

MCDONOUGH WAS ONCE INDUSTRIAL CENTER FOR CHENANGO COUNTY

Go-Won-Go Chapter. D.A.R. met at the home of Mrs. Robert Griffin in Oxford, Saturday afternoon, February 20. Sixteen members and five guests attended. Guests were Mrs. Fitch, and Mrs. Griffin of Oxford; Mrs. Parsons, Mrs. Bowman and Miss Marjorie Westcott of Greene.

Mrs. Frank Leary of Oxford read a short article telling about the three February-born freedom leaders; Abraham Lincoln who freed the slaves; George Washington, under whose leadership America was made a free country; and Susan B. Anthony who worked for more freedom for women.

Excerpts from a paper on local history written by the late Mrs. Helen Hill Read Tuttle of McDonough were read by Mrs. Wilbur McNitt of Oxford. The paper covered parts of Chenango county, but dealt with McDonough for the most part. One of the interesting facts which was brought out was that in 1845 McDonough, originally MacDonough, had a population of 1614. At one time this was a thriving community boasting of several industries including asheries, a hoe and fork factory, a tool and knife factory, a grist mill (still standing), a woolen mill, a paper mill run by John James Lee of the famous Virginia Lees, two tanneries, a hat factory, several blacksmiths, and a carpenter's shop where coffins were made.

It is surprising to note the changes years can bring as one will see from the following paragraphs taken directly from the original paper.

Chenango county in its beginning was as large as the state of Delaware, and later parcels were taken off for other counties. The town of Preston was one of the earliest to be set off from this tract. The most information on this subject of town land is the certificates of survey made out to purchasers after the sale of land by New York state. The date of the first was made to Norwich November 2, 1792, patent given December 29 same year. The second certificate was for the purchase of Preston by Melanthen Smith and Marinus Willet, a general in the Revolution (for whom the town of Willet in Cortland county was named) which was November 3, 1792.

Some of the early settlers came in from Vermont on a portion of land known as "The Vermont Sufferers Tract." This land was set off to compensate those who suffered loss of land through the change of boundary lines of New York and Vermont. There was also a portion set off in Jerico (now Bainbridge) for the same purpose.

One often wonders why these

from McDonough. in German, such was the price. Luther Lull, who came in from Byfield, Mass. paid such a price. It seems the "fever and ague" was prevalent in the valley and the hills were considered more healthful. For this reason Sylvanus Moore came to these parts. It is said that he was the first settler in 1795. He came in from Simsbury, Conn., to Oxford. There he met Henry Ludlow, and, as he was looking for a tract of land, Mr. Ludlow persuaded him to go to the west, then Preston, now McDonough, to look at land in the Ludlow holdings. Mr. Moore brought one hundred acres.

When Sylvanus Moore first came from Oxford he followed marked trees through virgin forest. He had an axe, a gun and a tin-plate, knife and fork, and one dollar in money. He built a "lean-to" in this dense forest, and the next summer rolled up a log house. Along the creek on Mr. Moore's land there were Indians' homes. These Indians were of a friendly nature.

The first road or paths which were made through the trackless forest were called "trodden paths" and people who traveled any distance went on horseback. The paths were two feet wide over pine needles and fallen leaves. The red men walked stealthily in Indian file. Later these paths were made by the heavy footwear of the pioneers. Others were formed by the slow tread of domestic cattle. Then scarcely broader than bridle paths, the blazed trees were used as guide posts. They broadened slowly to traveled roads and uneven cartways. A road was opened to the Unadilla river, and to Cayuga lake, near Ithaca, and is the same road now traveled from Unadilla to Oxford.

The two-wheeled cart was used by our forefathers, though the transfer of freight was done chiefly in the winter season by "sledding" for the reason there was less to do in the winter. A writer has described this in the following: "For many years distances were reckoned from tavern to tavern and stone mile posts were met with at every mile on the road. Drove of cattle and sheep were daily occurrences. In the winter the sleighs were loaded with hogs, poultry and venison, furkins of butter, sheep pelts, deer hides, skins of mink and fox, and occasionally a bear skin, also, the housewife had spun home-spun cloth and linen. Besides there was oats for the horses until the end of the trip, and food to last the teamster, consisting of doughnuts, cheese and cold roast pork, sausage and "Rye and Injun." Hiram Read, a raiser, breeder and buyer, in this section drove quantities of cattle to New York city every

and he disposed of the butter and cheese.

"One of the interesting events in early time following the War of 1812 was the general training of the military system of that day. Military companies were organized in each locality, which consisted of all able-bodied white male citizens, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. Among those exempt from military duty were clergymen, school teachers, students in colleges and academies, and members of fire companies, though in cases of insurrection or invasion all but clergymen and teachers were called upon. Each military company was obliged to assemble on the first Monday in September, or between Sept. 1 and Oct. 5 at a place designated by the commander of the Brigade, who was in this locality and central New York, General Hendrick Crane of Pharsalia, and who directed the assembly for one day's training. The regiment was made up for the most part of odd, quaint, ill-assorted and ungainly men from the hills, some of them barefooted, carrying their boots and military outfit in a bundle. It was spoken of as a time of great enjoyment. Men and boys sold trays of gingerbread and other food."

The remainder of the paper deals with the history of McDonough and vicinity and would be

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of great interest to anyone having ancestors who settled in and around that territory since each family's lineage is given.

Assisting the D.A.R. hostess were Mrs. Wilbur McNitt and Mrs. Minnie Dedrick of Oxford.

Members who attended from Greene were Mesdames J.F.L. Cunningham, Carl Purple, Lynn Harrington, Jennie Westcott,

Charles Mosher, Misses Madeline Barton, Laura M. Welcott, and Martha Westcott.

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One often wonders why these pioneers should come to the hills, leaving the valleys. The land was cheaper and could be purchased for a dollar an acre, while on the hills a little later it was worth one and a half dollars, even back

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trained the assembly. The regiment was made up for the most part of odd, quaint, ill-assorted and ungainly men from the hills, some of them barefooted, carrying their boots and military outfit in a bundle. It was spoken of as a time of great enjoyment. Men and boys sold trays of gingerbread and other food."

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