

Newspaper Article (*Jamestown Journal*)

Recollections of Early Busti

Address by Eleazer Green at the Centennial Celebration of the Town

Old Names Recalled

Many Old-Time Citizens Mentioned – Busti's Part In the "Underground Railway", That Carried Many Slaves to Freedom – Some Humorous Incidents – An Old Peach Orchard And a Dog – A Memorable Law Suit.

Among the addresses delivered at the Busti Centennial none will have a more important place in the thoughts of former and present residents of the town than that of Eleazer Green, whose memory of events extends back to pre-war days. Mr. Green spoke in part as follows:

"My parents were early settlers of the Town of Busti and I spent my boyhood days here and have been asked to speak a few words upon this occasion.

"When my parents Eleazer and Sylvina Kent Green came from Oneida county to the Town of Busti, to the Stow Farm on the Wellman road, where they located in the fall of 1847 they brought me, then less than two years old, into comparatively a new country, almost into the 'forest primeval', where they and their contemporaries by strenuous effort improved their conditions and improved the Town of Busti.

"Our immediate or nearest neighbors upon the Wellman road were, to the north, Uncle John Kent and 'Aunt Ann' and their children Silas, Priscilla, Annis, John, William and Clara, all dead., then came our family of father, mother, Broughton, Sophia, Betsey, Amy (Mrs. A.F. Palmers), William and myself; next on the south, Mr. and Mrs. Ransome Curtis and their sons, Spencer and Sidney, all dead; next came Mr. and Mrs. John Johnson and their children, James, Mary, John, Curtis, Normandus, Adeline, William and Martha, all dead except William. My sister Amy and myself are all that remain of our family.

“As I now recall them, the early residents upon the Wellman road, in the town of Busti commencing at the north line of the Town, were as follows: John Kent, Eleazer Green, Ransom Curtis, John Johnson, Russell Nobles, Peter C. Wemple, R.C. Wemple, Joseph Stevens, Homer Wellman and his sons, Clinton, Ardillo, Orin, Homer, Harlow, and a daughter, Lucy; William Nichols, Seymour Davis, James Cale, William Briggs, Otis Green, James Sweet, Arthur Nichols, Hiram Burton, William Seabury and Phileus Chandler. All of these are dead. Two of the sons of James Cale, Wallace and Wilton, are still living. One son of Harlow Wellman is living, George, and also his two sons, Clarence and Robert. Homer Wellman is also a grandson of Homer Harlow Wellman and is a prominent physician of the City of Jamestown. These early settlers were industrious, thrifty, substantial farmers and they with their families aided substantially in the development of the town.

“In this connection I mention my brother, Broughton W. Green who for a long lifetime was a prominent, influential and hustling resident of the town. He died in the year 1900 leaving five children, Wesley, Mary, Martha, Sylvina and William. Of these children Wesley became and was for many years prominent in railroad circles (text missing) was especially so with the young. I knew but few outside of a small circle; among these, I will mention Jacob B. Foster, still living; he has been prominent and influential in this town for at least sixty years. Then there was Truman Southwick, Winslow, Daniel, Joseph, Charles, Seth and Abram Shearman. William Clark, Seymour Cale, Rowland James, Samuel and William Smiley, Benjamin Cook father of the late Judge Orsell Cook, Charles, John, Samuel, Ransom, Fordyce and James Cowing, John Jasper Alexander, Stephen Douglas and his children, Charles, Anna, James, Silas, Latham, and Lucy. Anna was my early teacher, I loved her then, she is still living and holds a warm place in my heart today. Edwin Douglass and his family, and I wish particularly to mention Mr. Douglass as he seemed to take an especial interest in me and my early life and continued as one of my sincerest friends up to the time of his death which occurred only a few years ago. His children Charles, Emily D., Cale, Carrie D. Greene, and Elsie Douglass are all still living and are among my dearest friends.

“After I went to Jamestown to live, my professional work took me to the village of Busti Corners frequently where I came to know other residents of the town, among them the “Twin Palmers,” Whitman and Amos and their families. A son of Whitman, Amos F. married my sister, Amy, and they have two children living, Jennie and Frederick, the author and famous war correspondent. The other children of Whitman Palmer and Mary Ann, Lucinda and John, Lucinda is still living and married Alfred Ayres, they have one son, Herbert, who is an up-to-date farmer and a successful breeder of throbred cattle. Joseph Ayres, and his family Charles, Alfred, Elizabeth, Harriet, Conroy, Chauncey and Sereno, George Stoneman and his children, Kate the first woman lawyer in this state, Mary, Charlotte, Byron and George the famous cavalry general of the Civil War, afterwards governor of the state of California; Ira Young and his daughters Emmy Y.

Bootey, Anna Y. Morgan and Ella Y. Hazeltine; and, although I never saw him when very young, I used to hear the older boys tell of a Captain Cale who lived a good ways back from some road and who kept a peach orchard and a dog.

“Then there were James Broadhead still living and of “the salt of the earth” Doctors Martin and Bennett, Van Ness Walkup, William Northrup, Eli Whiting, John Fargo, Jerome Barber, Hubert, George, Willis and John Babcock, Oren Orlando and Hiram Stoddard, Charles Frank and his sons Warren, Dallas and John; Adelbert Simmons, John Robertson (Johnny Rob), Monroe, Mattison, Alvin Bullock, Hendrick and Erick Andrews, Burnham Penfield and undoubtedly others whose names now escapes me, all useful and law-abiding citizens.

“Thus far I have omitted to mention one who was a prominent resident of the town for many years, who possessed an enviable record as a soldier of the Civil War and with whom I frequently came in contact, Alonzo C. Pickard; who afterwards came to Jamestown and was a leading lawyer there up to the time of his death which occurred only a few years ago. His sons, Clare A. and Ray F. are now among the leading attorneys of Jamestown. It was my privilege to know Alonzo C. Pickard intimately as we were at times associated together on the same side of a law suit but more frequently we were opponents, and he was a worthy and resourceful one, no one who ever met him in court would question that statement. He had a rugged but companionable personality, persuasive with a court and with a jury and if he did not succeed in convincing that his client was in the right and should succeed, then no lawyer could have done so.

“Perhaps I am not justified in taking time to mention specifically one case in which we were associated together, but will venture to do so, we were defending a man accused of assault in the first degree for having shot his step-son with a rifle with intent to kill, and by the way the defendant was a resident of the Town of Busti. We were in doubt about a defense, what it should be. The defendant was of small mental caliber and as such are wont to be very talkative. We decided to feature his mental infirmity or peculiarity as a principal, if not sole defense. The evidence of his previous threats were overwhelming and there were eye witnesses to the shooting, but fortunately (or unfortunately) the step-son was not hit. Neither Pickard nor myself could understand why and were included to attribute it to the excitement of the occasion but Lon said to our client when we were interviewing him preparatory to the trial – “Henry I can’t understand why you didn’t hit him, you are an excellent marksman and you must have shot merely to scare him.” Whether or not our client took the cue we never knew but he at once exclaimed “of course, I shot to scare him, I didn’t intend to hit him. If he had held a penny in his mouth, I could have hit it. Everybody knows I am a good shot. Alonzo then said. “Henry, if this is the fact, I don’t’ know but it would be advisable to tell that to the jury.” That ended the

interview, and Pickard and myself decided to put Henry on the stand in his own behalf and without going into any of the details of the shooting would simply ask him a few formal questions and turn him over to the district attorney for cross-examination. Knowing the district attorney's methods and the impossibility of anyone stopping Henry after he got started we took our chances. It worked as Pickard had planned and I give him the credit. The district attorney pulled the cork and the flow of words started Henry told the jury about his excellent marksmanship, how he could hit a squirrels head every time in the top of the highest tree; that he could have killed his step-son the first shot but he didn't want to, he simply wanted to scare him away. The district attorney soon discovered his mistake and tried to stop Henry, the court tried to stop him, in a half-hearted way Pickard pretended to try to stop him. None of them succeeded. Henry told the whole story, revealed his true self to the jury and was promptly acquitted. We didn't get much for defending him but we had a lot of fun. As already stated in effect, Alonzo C. Pickard was an able lawyer, a companionable man and I had a genuine admiration for him.

"Busti has recently acquired another citizen, Benjamin S. Dean; one of Jamestown's leading lawyers has become an amateur farmer of your town and is fully determined to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before if it costs a dollar a blade to do it. He will give you, in substantial amount, moral, intellectual and financial support.

"It may not be inappropriate in speaking of the early history of the Town of Busti to mention some things in connection with what was then known as the Underground Railroad.

"I will speak briefly on the subject now. History tells us that the "Underground Railroad" was a secret or "underground" organization of Abolitionists, who in defiance of the law of the land assisted the runaway slaves to reach Canada from which they could not be brought. I believe it is generally understood at the present time by those reasonably well informed of Busti's early history that at least one track of the railroad extended thru the town of Busti.

"Things that a boy may see and hear were conclusive evidence that a track of that railroad extended from Sugar Grove north along the Wellman road. I well remember that as a small boy on many occasions as I would go to the barn early in the morning to feed the cows and climb up to throw down the hay. I would discover a negro upon the mow. During the day food would be brought him from our house or from the house of our neighbor. Ransom Curtis; and from the ample and appetizing supply I am sure that my mother and Mrs. Curtis were in fully sympathy and accord with the actions of their

husbands. During the day a conference would invariably be held between my father and Mr. Curtis. Being the youngest of the family and not considered of sufficient age (words missing) intelligently impart (words missing) I would sometimes (words missing) such an interview (words missing) planned that either my father or Mr. Curtis would start after nightfall, with a horse and wagon and the negro. This one of them would do, always driving north; where they went, none knew. Those who were old enough to realize what was being done knew that inquiries would not elicit information and made none. The younger ones if they made inquiries were told that father would be back before long, but the negro never came back. Sometime when father went he would be back when I arose in the morning. When the trip was a short one he was undoubtedly met by another "conductor" of the road who took the negro on the next station. Sometime father would not be back until nearly or quite night of the next day, then the trip probably extended to Barcelona where a rowboat would be ready for a trip across the lake to freedom. In those days starlit nights and the north star were important aids to the slaves seeking freedom.

"When one realizes the dangers attending participation in the underground railroad work and that it required courage and a conviction that it was a duty to violate the law of the land and obey what was by them believed to be higher law, we can but admire, yes, cherish, the memory of such men. They were unassuming, industrious, intelligent, honorable and fearless and only for this one exception, law-aiding, I revere the memory of those fathers and mothers.

"Only a short time ago I visited the old homestead, my boyhood home; and while a few things of the early time still remained, the changes seemed to me nearly universal. But in memory I saw the old farm as it was in my boyhood, and noted the changes that had come; for the time I was a boy of then and an old man of now. I communed as a boy with the birds, the trees, the rocks and the brooks of then; as an old man, I was saddened by the changes that had come.

"I congratulate the sturdy old town of Busti upon its past, much of it almost, yes, quite heroic. I congratulate it upon its present and upon its prospects for the future. I am proud of it, and of the fact that my father and mother and their children contributed, in some degree, to the making of the history of the dear old town."

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Eleazer Green (1856-1933) was the second mayor of Jamestown. He also served as District Attorney of Chautauqua County. He was the developer of Greenhurst which is named after him. He was also noted for prize teams of oxen.

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Alonzo C. Pickard owned variously half and full interest in the Busti Mill 1873-1876. He was town Supervisor at the same time 1873-1875).