

History of Busti

Paper Read at Centennial Town Picnic by Albert G. Jones

The First Road - Nine Dams – Swedish Settlers

Albert G. Jones, a descendent of one of the town's early settlers, prepared and read at the centennial town picnic the following record of Busti's beginnings when the nineteenth century was young, which was printed by request:

The town of Busti was founded in the year one by the almighty. If anyone questions the date, I would refer him to "History of Busti", chap. I written by Moses. God placed Chautauqua Lake on the north for beauty, and supported its southern walls by the whole state of Pennsylvania. He waved the surface of the ground and called it the Stillwater valley. He planted the seed of the hemlock, the oak and the chestnut, the beech and the maple, and they grew under his care and protection until not a rod of the town's surface but what was covered with forest monarchs.

The first road from Pennsylvania to Chautauqua lake, striking the lake at what was called Miles Landing, was opened in 1805, five years before the first person settled in the town. Robert Miles, who helped build the road, says in Young's History of Chautauqua: "This road commenced at my father's farm in the town of Sugar Grove, near where Frederick Miles now lives". The Miles is now owned by James Blakley," and passed a little east of where the senior Devereaux first settled. The Devereaux home was about where Grant Babcock's house now stands" and over the hills and near where Samuel Griffithe settled, and crossed the present lake road a little west of Judson Southland's farm, and came to the lake at the mouth of a little creek on the lake shore at Uriah Bentley's". The creek mentioned is the small stream crossing the lake road a little east of the brick house on the Bentley farm.

"The road was used for many years by the people of Pennsylvania to go to Chautauqua Lake, and for the first settlers on the lake to go to Pennsylvania for provisions. The Mileses made a large canoe on the hill west of where the Devereaux settled out of a pine tree, and drew it over the hills to Chautauqua lake and the hill was called Canoe Tree Hill by the early settlers."

It is now called Abbott hill and is west of where Mr. Covey and Mr. Harter now live. "There were a few settlers in Warren County, Pa. before there were in Chautauqua County, and the early settlers about Chautauqua Lake not infrequently went to Pennsylvania for seed potatoes, oats, wheat etc., and for cows and hogs when commencing in the woods."

Robert Miles died in 1910, aged 57 years, near Sugar Grove, PA. on the Frederick Miles farm, now known as the James Blakesley farm.

John I. Frank was the first settler of the town of Busti. He came in 1810 and settled in what has since been known as the Frank Settlement.

Lawrence Frank came the same year and settled on Lot 62.

Herman Bush came in June, 1812, and settled on the farm owned by O.J. Stoddard and son. He kept a tavern, a store and an ashery for many years.

John Frank and Theron Plumb came in 1811, and settled on Lot 60, which includes the village.

Aaron Martin bought the Martin farm in April, 1810. Rev. Duey I. Martin is a great grandson of this early settler.

Asabel Andrews, the grandfather of Earl Andrews, was an early settler in the village, as was also Hendrick Mattison, the grandfather of Hendrick Andrews, your assessor.

Asa Smith settled in 1814 on the farm now owned by Frank Harter.

James Cole settled in the town about 1817.

A tannery was built by John Frank in 1812. The first vats were troughs made of logs. It was burned and rebuilt and was continued until sometime in the 60's. The first saw mill at the village was built by Herman Bush.

A clock factory was built about 1830 and continued for several years.

Herman Bush built the first grist mill. Francis Sowl built the present one on the same site.

Palmer Phillips, Arbu Bullock, Daniel Sherman and Joseph Garfield and the two Devereaux were also among the early settlers.

In the early days of the town there were 9 dams. One at Sherman's Bay, called the Dry Sawmill; one on the present Kent farm furnished power to run a saw mill, one in the village, the only one left of the nine. One, known as the Devereaux dam had a sawmill. This dam was on the land now owned by Clyde Curtis; one on the land owned by August Baker, where Herman Bush had a factory for making wooden bowls. I can just remember the building, it was torn down over 50 years ago; one run of stone on the farm now owned by August Lindquist. The dam was just west of the road. There was a dam near what is called the brick school house. John Frank had a dam to provide power for his tannery. This dam was a little north of the Swede road in what is known as the Frank Settlement. After this dam was washed out by a flood, there was one built about 60 rods down the stream. Modern history has a record of one other dam, built by Fred Shaw, for the manufacturing of ice.

No history of the town of Busti would be complete without a record of the invasion of the Swedish people. It began about the middle of the last century. The South has its Negro, California and Oregon the Chinese and Jap, but in neither of these states has the race question been settled as with us. We are completely subjected as the Jeff Davis Confederacy, as badly whipped as Jeffries by Johnson. They have taken our farms and married our daughters; they have taken our names and we have thrown in the sons. They

invite us to their family reunions-they have to. We kill a hen and are glad to exchange our fried chicken for their – I don't know what you call it, but it is good, all right.

Great was Sweden behind Norway. I say was, because it doesn't seem possible there is anyone left.

A directory of Chautauqua County, published in 1873, was supposed to contain all the names of those owning, or leasing or in business. How many do you suppose are in that directory as owning or leasing land? Remember the date, 1873. I looked it up. There are four named as owning land, and one as leasing land. The names are as follows: August Fosburg, who came here in 1868, and lived where Ephriam Fosburg now lives; Alfred Johnson near the Charles Cowing farm; Johnson on the cross road near Mitchell's, Elias Sanbury, father of our Supervisor, and a man by the name of Adolf Lawson rented some farm on the Carroll road. I don't know that he was a Swede but suppose so from the name.

Elias Sanbury settled in Busti in 1851, and so far as I have been able to find out there was no one of his nationality before him.

The list in the directory is not complete as John Donaldson came in 1868; Forbian Newbury in 1869, August Baker in 1872, Mrs. Christine Johnson and children in 1868, John and August Linqvist and Charles Helgren and perhaps some others came before 1873.

Francis Sowl, a man who did much for Busti, was born in the state of Vermont. He moved from there to Northampton in the Adirondacks, then to the town of Stockton, Chaut. Co. From there he moved to Busti in the 1830's. A millwright by trade and practice he did almost anything that required mechanical ability. He helped to construct the first machine that made pointed screws. Screws before that time had the same size thread throughout. They had no point and would not draw themselves into wood without first having a hole bored for the screw to follow.

While living in Northampton he started out one spring to find work at his trade. When he got back in the fall he found his wife dead and buried. She had taken sick in the summer,

no one knew where to find him, he had no way to let them know where he was. No mail, no telegraph, no telephone, no railroad. There was some trouble even in good old times.

After coming to this town he built several houses. The house now occupied by Dwight Way, owned by Rev. Palmeto, being the first one. He bought the grist mill and put up the present mill building about 1838. He also built a new saw mill and sold it to Hiram Bush. He had a wagon shop and a blacksmith shop. Father began working for him in March 1845. His wages were 50 cents a day when working in the shop; a little more when working in the mill, on the farm or in the woods. A man could earn wages large enough in those days so he could lay some of it aside for posterity. I'm posterity in this case.

They would take the timbers in the woods, have them sawed at the mill, they would turn out the hubs with a lathe that was in the basement of the mill, and split and shave the spokes, saw out the felloes with a riddle saw, make the axle out of scantling, do their own iron work, making every brace and bolt. Certainly that was a handmade wagon, buggy or cutter.

Mr. Sowl was a man 6 feet 6 inches tall, weighed 340 pounds, had a hand, a foot and a gait that reminded one of an elephant. He was an honest, upright man, trusted by everybody, and he in his turn trusted in his God, the founder of Busti. Mr. Sowl after retiring from active business mended the lame clocks and sick watches for the people for many years. He is dead now and his remains lay in the village cemetery. John White now mends the watches and clocks while you wait.

Page 1

Albert Jones (1852-1930) owned the Busti Mill 1909-1925 plus part ownership from 1890. His father, Mark Jones, owned half interest in the mill from 1851 to 1859 and again from 1875, and full title from 1883 to 1890 and again part title until his death in 1909.

The Miles Road came out near Crescent Creek in Lakewood according to Holland Land Company survey notes.

Samuel Griffith settled on lot 4 where Norman Carlson lives in April, 1810 and lived there several years.

Page 2

The Lindquist dam powered a small grist mill judging by the two foot stone Elton Green had for a doorstep.

The Swede Road is now Orr Street Extension

Page 3

The Fosberg place was at the top of the hill on Burton Road, south side of the road. House still standing.

Page 4

Much of the information on Francis Sows was derived by Jones from a 1926 book *A contribution to the history, biography and genealogy of the families named Sole, Solly, Soule, Sowle, Soulis.*