displaying his wares he asked of Mr. Van Epps whom he should call upon farther up the road. Mr. Van Epps informed him that the brothers-in-law resided there. The peddler exclaimed in his German accent, "Ach Swaggertown". From a German dictionary our research staff finds that the interpretation of brother-in-law is "schweiger".

Post Offices:

In the 19th century, the Town of Charlton had two post offices. A post office was established in Charlton Village on September 28, 1802. The first post master was Chauncey Belding, who operated a store at the west end of the village. The post office was discon-

tinued July 14, 1906 at which time the mail was delivered Rural Free Delivery from Ballston Lake.

At West Charlton the post office was established November 2, 1828. The first postmaster was Finlay McMartin. The post office was discontinued July 31, 1906 after which the mail was delivered Rural Free Delivery from Haganan, Montgomery County. At the present time the town of Charlton has 10 mailing addresses. Since the early establishment of the post office had a great impact on the growth of the town, we will outline the stagecoach run that delivered the mail. The stage run began at the Merchants Hotel, 127 State Street, Schenectady, N. Y. Succeeding stops were made at Dedrick's Hotel, Town of Glenville, Callaghen's Store or Beldings Store. As politics changed in Washinton so changed the location of the village post office. The stage then proceeded north on Jockey Street to the Marvin Myers farm. The outline of the stage road is still visible as the road meandered cross lots to the Dr. David Low farm. From the Low house it proceeded north easterly to Eastern Avenue at Cook Road. This portion of the run was abandoned in 1817 when Collins Road, now Eastern Avenue, was surveyed from Jockey Street to Cook Road and established as a public road. The stage then continued westerly to west Charlton Post Office, Galway, West Galway and Haganan. The following day the stage would return to Schenectady with mail and passengers.

Eminence:

The Town of Charlton is rich in history in many ways. Gideon Hawley, Jr., who resided east of the Freehold Church, graduated from Union College in 1809. In 1813 he was appointed the first Superintendent of Common Schools of New York State. He is credited with establishing the foundation of our common school system, which was adopted throughout the State of New York.

At the present time our town can boast of only one New York State Historical marker. Located on the north side of Western Avenue just west of Potter Road Extension, the marker commemorates the "Consalus" tragedy. Here in April 1782, Joseph Consalus and his son Emanuel were killed by a band of marauding St. Regis Indians. Another son, John, a youth of 15, was captured at the same time, together with a hired man, and carried off to Canada, where he was forced into the British Army. The rest of the family escaped with horse and wagon and reached Cranes Village, on the Mohawk. At the time of the Revolution and the Civil War conscientious objectors erected liberty poles. The New York State Bicentennial Commission, is now inquiring about the locations of any such liberty poles. The

Town of Charlton can boast of our pole erected at Little Troy. Luke Dows, who resided in the house now owned by Fred Mason, sold off 46 acres from his farm which included the grist mill site. The last paragraph of the deed reads "thence along the same N44 45'W 9C59L to a stake near the Liberty pole in front of the dwelling house of Luke Dows Esq. thence along the center of the Charlton-Burnt Hills road N46 E7C63L to the place of beginning, containing 46 acres 3 Roads and 34 perches of land. In the year 1858, residents of Charlton took up a subscription and erected a school of higher learning. They called it the Charlton Academy. Many graduates of this school became famous throughout the country.

Burial Grounds:

On the Conde farm, south east of the village lots, there is located the Conde burial ground. Jesse Conde, who purchased Lot 5, was born in Schenectady November 3, 1743 and settled in Charlton in 1774. He died in 1818 and is buried here beside his wife Parthena Ogden, who died December 11, 1817. They had 12 children.

The present Swaggertown Road ran through the farm of Jeremiah Smith, who had purchased Lot 4, 200 acres, of the 5000-acre tract in 1774. Born in 1750, he died in 1828 and is buried in the Smith Cemetery, which he set off from his farm as a community cemetery.

Located on a secluded wooded knoll, on the west side of Division Street is the Isaac Smith burial ground. Here lie the progenitors of the families of Smith, Crane, Weld, Broughton, Weaver and Baldwin. In this plot is buried Capt. Isaac Smith, born 1767, died 1851.

On the east side of DeGraff Road we find a small burial ground of the Swart family. Teunis Swart was a veteran of the War of Independence. He purchased 156 1/2 acres for 62 L 16 sh. in 1797 and the following year an additional 24 acres, on which the burial ground is located. The date of his death is no longer legible on the gravestone. Margaret Mynderse, wife of Teunis, was buried here in 1796.

On both sides of Old Rt. 67, at Blue Corners, we find burial grounds of early settlers. On the south side is the Brotherson Cemetery. It has been reported that Philip Brotherson was instrumental in erecting the St. Marys Episcopal Church on this site. The graves on the east side of the burial ground are marked with slabs of blue lime rock, a custom of the early Quaker settlers.

Across the street is the Jacob Mott Cemetery. Where the graves of Jacob Mott and his wife Elizabeth are located. Elizabeth was

the sister of the Kissam brothers who purchased 407 acres in 1790 at this location. Elizabeth's share was 150 acres. Also buried here is Col. Samuel Richards, born 1776, died 1850. On the west side of Cook Road, near the Galway line, a plot of ground was set aside for burial ground by Oliver Adams prior to 1791. Presently one gravestone has been uncovered. It marks the grave of Byron, age 4, son of Levi and Eliza Callen, who resided on the east side of Cook Road. Another lone gravestone marks the burial place of Catherine, wife of John Spitcher. Catherine died March 16, 1857. No deed can be found showing where John Spitcher bought or sold this farm so we must assume that the land was purchased under contract and that, at the death of his wife, John Spitcher moved on to a new location. The grave is located in a pasture on the farm of Chester Orgolek on Division Street.

Century Farms:

The death of Hawley McWilliams, Jr., this past year, ends the male lineage of the McWilliams family. The nearly 200 year old homestead is located on a knoll on the west side of Sacadaga Road, at the Galway line. George McWilliams purchased this 100 acre farm in 1775 and in a succession of wills it has been handed down to Robert Myndert and Hawley McWilliams Sr. Hawley Sr. willed the farm to his wife Alberta, who in turn willed it to her son Hawley Jr. and daughters Jean and Mary.

The LaRue homestead, on Charlton Road, one mile east of the village of Charlton, is part of the 5000-acre tract. It is Lot 7, 200 acres, and is the only small lot of the tract that has not been subdivided into smaller farms. The farm is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. R. Nelson La Rue and family.

On the east side of Jockey Street, nestled in an apple orchard, is the home of brothers John and Arthur Riley. John Riley Sr. purchased this 20 acre farm in 1840. Joseph Porter built this house circa 1791.

Adjacent to the Riley farm is the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Leo Martin. In 1844 James L. Martin Sr. purchased the north half of the Riley farm from Thomas Riley Sr.

On Crane Road, one mile west of the village of Charlton, Miss Adelia Gardiner resides in the Gardiner Homestead. In 1832 Lawrence Gardiner purchased 78 acres and in 1871 John purchased an additional 18 acres. The farm is part of small Lot 3 that John Holmes purchased in 1775.

On the north side of Crooked Road, near Stage Road, William DeGroff lives in a 19th century Cape Cod house that Thomas and Jeremiah DeGroff purchased in 1836. A deed dated 1838 gives a surveyor's description showing how the north end of the farm bordered the Slab Troy Mill Pond.

At Harmony Corners is the Parent Homestead. The original house, next door, was sold off and another, more elaborate one was built, which is now owned by Ralph G. Parent of Herkimer, New York. John Parent, one of the early settlers of Charlton, purchased the 50 acres on which the house is located, from Kenneth and David Gordon in 1831. In 1864 Joseph L. Parent purchased a 25 acre timber lot west of the farm and it is believed that logs cut from this timber lot were sawed into lumber to build the present house. This farm was handed down by a series of wills to preserve it as a homestead.

At the corner of Jockey Street and Rt. 67 is the home of Mr. and Mrs Frank Holbrook. Frank is a descendent of Isaac Smith. In the year 1795, Nathan Pardy (Purdy or Pardee) purchased this 109 acre farm from Daniel Northrup for 900 L English money and in 1837 Isaac Smith purchased it from Nathan Pardee for \$3280.

At the corner of Division Street and Eastern Avenue, Mr. and Mrs Herbert Smith reside. The original farm consisted of 32 acres which Zadick Smith purchased from Isaac Smith, Jr. in 1796. Each Smith successor purchased additional land until the farm now consists of well over 150 acres. Through a succession of wills and purchases the farm was handed down from Isaac, Jr., to Zadick, Daniel, David A., George, Elmer and Herbert Smith.

Business Enterprises:

Previously we mentioned the mills on Eel Plats Kill, or Alplaus Creek, but Charlton had many diversified business enterprises. As we scan old maps and deeds we find that the early freeholders shopped close to their home or farm. In the hamlet of Charlton, in the 19th century, there were the Belding Store, Callaghan Store, Slover Store, Harvey Smith Tin Shop, Ely Leather factory, Van Epps Shoe Shop, Curtis Blacksmith Shop, Heaton Wagon and Blacksmith Shop, Cromers Hotel, Underhill Vineyard, Amos Smith Tavern, Young Pump Factory, Archibald Smith Cider Mill, Theodore Smith Slaughter House, Josiah Gran Coffin Shop, Jones Harness & Shoe Shop, Raymond Tannery and Bark Mills, and Charlton Union Cheese and Butter Factory.

At West Charlton there were the Bowlsby Tavern, Pearse General Store, Wheeler Blacksmith Shop and Hallowell Saw Mill.

At Blue Corners there were the Boja Store and Gilchrist Cider Mill.

Churches:

In the 19th century the Town of Charlton had six churches of various denominations. Today there are only two churches still used for worship.

In West Charlton we find the United Presbyterian Church of West Charlton. In the early days it was known as the United Presbyterian Reformed Church of West Charlton. Also it was known as Scotch Church from the fact that its founders were nearly all natives of Scotland. The road running north and south through this settlement was called Scotch Street.

In 1794 the congregation having built a house of worship, gave a call to Rev. James Mairs. Educated for the ministry in Ireland and Scotland, Mairs emigrated with his brother in May 1793, and reached Salem, Washington County, in August of that year. He accepted the call and was installed as the first pastor of the church on February 20, 1794.

The other church, presently serving the residents of the easterly part of the Town, is the Freehold Presbyterian Church in Charlton Village. In 1786 the congregation purchased the land from William and Mary Clark for 10 L English money. At the northeast corner of the church site there was located a burial ground. In later years, to make room for expansion, the gravestones were removed to the south east corner of Pine Grove Cemetery. Two neat rows of gravestones designate the passing on of some of the early settlers of Freehold.

On the east side of Maple Avenue, just north of the village of Charlton, stands St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Charlton Village, another old parish, dating back to 1803. On the 10th day of December A.D. 1803, a meeting of the members of the Episcopal Church, was held for the purpose of organizing a society of that denomination in Charlton or (Freehold). The present building is the original structure built in 1804. In the year 1869 an addition was constructed at the east end of the church to accommodate a larger space for the altar. The last service was conducted by Rev. Leon Cartwell in 1966. This church has recently been

purchased by the Charlton Historical Society to be used as a meeting place and a folk museum. At this time we think it appropriate to mention the churches that have been torn down.

Just west of the brick store, in the Village of Charlton, there stood a 1 1/2 story building, with walls constructed of field slate stones. At times it has been referred to as the "Stone Jug". Little is known about the building except that about 1834 it was used for a place of worship by the congregation of the Universalist Church of Ballston. The building was torn down about 1944.

At the west end of the village, nearly opposite the K. of P. Hall, there was erected a house of worship for the congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The church was built in 1834 and torn down in 1906.

In a wooded patch on the south side of Old Rt. 67, at Blue Corners, there is located the Brotherson Cemetery. On the west side of this plot a building for worship was erected by the congregation of St. Mary's Episcopal Church. The building was torn down about 1880 and only particles of glass in the burial ground are mute reminders of the presence of a church. The land was set aside from the farm of Philip Brotherson, who was instrumental in erecting the church.

Schools:

From deed recordings it is quite difficult to determine when the early schools were built since landowners usually granted permission to use the land for a school site. When the building was no longer used for a school house the land reverted back to the owner. In the 19th century the town had ten school districts, divided so that a child did not have to walk more than one mile to school. The following school numbers did not necessarily indicate the age of the building. Dist. No. 1 school was located at Blue Corners, on old Rt. 67, a small hamlet at the northwest corner of the town. The building was converted into a dwelling house.

Dist. No. 2 school was located on Sacandaga Road, adjacent to the West Charlton Cemetery. It has been removed from the original site and stands idle.

Dist. No. 3 school was located on Rt. 67, just west of Holbrook Corners. Although converted into a summer home, it still retains the charm of a one room school house.

Dist. No. 4 school was located on Western Avenue, just west of Sacadaga Road. The building was converted into a dwelling house. The original school house, built in 1815, was erected closer to Sacandaga Road.

Dist. No. 5 school was located on Cook Road but in 1871 another school house was built on the corner of Eastern Avenue. The latter building has been converted into a storage barn.

Dist. No. 6 school was located on the corner of Division Street and Charlton Road. The district was abolished in 1916 and the building removed. The children of that district attended Dist. No. 8 school. Dist. No. 7 school was located on Stage Road, at Little Troy. In 1965 it was converted into a dwelling house. The first school, built in 1818 on the corner of Valentine and Lakehill Roads, was moved and now is a portion of the home of Town Justice Howard Plummer.

Dist. No. 8 school, on Maple Avenue, has been converted to a Mission Library by Rev. Leon Cartmell. This school house was built in 1859. The original school house in existence in 1818, stood on the site where the Historical Society town sign now stands.

Dist. No. 9 school was located at Harmony Corners, a hamlet at the north east section of the town. The school house was torn down for an alteration of Rt. 67 at that point. Dist. No. 10 school was located at the corner of Valentine and Charlton Road. No record of its removal has been found. In the early recordings of the town a Mr. Sweetman had this to say, " We have a poor school and a teacher of poor quality. In as much as the school house was located near the Sweetman farm we can assume that his remarks were directed at Dist. No. 10 school.

At one time Charlton residents could boast of a school of higher learning, the Charlton Academy. It was located on the south east corner of the Freehold Church site. In the year 1859, the academy was built chiefly through the exertions of the Rev. Mr. Crocker. The money was raised by subscription. The school closed in 1912, after which the building was used for social events until it was destroyed by fire in 1946.

Charlton School:

In 1895 Mr. John Hawley established a Christian home for wayward or homeless boys. At that time it was called The Charlton Industrial Farm School. The brick school was destroyed by fire.

in 1938. In 1955 the program was reconstructed for teenage girls. There now exists a complex of buildings for all phases of the program.

Charlton Historical Society:

On February 21, 1966, plans for a society were made at a pre-organization meeting held in the Mission Library. First officers elected were Frank Lafforthun, president; William Gottung, vice president; Ruth Bull, recording secretary; Barbara Holbrook, corresponding secretary; and William Moffatt, treasurer. Frank Lafforthun was presented with the first charter membership card. Other charter members accepted were Ruth Bull, Robert Bull, Janet Moffatt, William Moffatt, Helen Loehtrupp, Christian Loehtrupp, Barbara Heinemann, Robert Heinemann, Phyllis Gottung, William Gottung, Doris Schaus, Carl Schaus, Frank Fee, Jr., Alice Gilmore, Dorothy Grave, Vivian Grunewald, Jane Robbins, Jeanne O'Brien, Irene Yates, Frank Fee, Sr., Jan Kirschman, Betty Jordon, Helen Hequembourg, Fred Hequembourg, Barbara Renaud, Betty Lou Wessell, Bettie Larsen, Jess E. Martin, Louise Clark, Barbara Holbrook, Frank Holbrook, Louis Riccardi, Henrietta Van Der Veer, Clarence Van Der Veer.

On September 19, 1969 the society unfurled its new flag. The 3-by-5 foot flag was designed by Steve Jordon and hand sewn by Helen Kasquibski. Against a bright blue background it displayed a picture of the Henry J. Springer pump. This type of pump, adopted as the society emblem, was in use as early as 1847. Mr. Springer purchased this pump factory from the John N. Young heirs in 1932. John Young manufactured these pumps as early as 1898.

Indian Trails:

From an old map we find that His Excellency George Washington Esq. petitioned Isaac Vrooman to make a map indicating the Indian trails out of Schenectady. The north west trail crossed the Ale Plaus Kill, (or Eel Plats) or now known as the Alplaus Creek, at an equal distance to that of a point at Long Lake (now Ballston Lake) at this point of the Eel Plats the water flowed from the west about 1/2 mile and then came from the north. At no point does the Alplaus Creek cross Sacandaga Road in the Town of Charlton. The map indicates two mill ponds west of the trail. Isaac Vrooman made this map on June 7, 1779. At this date John Rogers had built a mill pond and mill where the Alplaus Creek crosses Swaggertown Road. Also, John Holmes, at this period, built his mill pond and mill where the Alplaus Creek crosses Crane Pond. From these facts we can substantiate the fact that the north west Indian trail is our present Swaggertown Road.