

Brief History of the Town of Great Valley, Cattaraugus County, NY

Excerpts from: **The History of Cattaraugus County, NY**

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The Everts history was edited by Marilyn K Eddy Siperek, Town of Great Valley Historian.

Links to more information on Great Valley History are at the bottom of this document.

“This town was formed from Olean, April 15, 1818. Burton (now Allegany) was taken off April 18, 1831, and Carrolton, March 9, 1842. It is an interior town, laying a little southeast of the centre of the county, and contains 33,715 acres. The surface is a mountainous and hilly upland, the highest summit, near the southwest corner, being 1,300 feet above the river.

The Allegany River runs through the southwest corner of the town, and the Allegany Indian Reservation, lying on both sides of the river, is here over a mile wide. The name of the town is derived from the broad valley of the principal stream running through the town from the north, and uniting with the river at Kill Buck.

The town of Great Valley, by its present limits, is composed of township 3 and the north half of township 2, in the sixth range of Joseph Ellicott's survey, and is bounded north by Ellicottville, east by Humphrey and Allegany, south by Carrolton, and west by Salamanca and Little Valley.”

PIONEER SETTLERS

“James GREEN is credited with being the first permanent settler of Great Valley. He came from New Hampshire, and located first at Olean Point, but removed thence to near the mouth of Great Valley Creek, in 1812, being the first white inhabitant to locate on the Allegany below Olean. He afterwards removed down the river, and died at Golconda on the Ohio River. His brothers, Francis and Richard, came a little later, and settled near the mouth of Wright's Creek. They were men of respectability and good judgment, and engaged in mill-building and lumbering. Ira Norton came to Franklinville in 1807, and in 1816 located near Peth, on the farm now occupied by his son, Andrus L. NORTON. Jeremy WOOSTER settled on the place where Orrin PITCHER had made a beginning in 1815. This was the place now owned and occupied by E.H. HESS.

Benjamin CHAMBERLAIN came from Little Valley in 1816, and built a mill and resided for some time on Lot 9, about a mile above the mouth of Great Valley Creek. He moved to Peth a year or two later and built a house and a store, and bought a grist-and sawmill of J. and L. WOOSTER, on the west side of the creek. He either owned, or had an interest in, several mills and stores, and became the owner of a large amount of landed property. The father of Judge CHAMBERLAIN and four or five brothers also settled in town. Their names were John, David, Simon, and William. The last named is still living on Wright's Creek. Gen. Calvin T. CHAMBERLAIN of Cuba, was also a brother of the Judge. He died in 1878. Jeremy, Henry, and Lewis WOOSTER came with the

pioneers of 1816. David GREGORY, John ALEXANDER, Daniel FARRINGTON. Col. William BAKER was an early settler at the mouth of Great Valley Creek, where he built a house and kept an inn on the east side of the creek. A part of the house is still standing, it being now over sixty years old, and is occupied as a dwelling. It is owned by J.H. MELHUISE. That tavern was a much-frequented stopping place in pioneer times, especially for raftsmen. Marcus LEONARD kept an inn on the west side of the creek, beginning a few years later than Col. Baker. David FARNHAM, who was an early pioneer, settled near Peth about 1816. He died in 1878 at the age of eighty-five years. Among other early settlers in town were Arza SEARL, David SIMMONS, John SAWYER, Truman and Erasmus D. KELSEY, D. MARKHAM, Chas. WARD, F. BRYANT, John ELLIS, Isaac LAWTON, J. MUDGETT, Elmore SEARS, John ALEXANDER, N. and M. CHASE, J. and R. CHASE, Benjamin B. BACON, William BARKER, Robert PATTERSON, Parley CARVER, G.W. DRAKE, N. BONESTEEL, N.L. and M. GIBSON, and Michael HICKEY. The father of Benjamin CHAMBERLAIN was called Benjamin CHAMBERS. This was because, as a soldier of the Revolution, he served under the name of CHAMBERS. He was a pensioner until his death in 1855, aged ninety-four years. Other early settlers were Nicholas FLINT, Daniel MC KAY, B. HIBBARD, Moses CHASE, Reuben and Robert CHASE; and many of those early settlers had sons, who also soon took an active part in the business affairs of the town."

NATIVE AMERICAN SETTLEMENT

"On the early settlement of Great Valley, there existed an Indian town or settlement in the midst of which was the wigwam of KILL BUCK, their chief, which stood on the site of the present store of J.M. BEMIS & Co. The names by which some of the Indians were known were John LOGAN, John HALFWHITE, David SNOW, Jonathan TITUS, William HALFTOWN, Daniel HALFTOWN, William JOHNSON, John HUTCHINSON, Daniel KILL BUCK, and several others.

RUNNING RAFTS

"During the period in which the various sawmills on Great Valley Creek were in active operation, the lumber made at the mills, as far up as the Lawton mill, was piled on the bank until rafting time, which was usually about the month of March, when it was rafted into the creek awaiting the spring flood when the rafts were run down the creek to the river. The creek rafts consisted of one string of four to five platforms or lengths. At the river, about four of these strings were put into a Warren raft. When run to Warren, three of those fleets were put together to make up a Pittsburgh fleet, being three abreast and twenty platforms in length. On the Ohio, from Pittsburgh, the usual raft or fleet was from three to five platforms abreast, and from twenty to forty platforms in length. On a creek raft, from three to five hands were employed. On a Warren raft, from seven to ten hands, including the pilot; and on the Ohio, from a dozen to twenty men.

A creek platform commonly contained from 16,000 to 20,000 feet, and a river platform, 25,000 feet. Large quantities of shingles were often carried to market on the rafts. Many of the rafts had cabins or shanties on them, some of which were made quite comfortable and well furnished, even to nice carpets on the floors. In early times it was customary for raftsmen to travel home from Pittsburgh on foot. Oarsmen were paid \$4 to \$7 per trip to Warren, \$20 to \$30 to Pittsburgh, and \$30 to \$40 to Cincinnati. Pilots were paid twice as much or more. A full size Ohio raft is 80 feet in width, and 640 feet in length, and contains about from 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 feet of lumber. There are, however, seldom as large as that."

PUBLIC HIGHWAYS

"At an early period roads were laid out through the wilderness. The old stage road from Buffalo to Olean passed through the town. At first, it passed down the Great Valley Creek to Peth, where the post office was kept; thence up the valley of Wright's Creek to Chapellsburg. The road was first marked out and the underbrush and logs cleared away, so that teams (oxen and sleds) could pass, and afterwards the trees were cut away, the rough places graded, and bridges built. A large amount of labor was required to make the road passable for the stages. That road was a great convenience to the early settlers. Judge Ira NORTON, and his brother-in-law, Samuel L. HOLLISTER, and two other men, were seven days at work in getting from Franklinville to Great Valley by the way of Sugartown. The distance is about fifteen miles. This was in the year 1816. There was a road, at an early day, leading along the north bank of the river to Great Valley and so down to Warren, PA., but it was extremely rough, and used mostly by footmen and lumbermen returning from their trips down the river with rafts. There was a road built under authority of an act of the Legislature, passed in 1841, and running on the north side of the river also, through the Reservation. This was a much-needed improvement. It was cut out through the woods, three rods wide and graded and bridges built.

On the completion of the Erie Railroad in 1852, a plank road was constructed from the river to Ellicottville, a distance of ten miles. This was much used for some years, but was finally discontinued, and it scarcely paid the expense of gatetenders and keeping in repair.

About four miles of the Erie Railroad and nine miles of the Rochester and State Line Railroad pass through the town of Great Valley. The Erie station, at the mouth of the creek, is called Great Valley, and the station on the Rochester and State Line Road, five miles north, has same name.

VILLAGES

"There is a small village at Great Valley Station on the Erie Railroad, two miles east of Salamanca. It contains a store, tavern, wagon and blacksmith shop, steam sawmill, grocery, and a saloon, besides the depot and several dwellings. At the corners, half a mile north of the depot is another collection of buildings, called Kill Buck. This place contains a store, hotel, meat market,

wagon and blacksmith shop, Methodist Episcopal Church, a post office, and a large two-story school house and about 20 dwellings. On the opposite side of the creek and a few rods west from the post office, are several dwellings, a Catholic church, a brewery, cooper shop and a hotel or saloon.

At the Plank Road or Halfway House, as it is commonly called, there are two stores, a hotel, Great Valley post office, a steam sawmill, a blacksmith shop, and several dwellings; and on the west side of the creek opposite is the new railroad station, a school house, cheese factory, and a few dwelling houses. A depot building is soon to be erected.

The small village of Peth is situated on the Great Valley Creek, three miles from the river. It has a tavern, a grocery store, school house, blacksmith shop, a shingle mill, and several dwelling houses. The handle factory was burned September, 1878. At an early period after the first settlement of Great Valley, the village of Peth was an important point, being the central business place for a large lumber district for a period of about forty years. Here centered the business operations of the WOOSTERS, the GREENS, the CHAMBERLAINS, the GIBSONS, the HOWES, the KELSEYS, the MARKHAMS, and other active early settlers and their sons. About 1845, a dozen or more Scotch families settled at Peth and its vicinity. James NELSON owns and occupies the farm and large dwelling house formerly occupied by Judge CHAMBERLAIN. With the decline of the lumber business some of the settlers left, and the population of Peth also declined.”

KILL BUCK and GREAT VALLEY STATION STORES

“The first store kept at Kill Buck was by Daniel and Horace HOWE on the west side of the creek in 1834. It was afterwards kept by Marcus LEONARD, who also kept an inn at that point for some years. He died of the cholera, at Buffalo in 1850. Hiram SMITH, from Chautauqua County, was the next proprietor of said store for a year or two and he was succeeded by CROSS and ELLSWORTH, about 1846. They continued in the business for some years. In 1857, Andrew MERKT bought the store, including the tavern in the same building, and carried on the business of brewing lager beer and hotel-keeping for some years. After his death in 1860, Lewis P. BREWER was proprietor of the brewery and hotel. There was no store kept on the west side of the creek after about 1855. The brewery and hotel was burned about 1865. It was rebuilt by John SPRAKER in 1874, and bought by Lewis TORGE, Jr., in 1875. He makes beer for the wholesale trade and does no retail business. In 1852, James W. PHELPS built a large two-story store on the northwest corner of the streets at Kill Buck. He kept a good stock of merchandise and traded at that stand for about twenty years. Mr. Phelps still owns the store, which is occupied by George J. WITHERELL as a general variety store.

Two stores on the east side of the street nearly opposite the Phelps store, were built about the same time—one by Jeremiah FRANK, who kept a liquor store, and the other was built by R. PATTERSON and Son, in which the post office is kept.

In 1856, Oscar SENEAR and Francis GREEN, Jr., built a store on the river bank opposite the depot on the same spot where formerly stood the wigwam of Kill Buck, the Indian chief. This store was afterwards occupied by Charles BURNSIDE for some years, and then for a few years by Henry S. SHORTER, with a fair stock of goods.

Michael SHEEHAN occupies the store east of the depot, built by Jos. COLMAN and occupied by H.S. SHORTER and Company, in 1861. J.H. MELHUISE owns and occupies the Railroad House, next north of the depot.

At Peth, Lewis WOOSTER was the first storekeeper. He sold the store to Judge CHAMBERLAIN in 1821. It was kept by the Judge for many years, with a large stock of merchandise. William J. NELSON kept store there in 1848, and for several years.”

LINKS for more information on the Town of Great Valley, NY History.

1. Full Everts' history.
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nycattar/1879history/great_valley.htm
2. Rootsweb information:
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nycattar/towns/gvalley.htm>
3. Great Valley Hotel, now doing business as Evergreen Tea Room.
<http://evergreentearoom.com/>
4. Like us on Facebook: Town of Great Valley, NY History. Share pictures and information, ask a question or volunteer to assist in projects preserving Great Valley History.
5. Please join our Facebook site at: Great Valley, NY History.
6. A NYS project that is under development in 2014: New York State Path through History project. <http://historicpath.com/municipality/towns/great-valley>