

**REMINISCENCES OF TROY: FROM ITS  
SETTLEMENT IN 1790, TO 1807, WITH  
REMARKS ON ITS COMMERCE,  
ENTERPRISE, IMPROVEMENTS, STATE OF  
POLITICAL PARTIES, AND SKETCHES OF  
INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER**

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Reminiscences of Troy: from its settlement in 1790, to 1807, with remarks on its commerce, enterprise, improvements, state of political parties, and sketches of individual character by John Woodworth

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**JOHN WOODWORTH**

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# Reminiscences of Troy,

FROM

ITS SETTLEMENT IN 1790, TO 1807,

WITH

REMARKS ON ITS COMMERCE, ENTERPRISE, IMPROVEMENTS,  
STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES,

AND

Sketches of Individual Character.

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF SEVERAL GENTLEMEN OF TROY,

BY THE

HON. JOHN WOODWORTH,

OF ALBANY.

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## REMINISCENCES OF TROY.

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TO THE HON. JUDGE MCCONIHÉ :

Dear Sir — Shortly after the close of the Revolutionary War, in 1784, when quite a lad, under the instruction of the late Hon. John Lovett, of facetious memory, then principal of an academy in Albany, one bright morning in April, on his invitation, I embarked with him in a canoe to make a voyage to Half-Moon Point, now the village of Waterford. Mr. Lovett's servant man was of the party. We tugged at the oar against a strong current, making slow progress, continually admonished, if

“ We slack our hands, or cease to strive,  
Then down the flood with headlong haste we drive.”

About sun-set we arrived at the south part of the village of Lansingburgh, where dwelt, on the bank of the river, one Baily Austin. The young lad was landed for the night; Mr. Lovett continued the voyage; the parting was rather unpleasant, though not comparing with the case of Calypso, who remained disconsolate after the departure of Ulysses.

The next morning, Mr. Lovett returned. We wended our way back to Albany. In gliding down

the beautiful Hudson, on the gentle current, I well remember the ground on which the City of Troy is now located. Then all was quiet; no bustle of commerce at that time. There stood at some distance from each other, three ancient brick dwellings, probably erected in the preceding century; the most northern occupied by Jacob I. Vanderheyden, familiarly known as Big Jacob; next came Jacob D. Vanderheyden, owner of the greater part of the ground on which the City is built, and under whom or his descendants, the inhabitants hold title; the last was the dwelling of Mat. Vanderheyden, which I observed a few days since was standing, a relic of former times. There was a stillness, and I may say solitude, about these dwellings, as profound as the quiet that surrounded Rip van Winkle in Sleepy Hollow. Ah, who at that day could look forward through the dark vista of time, and conjecture the future destiny of this queen of cities!

About this time, and for several years after, might be seen a solitary scow, occasionally crossing the river, under the direction of that old experienced ferryman, 'yclept Mat. Caldwell. He had become a fixture in his vocation. Who that has seen sixty winters, does not remember the well known voice of Mat., crying, "Over! Over!" summoning his passengers with a shrillness only equalled by the huntsman's horn. Alas, with all his care and skill, in an evil hour he took on board an overload of cattle, driven from Vermont to the



Albany market; they becoming restive precipitated into the river, and caused the death of an interesting young man, returning from his residence in Manchester, to visit the late James Caldwell and other friends in Albany. His name was McMath. His death was much lamented. He was a specimen of the warm-hearted friendship and manly virtues frequently met with among the gifted sons of the Emerald Isle.

Within the last two years you requested me to write reminiscences of the first settlement of Troy, its inhabitants, and progress for several of the next succeeding years; supposing that from my early residence, commencing in its infancy, I might be able to communicate information interesting to the present generation, which could not be derived from any other source. I declined the invitation, under an impression, that a mere narrative of facts within my knowledge would not be sufficiently interesting to become the subject of publication. So far as my partialities were concerned, there was no lack of kind feeling; even in its infancy, when I commenced my happy sojourn among its inhabitants, it might well compare with

“Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,”

now a city, enriched by intelligence, commercial enterprise, wealth acquired by untiring industry, and among the foremost in extending the influence of moral and religious principles through our widely extended domain.

Within a few days past, the subject of your request was revived. It appeared to me that something might be written of the olden time, calculated, if not to instruct, perhaps to amuse, by indulging a little in thoughts suggested, while writing on the principal subject, so as to render my desultory remarks more acceptable to the reader.

But whence did Troy derive its name? As to ancient Troy, it had long since been said, "Ilium fuit;" the remembrance was not forgotten, nor could the recorded incidents in its history pass into oblivion, so long as Homer fills his readers with sublime ideas; and Virgil has drawn together in the *Æneiad* all the pleasing scenes his subject is capable of admitting. Every school boy advanced in his studies, knows the cause of the Trojan war; fair Helen, wife of Menelaus, seduced by Paris, who had obtained admittance to the hospitable mansion of the husband, abducted the prize, not unlike occurrences in modern times, when marriage vows are violated and forgotten.

Whose bosom is not warmed at the hint of certain passages in the *Illiad*? Who can read, without emotion, the death and funeral rites of Patroclus? the solemnities attending the death and funeral honors of Hector? the aged Priam begging of stern Achilles the body of his son, and the lamentations of Andromache, Hecuba and Helen?

"Such honors Ilium to her hero paid,  
And peaceful slept the mighty Hector's shade."

More deeply interesting than all the preceding, has ever appeared to me the interview between Hector and Andromache, his darling wife. I have never met with any thing, in ancient and modern story, more exquisitely tender, or more calculated to awaken the best feelings of our nature. To those whose bosoms are not moved by this description, I would say,

"Some rugged rock's hard entrails gave the form,  
And raging seas produced them in a storm."

I will now speak of things comparatively recent. As early as 1788 the favorable location of Troy did not escape the keen discernment of Yankee enterprise. About this time, or shortly after, something like a scattered settlement commenced, but inconsiderable for several years thereafter. According to my recollection, in 1790, a vote of the inhabitants, assembled in a regular meeting, was taken; they resolved that thereafter the place be known by the name of Troy; it was so known, when immediately after my admission to the bar of the Supreme Court in 1791, I commenced my residence in the village. In that year the County of Rensselaer was taken from the County of Albany and erected into a new county. The judges of the Court of Common Pleas appointed were, Anthony Ten Eyck first Judge, Robert Woodworth, Israel Thompson, Jonathan Brown and Jonathan Rouse, Judges; Nicholas Schuyler, Clerk; Albert Pawling, Sheriff, and Moss Kent, father of the late