

ANNALS OF RICHFIELD

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Annals of Richfield by Henry A. Ward

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DR. HENRY A. WARD.

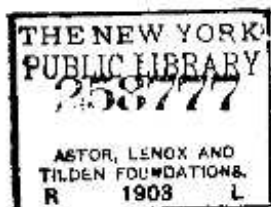


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PREFACE.

IN response to urgent requests of many residents and visitors, this volume has been compiled; and the aim of the writer has been to present to the public, an annals as full and complete as possible. No attempt, however, has been put forth to make it a book of biographies; neither will there be found evidence of any studied effort at rhetorical flourish or period. But it is confidently hoped that the reader will find in these pages what the writer tried to place there—a plain, straightforward history of Richfield.

HENRY A. WARD.

RICHFIELD SPRINGS,
July, 1898.



FIRST WHITE PEOPLE.

For many years before the French and Indian war, although New York was a British province, that part of the State where peltry was abundant, was much frequented by French traders and trappers, whose headquarters were Crown Point, Frontenac and Niagara. Many of these Frenchmen married squaws, Indian fashion, and lived with them in the beautiful lake region of the young Empire State. A little settlement of these was located at the site of the Lake House, on both sides of the brook which seeks the lake at that point, and was doubtless the home of the first white settlers in this vicinity. One of these Frenchmen and his dusky mate, remained as late as 1805 or '6, but the others left, subsequent to the time of the survey of the three land patents embracing the shores of "Cania-deraga" Lake, that were granted by King George II., through agents at Albany.

PATENTS.

The records at the capital show that David Schuyler and 21 others obtained, June 3, 1755, a patent to 43,000 acres bordering on the lake on the northern half of the west side, extending around the head of the lake, and down the east side about one-half mile. From this line to a point opposite the island were the lands of John McNeile, whose grant of 5,928 acres was

dated April 5, 1769. The rest of the lake was bordered by the lands of the Otsego Patent, granted Nov. 30, 1769, conveying to George Croghan and 99 others, 100,000 acres.

Coenraedt Mattys, one of the patentees of the Schuyler purchase, took for his share, lot 85, which in our day, is the site of the chief portion of Richfield Springs, and contained about 1,000 acres. It was necessary to name something as a consideration for the transfer of real estate; and in getting a title to his share of the Schuyler Patent, Mattys named "one barley corn" as the consideration, but not to indicate the price or value of the land.

West of the Schuyler Patent, was a grant of 9,200 acres, given Sept. 6, 1770, to Leonard Lispenard, Martin Shier and others. Shier was great-uncle to Mrs. A. C. Van de Water, of Church street. This grant was in Richfield as originally constituted, but was set off, in 1799, as Plainfield. George Robson, father of Mrs. Van de Water, and grandfather of Mrs. T. J. Crombie, afterward bought Shier's share. A map made in London, in 1779, by Claude Joseph Sauthier, by order of Major General William Tryon, the last British Governor of New York, shows the locations and limits of these patents.

COUNTY AND TOWN CHANGES.

This part of New York was included in the county of Albany, formed Nov. 1, 1683. Tryon county, named

for William Tryon, colonial Governor, was taken off from Albany, March 12, 1772. Afterward, it was called "Old England District," because nearly all its inhabitants were of English origin, while the Mohawk valley portion was occupied by people who spoke a German dialect. At a Court of Special Sessions held in Johnstown, the county seat, Oct. 31, 1786, Hugh Johnson, Matthew Cully, Joseph Tunnicliff, Samuel Tubbs, and Joseph Mayall, were appointed highway commissioners of Old England district. The State tax of the district was twenty-five pounds in 1787, and seven pounds in 1788. After the Revolution, the name, Tryon, was not agreeable to its inhabitants; so, on April 2, 1784, it was changed to Montgomery, in honor of General Richard Montgomery. Richfield was in German Flatts, as the towns were set off, March 7, 1788. Otsego county was erected from Montgomery, February 16, 1791, and was originally divided into the towns of Otsego and Cherry Valley. The town of Richfield was formed from Otsego, April 10, 1792; and as then set off, included Exeter and Plainfield, which, on March 25, 1799, became separate towns. Still later, April 17, 1816, another portion of Richfield was taken away, when Winfield, Herkimer county, was erected. The following is relevant: "At a Special Town Meeting held at the House of John Rudd, Innholder, in the Town of Richfield, on Tuesday, the 18th day of December, 1798, for the

purpose of * * * * and Likewise to Divide Sd. Town—Voted that the Town be Divided into three Towns, and that Obed Edson, Jr., Vose Palmer, and Caleb Clark Be the Committee to report a plan of Division."

"At a Special townmeeting held Feb. 22, 1812, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety or impropriety of dividing the Town, a vote was taken upon the division of Said Town by passing round, upon which it appeared that 51 were in favor of having the town Divided & one hundred & ten against a Division."

At a town meeting held March 5, 1816, this record was made: "A notice being Read at the Opening of the Meeting, of an Intended Application to the Legislature at their present Session for a Division of the Town by taking off two tier of Lots on the west end of Said Town for the purpose of Erecting a Town with a part of Litchfield and plainfield—on Motion being made and Seconded—Voted that no Division be made in Said Town—by a large majority."

EARLIEST SETTLERS.

About the year 1755, Hendrick Herkimer settled upon Herkimer creek near Schuyler Lake village. In 1756 came John Tunnickliff, from England. He bought 12,000 acres lying both sides of Oaks Creek, and built a cabin on Pleasant Brook, about two miles south of Schuyler Lake. As far as can be learned,