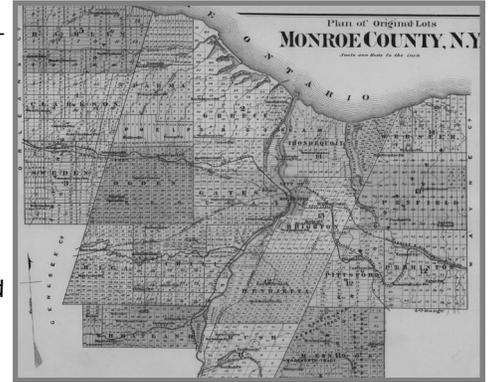


Greece History

Happy Birthday To Monroe County! by Marie Poinan

On February 23, 2021, we celebrated the Bicentennial of the founding of Monroe County. Named for **President James Monroe**, the county was carved out of land taken from both Ontario and Genesee Counties; it became a new county on February 23, 1821 by decree of the New York State Legislature.

After the Revolutionary War, a treaty of 1783 established the Great Lakes as the north-western border of the United States. This treaty was referred to as "The Thirteen Council Fires" by Native Americans who were attempting to peacefully co-exist with the former colonists. Unscrupulous speculators often attempted to swindle the natives by tricking them into surrendering their land, not to mention the fact that **George Washington** had sent **General Sullivan** into western New York to forcibly remove the Seneca by burning their crops and destroying their villages.



Land speculators **Oliver Phelps** and **Nathaniel Gorham** purchased over six million acres

in western NY from Massachusetts in 1788. The land extended all the way from Lake Ontario at the north to the Pennsylvania state line on the south. Phelps also negotiated a treaty with the Seneca, who had originally refused to sell any land west of the Genesee River. Phelps "convinced" the Native Americans to part with an area 12 miles wide by 28 miles long for the construction of a mill on the west side of the Genesee. This area became known as the "mill seat tract" and was the site of the first mill built by **Ebenezer "Indian" Allan** in 1789 (the site was just west of today's Court Street Bridge).

When Phelps and Gorham were unable to pay their debts, their unsold lots were sold to **Robert Morris** of Philadelphia in 1790. Morris was a financier who quickly turned over the sale of a million acres of Genesee land the very next year to **Sir William Johnstone Pulteney**. Due to a NY State law that said that a foreigner could not pass title to any New York property, **Charles Williamson** became Pulteney's land agent and he held the legal title to the Genesee lands. He opened a land office in Bath, Steuben County.

The settlements on the east side of the Genesee became the Town of Northfield created in 1796. This land was originally a part of Ontario County with the county seat at Canandaigua. It later was known as "Boyle." The towns split off from Northfield were: Penfield (1810), Perinton (1812), Pittsford and Brighton (1814), Henrietta (1818), Irondequoit (1839) and Webster (1840). Mendon was taken from Bloomfield in 1812 and Rush was taken from Avon in 1818.

Settlements on the west side of the Genesee River were part of the Town of Northampton created in 1797. Originally a part of Genesee County, the county seat was at Batavia. Towns split off from Northampton were: Parma and Riga (1808), Gates (1808*), Sweden (1813), Ogdenville (1817), Clarkson (1819), and Greece and Chili (1822). (The reason for the asterisk after Gates 1808 is because the petition was presented to Albany in 1808, but it took four years to pass in the legislature and an additional year to take effect!) Wheatland was originally called "Inverness" when created in 1821 and Hamlin was originally called "Union" when formed in 1852 before being renamed in 1861. The county seat of Northampton was at Batavia.

In March of 1801, **Abel Rowe** built a cabin in Batavia and **Joseph Ellicott** moved his Holland Land Company office into Rowe's cabin. Abel Rowe soon became a pioneer settler of Gates (later the Town of Greece) and married the daughter of **William Hinchey** of Charlotte in 1804. Their son **Asa** would become the famous nurseryman of Ridge Road in Greece.

In 1805, Pulteney land agent **James Wadsworth** (1768-1844) offered land for sale in a letter written at Genesee in 1805. (see page 5, New Lands for Sale photo)

At first, there were very few permanent settlers in our area. Pioneers included **Orring Stone**, **Daniel Penfield**, **Glover Perrin** and **William Hinchey** who built log cabin in 1792 on the bluff where the Charlotte Genesee Lighthouse now stands. The "Genesee Fever" pretty much wiped out the settlers at King's Landing where **Gideon King** and **Zaddock Granger** had bought 6000 acres in 1796. The earliest settlers of the Town of Greece are buried at the Hanford Landing and the Charlotte Village Cemeteries.

The 1971 Monroe County Sesquicentennial booklet, Preface to Tomorrow, referred to our area as: "a God-forsaken place, inhabited by muskrats, visited only by straggling trappers, and through which neither man nor beast could gallop without fear of starvation, or fever or ague." Nevertheless in 1803, **Charles Carroll**, **William Fitzhugh** and **Nathaniel Rochester** contracted to buy the "Genesee Fall mill tract" property (100 acres) from Sir William Pulteney, through his attorney Robert Troup. (continues, page 5)



Oliver Phelps



Nathaniel Gorham

Greece History (cont'd)

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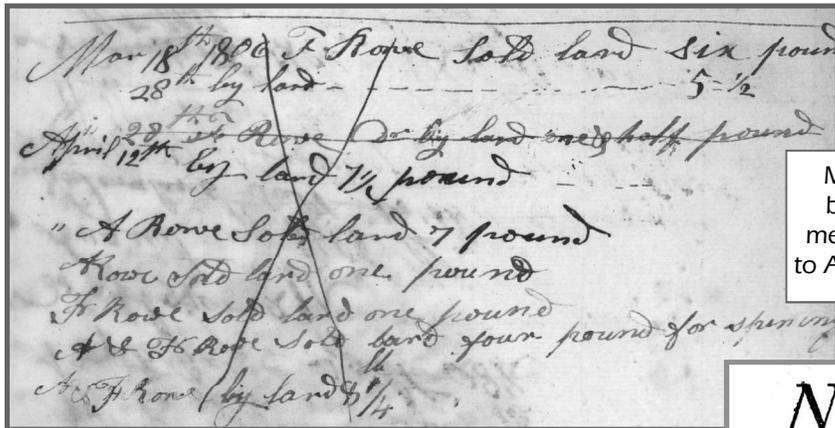
But it was the area's waterways that were key to the early growth of Monroe County. The arrival of the Erie Canal was a huge boon to the local economy by providing a cheap and efficient way to get bountiful crops to market. The waterfalls of the Genesee River provided power to its flour mills, mills that shipped over 200,000 barrels of flour in 1826, the very next year after the Erie Canal opened. Schooners and steamers at the busy port at Charlotte brought in lumber from Canada and exported finished wood from its sawmills and flour from its gristmills.

Early settlers planted fruit orchards and grain fields of wheat and barley. Wheat was ground into flour and the excess was turned into whiskey. An early census of western New York noted that there were more distilleries than gristmills.

The population of Rochesterville was less than 5000 people when it became an incorporated village in 1817. That number grew to over 12,000 residents when it received its charter as a city in 1834 and annexed another 4000 acres of land obtained from the surrounding towns of Gates, Greece, Brighton, and Irondequoit.

Both Genesee and Ontario Counties fought the establishment of Monroe County and it took four more trips to Albany to persuade state legislators. But the locals grew tired of the long and arduous journey to either Batavia or Canandaigua to record land transactions. Monroe County was approved by the NYS Legislature on February 23, 1821.

Today, the County of Monroe has a total of 19 towns. The current Monroe County Office Building is on the same spot that the first courthouse building of 1829 occupied. After two hundred years, most of the farmland is now gone, but Monroe County can trace its roots back to the farming pioneers who came to the area after the Revolutionary War.



March 18, 1806 record book of Northampton mentions money payable to Asa and Frederick Rowe.

NEW LANDS For Sale.

THE subscriber offers for sale, about 40,000 acres of excellent LAND, situated within six miles of the Landing in Fall-Town, on the west side of the Genesee River. This Tract is divided into Lots of about 100 acres. In order to encourage and accommodate industrious and enterprising settlers, one half of the Land, consisting of every other three hundred acres throughout the Tract, will be sold for Wheat, Pork and Neat Cattle; the Wheat and Pork to be delivered at Fall-Town Landing.—The very flourishing settlement of Fairfield is within this Tract; the inhabitants in this settlement have been remarkably healthy.

Vessels of 200 tons sail from Lake Ontario up the Genesee River, to the lower falls: this place is called Fall-Town Landing, and is only six miles from the Tract now offered for sale. A barrel of flour can now be sent from Fall-Town Landing to Montreal for one dollar, and a barrel of pot-ashes for one dollar and a half;—these prices will be reduced as the business of transportation increases. Most articles of American produce command as high prices at Montreal as at New-York. The Intervals and Swails are timbered with Elm, Butternut, white and black Ash, Walnut, &c.—the upland with Sugar Maple, Beach, Basswood, Hickory, Oak and wild Cherry.



March is Women's History Month

In honor of Women's History Month, we would like to recognize Greece resident, **Joan Korsch**, the first woman to sit on the Greece Town Board. Joan first joined the Town as secretary for Supervisor Don Riley. When Roger Boiley left his council position in April 1989 to serve as Town Supervisor, Joan was selected to fill his seat on the council. She continued to serve as a councilwoman for eight years. It had only taken 167 years of Town history to select its first woman to serve in a governing position!