

1801-1976



Our Heritage

Town
of
Rodman

1801 - 1976

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of



**Stephen Harry Longamore, PFC, Co. 1, 17th
Infantry.
Born 10-6-34. Died 3-18-53 in Korea.
Age 18 years**



**Thomas Michael Lowe Sp. 4 Co. A1, BN, 6th
Infantry.
Born 10-12-49. Died 4-10-70 in Viet Nam.
Age 20 years.**

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Our Wilderness Opened for Settlement

The territory we now know as the town of Rodman was in 1775 a cool, green forest, criss-crossed by bubbling brooks and fast running streams unchecked by mill wheels. The creatures of the forest were undisturbed save by an occasional Indian passing through. The first white men known to set foot in the town were British soldiers accompanied by a war party of Oneida Indians. They had been defeated in the battle of Fort Stanwix, where the city of Rome now is, in 1777, and were fleeing to Canada. They rested for a time at the site of an old Indian encampment on what is now called Dry Hill, then went on to Canada.

In September 1788 New York State made a treaty with 31 ranking Oneida Indians, men and women both, for a large part of New York State. In 1794 the United States confirmed the treaty. New York city businessmen lost no time buying huge tracts of the north country for resale. In 1796 Benjamin Wright made the first survey of our area and commented, "It is pretty level, with gentle ascents and some hills, and Sandy Creek is a fine stream with some good mill-seats." In 1801 Silas Stow, agent of the proprietors Harrison and Hoffman, opened the town for settlement at \$3.50 an acre. Winds of change were blowing over the forest, the white man was on his way.

The town, including for some years part of the present town of Pinckney, has fertile, loamy fields and rolling hills. In the Southern part some of the streams flow through deep gorges or gulfs and are known as gulf streams. The North Branch of Sandy Creek, the outlet of Rutland Lake, comes into the town from Watertown and Rutland on the north. North Sandy Creek, which has its source in Denmark, Lewis County, crosses the towns of Champion, Rutland, and Pinckney. It enters the town of Rodman on its east line, one mile from the northeast corner, then flows southwesterly. These two streams are joined by the main Gulf Stream east of Rodman village, and leave the town near the southwest corner, continuing toward Lake Ontario. There is a fall in the town of 170 feet, which means good water power. In the southern part of the town Fish creek and two small creeks also flow west. A high plateau called Dry Hill is in the northwest part of the town.

Because of the many gulfs in the southern

part of the town early settlers, who were bound for Rodman and followed blazed trails through Redfield, found it easier to come to Adams and follow Sandy Creek and its branches east. In 1801 the first eight men came in, made small clearings and built log houses. They were Anson and Ebenezer Moody, Jonathan, Noah and Aaron Davis, Simeon Hunt, Benjamin Thomas, and William Rice. Mrs. E. Moody came in the fall, the first woman to live in the town. A few months later the Moodys had a son, the first child born in Rodman. He was named Walter Harrison Moody after the proprietor, who had promised a hundred acres of land to the first child born. The boy had not received the land when he died at three years of age, but Mr. Moody received a deed for fifty acres.

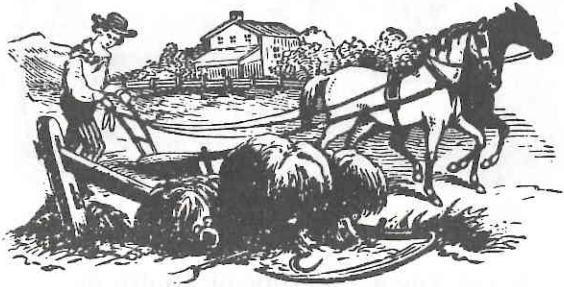
The route into the town through Champion was a part water route; on the Black River, then over heavy hills, across a large gulf on a pole bridge, then over more hills and down through the Sandy Creek valley. One settler's wife said, "When I got across that bridge I felt I had said, Good-bye, to everything. I was very sure that I would never go back across that place." Simeon Hunt built a large cabin at the junction of the Gulf Stream and Sandy Creek and kept an inn. His wife saw no other woman for six months after coming here.

Settlers who came in 1802 and 1803 were Timothy Greenley, who purchased the first land he came to inside the town in the southeast corner. He purchased 2669 acres at 18 shillings an acre. This was the largest number of acres purchased by one person in the town. Also to come at this time were Daniel Todd, Reuben Smith (who built several mills), Caleb Woodward, William Dodge, John Fasset, and Jonathan Wyman, also Thomas White who settled on North Sandy Creek in the eastern part of the town, and gave his name to the village which soon sprang up there.

The landholder's books show the names of the following who contracted for land under the date of December 1, 1804: Jesse Smith (later the founder of Smithville), Aaron Moody, Horace Townsend, Joseph Nickles, Arnold Stone, Nathan Whiteman, Avery Wallsworth, Joseph Dana, Titus King, Noah Davis, Thadrick Case, Leonard Farewell, Joshua Finney, John Vaughn, Leonard Barker. Listed on March 25,

1805 were Buell, Westcott, and Nathan Freeman. In August 1805, Hawks, French, Pierce, Lampson and Wright Mead.

William Rice erected at the site of Rodman village a sawmill in 1804, a grist mill in 1806. There were no bridges over Sandy Creek until 1809.



The town we know as Rodman was divided from the large town of Adams in 1804 and was named Harrison. The town consisted of the present area-township number 8, plus part of number 9 to the east. The first town meeting of Harrison was held Nov. 6, 1804 at the log home and tavern of Simeon Hunt, east of Rodman Village's present location. Many following town meetings were held here. In February 1808 the two parts of number 9 were set up as a separate town named Pinckney and included in the boundaries of Lewis County. This left Harrison nearly square, a little more than six miles long,

with an area of 22,597 acres. Two months later the name of Harrison was changed to Rodman after a popular clerk of the state assembly. The reason given was that Harrison had sometimes been confused with Harrisburg, a Lewis County town.

It is hard for us now to realize that during those early years there were no stores or groceries of any kind. After enough land had been cleared so that corn could be raised, the tops of the hardwood stumps would be hollowed out and corn reduced to meal by pounding it in the hollows. In those early days bread was made mostly from cornmeal. When more land was cleared and wheat could be planted, white bread became plentiful. Salt pork was the standard diet. This with pumpkins and potatoes, sugar from the maple tree, and plenty of milk and cream made up their living. Wild grapes, apples and berries were their only fruit. Cattle roamed at will through the forests, and if they failed to return at milking time, the musical tinkle of bells hung around their necks on leather straps showed where they lingered.

Log houses were built with one large room, an immense chimney in the center of which contained a roomy fireplace. In these log cabins the settlers gathered for picking bees, or quilting bees. The wool must all be picked, or the quilt finished before supper. Spelling bees or singing schools were popular among all ages, and were sometimes held at the school house.

Rodman's First Twenty Years: 1801-1821

The privations of the early settlers were far from bringing unhappiness. On the contrary, in the simple life they led they knew little of the strife and anxiety which have been the lot of later generations. Their dependence on each other formed a bond between them that came near obedience to the command, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

From 1804 to 1810 the town settled very rapidly. Spafford's Gazetteer of 1813 says, "In 1810, there were 214 families and 1281 people." Because of the rapid settlement there was not so much of the hardship which sometimes goes with pioneer living. Timber supplied income while the land was being cleared. The first settlers are said to have carried grain on their backs, with blazed trees for a guide, twelve miles to Brownville where the nearest grist mill

was. By 1810 Rodman had four grist mills and six saw mills. William Dodge said that he could catch trout and salmon in large numbers from a brook running by his house. There was an abundance of wild game, and if a man shot a deer he divided it with his neighbors.

Peaceful settlement was seriously hindered by three disasters, like those of ancient times, in the years 1812-1817. "War" with England was the first, beginning in 1812. Jefferson County was greatly aroused. The first battle of the war, and also a later one, were fought at Sackets Harbor. News of the attack on Sackets reached Rodman on Sunday and the next day a meeting was held to organize a company of 60 men, called "Silver Grays". These were men past the age of military service, many being Revolutionary veterans and sons of veterans.

Nathan Strong was Captain, Simeon Hunt, Lieutenant, and Sheldon Adams, Ensign, Quickly they obtained several wagons and teams of horses, and set off for Sackets Harbor. They reached there in an hour and twenty minutes, which was quite a speed for those days and road conditions. The British vessels had been driven away, so the "Silver Grays" returned home and were never called on to serve. The Rodman Militia served under Captain Anson Moody. Others who served were Syril Harrington, Daniel Smith Jr. (who also helped carry the famous cable), Joseph Woodman enlisted as a surgeons mate of a Schoharie Regiment in 1812. In 1813 he came with them to Sackets Harbor, where he was appointed Surgeon of the First Regiment of the U.S. Volunteers. He served until the end of the war. During the battle of Sackets Harbor he fought with the Regiment until he had to care for the wounded. After the war he came to East Rodman, where he married Sally Wright. He practiced medicine, taught school, and conducted religious services there for some years.

Jesse Woodward, a skilled sharpshooter- "a second Hawkeye"-was detailed, during the battle of Sackets Harbor, to keep the British from crossing the bar from Horse Island to the mainland. Concealed opposite the bar, he picked off the Redcoats until he suddenly noticed that his companions had left and he was alone. He said later that he "made more ground in less time than any man who ever lived in Northern New York." His long-barreled rifle was on exhibit during the centennial of 1876.

The next disaster was "Pestilence" in 1813, when an epidemic of a deadly typhoid like disease struck and killed sixty people within three months. It was not contagious but attacked people of all ages. Many died in less than a day. One who died was Mrs. Ariel (Lydia Dodge) Edwards. The pioneer spirit of mutual sharing was very apparent during those trying times. If a family had illness, neighbors rallied to take over the work or help with the nursing.

The third disaster was "Famine." During the cold years of 1816 and 1817 there were heavy frosts in midsummer, with cold winds and snow. Farmers had scarcely enough food for their own families. It is said that "suffering and want prevailed where cheerfulness and plenty had before." But Rodman's sturdy citizens mastered this adversity as they had others. Food was brought in, warmer weather came, and again the town grew and prospered.

Spafford's Gazetteer of 1824 says: "In 1821 the population was 1,735; taxable property 117,428; 890 acres of improved land; 2,308

cattle; 490 horses; 4,312 sheep; 17,976 yards of cloth made by families in homes. There were seven grist mills, two carding machines, five distilleries, and six asheries."



First Town Meeting of Rodman

Harison, November 6, 1804. At a special Town meeting of the inhabitants of the Town of Harison for the purpose of choosing Delegates, to meet in Convention in order to consult on measures for the division of the County of Oneida.

1st voted Jonathan Davis	Moderator
2nd. voted George H. Thomas	Clerk
3rd. that three delegates be voted in by hand	
4th. William Rice	
5th. Cyrus Stone	
6th. Simeon Hunt	
delegated to said Convention	
7th. voted that said meeting be dissolved	

Following is a copy of the first annual Town meeting:

Town Meeting of 1805

At the annual Town Meeting of the inhabitants of the Town of Harison holden at the dwelling house of Simeon Hunt on Tuesday the 5th day of March, 1805

The following votes were taken

1st. Voted Osias H. Raieson	Moderator
2nd. voted Thomas White	Supervisor
3rd. voted George H. Thomas	Town Clerk
4th voted Osias H. Raieson	Assessor
5th voted Cyrus Stone	Assessor
6th voted William Rice	Assessor
7th. voted Jonathan Davis	Poormaster
8th. voted Robert Stewart	Poormaster
9th. voted David Nickles	Commissioner of High-ways
10th. voted Simeon Hunt	Commissioner of High-ways

11th. voted Calvin Clifford	Commissioner of	25th. voted Beloved Rhodes	Path Master
Highways		26th. voted William Dodge	Path Master
12 th. voted Peters Yendes	Constable and	27th. voted Cyrus H. Stone	Path Master
Collector		28th. voted Isaiah Post	Path Master
13th. voted George H. Thomas	Fence Viewer	29th. voted that hogs be free - well yoked.	
14th. voted John Fassett	Fence Viewer	30th. voted that - horses be confined from the	
15th. voted Simeon Hunt	Pound Master	first day of Sept.	
16th. voted William Rice	Path Master		
17th. voted Anson Moody	Path Master	31st. voted that rams be confined till the 10th of	
18th. voted Basaleel Gleason	Path Master	Nov.	
19th. voted Roswel Blanchard	Path Master	32nd. voted that Jonathan Davis be a sealer of	
20th. voted Joseph Dana	Path Master	Weights and Measures.	
21st. voted Luther Eastman	Path Master	33rd. voted that one hundred and fifty dollars be	
22nd. voted Timothy Greenly	Path Master	raised by said Town for the purpose of building	
23rd. voted John Fassett	Path Master	bridges in said Town.	
24th. voted Peter Yendes	Path Master	34th. voted that said meeting be dissolved.	

Summary of Progress Through 1890

We are indebted to the Jefferson County Gazetteer for the Information in the following report on progress and industry through 1890. Notes have been added from other sources.

Unionville, later called Zoar, was once the principal village in the town. It contained a church, a school, a hotel, two stores, Isaac L. Huillier's shoe shop, Whitcomb's furniture factory, two blacksmith shops, perhaps other industries. However, in 1890 only the school, a cabinet shop and twelve houses remained.

Alvin Eastman once ran a hotel in southern Rodman, or Tremaines Corners. In 1890 there were a Post Office and a cheese factory there.

Martin Wait built a saw, shingle and planing mill in 1866 on Fish Creek a mile west of Rodman Village, and ran it to 1880. Mr. Oatman was running it in 1890, and it turned out 5000 feet of lumber a day, and 600,000 shingles a year. Reuben Smith built a sawmill on the Gulf Stream in 1840. It was owned by E.A. North in 1890, and could saw 200,000 feet of lumber per year. Jacob Heath had a cloth-dressing mill and a sawmill.

Whitesville was renamed East Rodman because another town in the state had a post office by the name of Whitesville. Besides the Post Office, East Rodman had in 1890 a church, a school, a hotel, Grimshaw and Moore's store, W.D. Waite's grist and sawmill, a cheese factory and a blacksmith and wagon shop.

Nathan Strong built a grist mill in Rodman Village in 1810. A Mr. Slaughter bought it in 1850, repaired and operated it until 1861. That year he sold it to O.M. Cooley, who ran it until 1879, when he sold a half interest to his

cousin, Egbert Cooley. It burned in 1881, and the Cooleys sold the site to the Rodman Milling Co., who built a mill there. This mill was running in 1890, managed by O.R. Porter. It could grind 250 bushels per day.

Joseph Brown built a tannery in 1840 on Sandy Creek in Rodman Village. In 1843 he sold it to Hiram Herring, who operated it almost forty years, and sold it to Levi Washburn. In 1891 it burned, but must have been rebuilt, as Washburn was running it in 1892 and employing four hands.

Rodman Village contained in 1890 two churches, a school, a hotel, a creamery, seven stores, a wagon shop, two blacksmith shops, and about thirty five homes. At that time there was also a gristmill, tannery, and post office there.

West Rodman had a gristmill, a cheese factory, and several houses. The gristmill occupied a building which had been a distillery.

The production of cheese and butter was the one main industry in the town and well into this century, until milk could be refrigerated and shipped. We have the following data on the cheese factories and their production in 1890.

The C.C. Vroman Creamery at Rodman turned out 80,000 lbs. of butter a year. The M.A. Fassett Creamery on Sandy Creek half way between Rodman and East Rodman made 47,000 lbs. of butter. Henry Spencer's Creamery in southern Rodman produced 15,000 lbs. of butter. The West Rodman Cheese Factory was built by A.R. Heath in 1870. It made 120,000 lbs. of cheese and 15,000 lbs. of butter. Dunaway and Dickinson's Cheese Factory at East Rodman

made 90,000 lbs. of cheese. The South Rodman Cheese Factory Owned by C.D. Hitchcock was located at Tremaine's Corners, and produced 75,000 lbs. of cheese. The Anson Miller Cheese Factory of south Rodman (Ross Corners) was built by O.J. Heaton in 1864, and made 81,000 lbs. of cheese. M.G. Wilson's cheese factory at Rodman was just starting in 1890.

In 1905, according to Homer Heath, there were four in operation in the town compared to eight in 1890.

In all, in 1890, Rodman produced about 157,000 lbs. of butter, and 366,000 lbs. of cheese for sale.

The first round silo in New York State to be used for ensilage was built at the Patrick farm about 1894, and was 11 ft. x 24 ft.

Heath's Cheese

Although most cheese in the country today is made by large corporations or cooperatives in cities, anyone in Northern New York will tell you the best cheese made anywhere comes from Heath's Sandy Creek Valley Cheese Factory, about half way between Rodman and East Rodman.

Orrin Heath Sr. who died in December of 1974 at the age of 92, was born in Rodman. At thirteen years of age, he helped his grandfather, Albert Heath, make cheese and he later helped the Muzzey family at their factory. Mr. Heath married Susan Cagwin of Rodman on December 11, 1906. He rented the present factory for a few years, and bought it in 1908. He worked in it until late 1972. He won prizes at the State Fair for his cheese, and never lacked a market.

The cheese making had long been a family enterprise, and now sons Orrin Jr. and Malcolm Heath operate this only remaining family-

owned cheese plant in the state. The milk they use comes from small farms with 15 to 30 head of cattle and daily production of 200 to 1000 lbs. In early morning the previous day's cheese is removed from the presses, and put in storage for 60 days aging process. Incoming milk is unloaded into a 7000 gallon vat. Lactic ferment is added, and the mixture heated to 88 degrees, when rennet is added. Twenty minutes later at 102 degrees the material is cut in both directions with a comb-like metal rake. The small curds resulting are stirred by machine for an hour before the whey is drained off. The mass is cut and piled until it becomes firmer and is then packed in cylindrical presses. The vat and utensils are cleaned, and made ready for the next day.

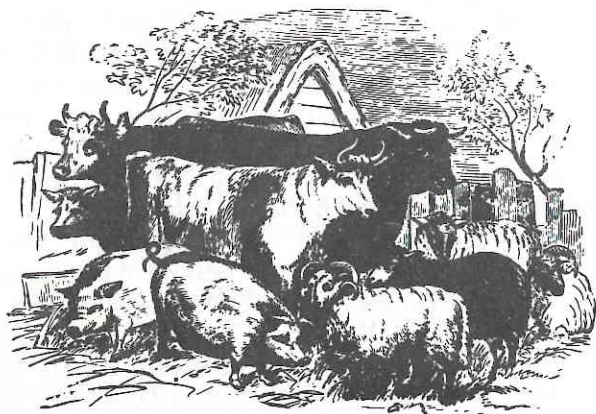
Some cheeses are sold to dealers. Storekeepers have signs, "Heath Cheese Sold Here" in their windows. Many people come literally "from far and near" to buy from the Factory. Like their father before them, Orrin and Malcolm have achieved a wide reputation for fine workmanship and the quality of their product.

A First for Rodman

The first limburger cheese in the United States was made in Rodman in 1853. Jefferson County became the heart of the limburger cheese industry in the nation, having at one time 40 limburger cheese factories.

Anthony Haug came to America from Germany and opened a saloon in New York City. He wrote glowing letters to a friend of his back home, Peter Schwarz, about the riches to be made in this new land. He especially stressed the golden opportunity in the field of making limburger cheese in which young Peter was an expert. When Peter reached New York City in the early spring of 1853. Mr. Haug, sent him to Jefferson County which he selected as the best dairy location in the State. Peter made his first cheese on the farm of Albert Ralph in Rodman. Some time afterward Edward Cooper of Theresa persuaded him to come to his farm to make the milk from his large (in those times) dairy of 60 cows into the new kind of cheese. Mr. Cooper was to receive the very high price of six cents a gallon for his milk.

Other farmers wanted to get into this new market, and at Whitney's Corners near Theresa Village they formed a pool which they contracted to Martin Boose. He hired Peter Sch-



warz as maker for two cents per pound of cheese.

When Peter had \$500 coming to him he pressed Mr. Boose for his pay. Not receiving it, he walked all the way to Great Bend and Watertown to hire a lawyer. The lawyer found that Peter actually had twice that amount due

him as wages for Mr. Boose had deceived him about the value of United States money. Peter did lose his wages, but after he had once more accumulated sufficient capital he entered the limburger cheese business as a buyer and manufacturer and eventually became a rich man.

A Rodman Business Man

Orrin Heath, Sr. started in the cheese making business for himself in 1909 in a cheese factory rented from Willis Kenfield. It was located on the North bank of Sandy Creek midway between Rodman and East Rodman. The rent was a set amount for each pound of cheese made.

In 1912 the roof leaked badly and Mr. Heath went to see the owner about replacing it. When Mr. Kenfield flatly refused, Orrin was much taken aback and said "I can't carry on business in a building with no roof". "I'm going to sell the place to you", said Mr. Kenfield. "How do you know I want to buy it"? "You want to keep on making cheese, don't you? Let's talk business". So they talked business. Mr. Heath bought the factory and the Heaths have made cheese there ever since.

During the depression of the thirties not all of the cheese could be sold locally and Mr. Heath shipped some to a commission merchant in New York. However, he was dissatisfied, not only with the amount of payment but with the merchant's report that the cheese was poor quality and didn't sell well. "I'm going to New York and find out what ails that cheese", he told his wife, the former Susie Cagwin. The family noted that before he started out he printed his name and address on a small card and placed it inside his derby hat.

In New York he hunted up the merchant he had come to see, and introduced himself as a cheese wholesaler from Pennsylvania. "I've come up to see if I can find a shipment of soft, creamy cheese such as my customers demand", he told the merchant. I have just what you want, a shipment I just got from upstate. I'll show you. Whereupon the man took Mr. Heath into a storage room and showed him the cheese he himself had sent.

Mr. Heath said it looked good and asked the price which turned out to be quite high. "The price is rather steep", he told the merchant. "What makes it so expensive"? "Quality" returned the merchant. "If you want real quality you have to pay for it." Mr. Heath hesitated. "Are you sure it's the highest quality"? "Absolutely. You won't find any better anywhere". This was what Mr. Heath had waited for. Taking off his derby, he held it so the man could read the card inside. "This is who I am", he said. Staring at the card, realizing how he had been outfoxed, the merchant was too nonplussed to speak, slowly he held out his hand. "I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Heath. I can assure you nothing like this will ever happen again". The sons declare they sold that same man thousands of pounds of cheese after that, always receiving top prices.

Rodman Bands

The first band to be organized in the town of Rodman was at Whitesville in 1871. It consisted of fifteen instruments with Nathan Elder as instructor, and Daniel Way the leader. Five years late it was reorganized with twelve members, Daniel Way being the leader, but it existed only a short time.

In 1880 a band with eighteen members was formed at Rodman village. The first instructor

was Edward Watts, a former musician in the Union Army and who later became a member of the Barnum and Bailey and Ringling Brothers circus band. Later instructors included Charles Harrington, George Fox, Everett Cooley and possibly others. The



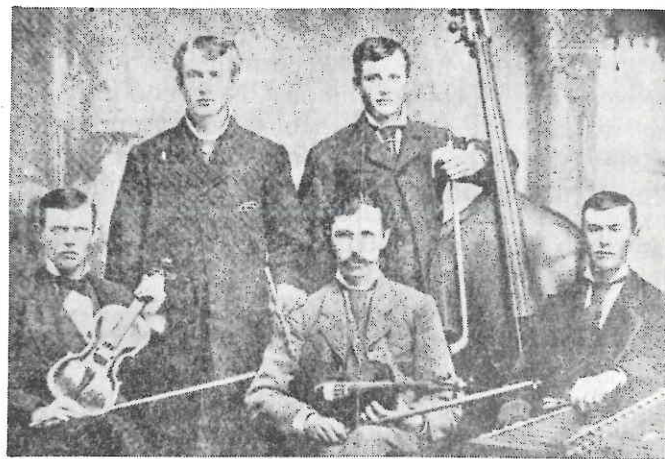
E. Watts

members met weekly for instruction and practice. It made its first public appearance on March 22, 1881.

In 1890 a subscription was taken for a band stand to be built by adding another story to the engine house on the village square. Previous to this the concerts were held on the porch of the hotel in warm weather. The following year they raised money for a band wagon to convey them to their various functions.

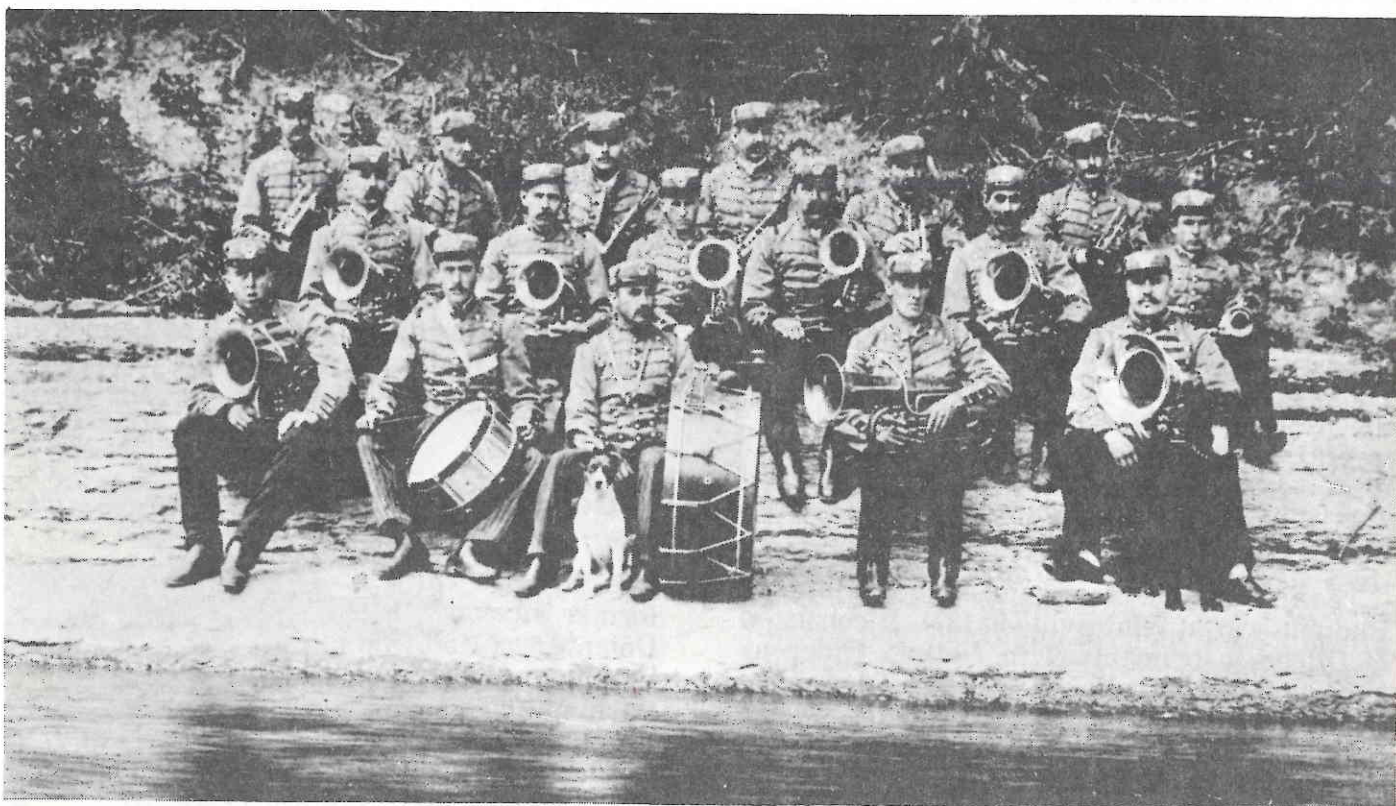
The band attired in their natty uniforms played at various activities; strawberry and ice cream festivals, the county fairs, picnics, and even for skating on the mill-pond and the weekly concerts during the summer. Oft times they would travel to the home of an elderly or a sick person to serenade them.

On these Saturday summer evenings horse drawn carriages came streaming in from all points of the compass bringing their loads of toil worn citizens to shop and to enjoy the music of their own band. But time changes many things and was even reaching into our little com-



Front Row- L-R: Homer Oatman-second violin Ross Corners- Robert D. Loveland-first violin, Honeyville Clark Oatman-dulcimer, Honeyville Second Row-Mattie Lewis-flute, Ross Corners Frank Oatman-bass viol, Ross Corners.

munity. So many of the members moved to other areas in pursuit of other occupations necessitating the dispersal of this well known and much loved band. Thus it passed into history's pages, but the memory of their music lingered long like a beautiful fragrance.



Rodman Cornet Band-1890. Front row, L- to R: Gilbert Eastman, Burt Waite, Elam Cooley, Daniel Youngs, Oren Youngs. Second row; Brayton Cooley, Milo Wilson, Wm. F. Oatman, Wm. F. Ed-

monds, Edward Hartson, Perl Miller. Third row: O.R. Cooley, Lewis Richmond, Chas. D. Cooley, Everett A. Cooley, J. Sterling Sill, Isaac L'Huillier.

Acknowledgements

We have endeavored to make every detail of this history as true as possible to what is known of the history of this town.

Although it is impossible to list the names of all of those people to whom I am indebted to for information and pictures, I do wish to express my appreciation to them for their help.

I am especially indebted to Mrs. Marion Colman, author of this book and to Mrs. Jennie Edwards for the hours spent copying pictures for this book, and for her help with researching.

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Dorothy Thomas
Town Historian



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