History of Buffalo.

CHAPTER I.

Buffalo before the War of 1812.


A HUNDRED years ago, the site of the city of Buffalo was a wilderness wherein a representative of the race that now constitutes her population had not set his foot in permanent settlement. Where now extend miles of broad and beautiful thoroughfares, lined with the imposing edifices that characterize the most prominent cities of America, the Indian then followed the war path or the hunt through the thick forest and over the open plain, and here made his primitive home. Seventy years ago the site of the present proud city was a burned and blackened waste far more desolate of aspect than it was before the hand of civilization had left its impress there. The growth of Buffalo in that comparatively short period of time to its present proud position in the great sisterhood of American cities, speaks eloquently of the almost
unrivaled energy and strong practical vigor of her people and fulfills
the ardent prophecies of her founders and early settlers. The reader
of the first volume of this work is now familiar with the first known
Indian settlement made on the banks of Buffalo Creek in the winter of
1779–180; with the important proceedings of the Buffalo Creek Council
of July 5, 1788, with other events of that period, and with the transfer
in 1792–93 of a large tract of land embracing the site of the present
city of Buffalo, by Robert Morris, the financier of Revolutionary
days, to representatives of what is known as “the Holland Land Company.”
At this point the history of the city of Buffalo as distinct from that
of the county and towns given in the preceding volume, may properly
begin.

The derivation of the title to the lands on which Buffalo stands has
been explained by excellent authority as follows:—

“... The territory now constituting the city, formed a part of the region
granted to the Council of Plymouth by Charles the First in 1620, and by
Charles the Second to the Duke of York in 1664. It was claimed by both
New York and Massachusetts under these conflicting charters until in
December, 1786, by what may be termed an amicable partition, the title
or rather the preemption of the exclusive right to purchase the lands
of the Indians was vested in Massachusetts, with the exception of a
strip one mile wide, extending northerly from Lake Erie along the
Niagara River, the preemption of which was vested in New York. The
Indian title was gradually extinguished by treaties in 1797, 1838 and
1842. In 1791, Massachusetts conveyed its interest to Robert Morris,
who, in 1792, conveyed it in trust for certain gentlemen residing in
Holland, who being aliens, were unable to hold the legal title. This
disability was removed by an act of the Legislature passed in 1798, and
the lands were conveyed to the members of what has since been known
as the Holland Land Company. Thus the present title to the territory
in Buffalo embraced in the mile strip is derived from the State of New
York, and to the remainder, from individuals composing the Holland
Land Company.”

The city of Buffalo is situated in longitude 70° 6' 37" west from
Washington, 446 miles from New York city and 296 miles from Albany.
Of its climate Mr. S. Ball wrote in 1825:—

“The climate is more pleasant than any situation in an equally
northern latitude in our country and equally healthy. The summers and
autumns are peculiarly fine; the lake affords a gentle breeze during those
seasons, much resembling a sea breeze, but of more elasticity and sweet-
ness. The winters are less uniform than in most other parts of the country;
the snow rarely falls to a greater depth than six inches; the cold is not
so severe as in other places in the same latitude situated remote from
the lake, yet in winter, when the waters are covered with ice the winds
are often cold and piercing.”

The first building known to have been erected by civilized man on
the site of the present city of Buffalo, was a small log house, which was
built by Cornelius Winney, (or Winne) as early as 1789. One authority
gives the date of his arrival as 1783 or 1784.* The building stood near
the foot of a small hill which descended southward from the present site
of the Mansion House, and not far from the corner of Washington and
Quay streets. Winney was a Dutchman from the Hudson River
country, and came into the wilderness to establish a post for trading
with the Indians. If this unlettered pioneer cared aught for the sur-
roundings of his primitive home, from any other than a business point
of view, he must have been favorably impressed. Although from his
house southward and towards the lake, Winney beheld only a tract of
low, swampy, uninviting lands, to the northward the prospect was much
more attractive. From the crown of the little ascent near his dwelling,
there stretched away northward, high, rolling lands that sloped grace-
fully westward to Lake Erie and rose into lofty bluffs along Niagara
river, falling away more gradually to the level country that reached for
miles to the eastward, mostly forest-covered and unmarred by the hand
of man. If Cornelius Winney possessed the keen business foresight
that is indicated by his pushing thus far into the wilderness to traffic
with the Indians, he may have realized the peculiar adaptability and
superior advantages of the locality for a great city; or, if a proper appreci-
cation of the beauties of Nature’s handiwork animated his soul, (which
is less probable) he may have felt a thrill of admiration for the varied
favorable aspects of the scene.

Early in the winter of 1780–81, Captain Powell (afterwards Colonel)
and Lieutenant Johnston, well known to all the early settlers as Captain
William Johnston, came first to the Indian settlement on Buffalo Creek.
They were British officers and half-brothers. Captain Powell afterwards
secured an interest in Winney’s store; he died at an advanced age a
few miles from Fort Erie. Winney is said to have left the locality soon
after 1796. Mr. Ketchum expressed the opinion in his work, “Buffalo
and the Senecas,” that Winney left in 1798, “as Mr. Eggleston, one of
the surveyors of Mr. Ellicott, writes to him at Schlosser, from Buffalo
Creek, that he (Ellicott) had better bring some boards to make a map-
ing table, as there were none to be had in their new location, Mr.
Winney having carried off those that were in the partition.” This is
probably correct.

Unlettered denizen of the wilderness that he was, Winney’s position
as the first and for a time the only white settler on Buffalo Creek, gave
him sufficient prominence to render him of value to the government
officials, who occasionally sought information from him. The following

*William Ketchum in his “Buffalo and the Senecas,” gives Winney’s arrival as in 1783 or 1784.
This is improbable, as Winney was said to be a Hudson River man, who was on the American side
in the Revolutionary war, yet came here from Canada. He could hardly have gone to Canada and
come back here after peace was declared, at so early a date as that given. There are, moreover, no
statements in existence regarding Winney until about 1791, though there were several visitors here
between that date and 1784.
letter to General Chapin, then Superintendent of Indian Affairs, is quoted as a specimen of Winney's correspondence:

"BUFFALO CREEK, 23d Aug., 1792.

"I inform Gen. Chapin that about seventy-nine of the Canadian Indians is gone to Detroit. They seem to be for warr, and a number of Indians to go up. I further inform you that the Indians of this place are to go up in the first King's vessel that comes down. Prince Edward * is arrived at Fort Niagara. Should I hear anything worth while to write, I shall let you know.

C. WINNEY."

William Johnston married a wife from the Senecas soon after his arrival, and afterwards wielded a powerful influence over the destiny of Buffalo. In the year 1794, he built a small block house near Winney's store, and there took up his permanent abode. This house stood, according to Mr. Ketchum, "north of Exchange street and east of Washington street." Johnston had early acquired a strong influence over the Indians, who gave him two square miles of land, which embraced within its limits the site of the present city of Buffalo. Johnston afterwards agreed with the agent of the Holland Land Company, to use his influence with the Indians to get this tract included in the Company's purchase, and to surrender his own claim to it, in consideration of the Company's conveying to him by deed six hundred and forty acres lying about six miles from the mouth of the creek and including a certain mill-site and adjacent timber lands, with forty-five and one-half acres embracing the improvements then owned by Johnston. Four acres of this latter named tract were on the "Point." This agreement was afterwards consummated. The smaller tract which thus passed into Johnston's hands, was bounded on the north by Seneca street, west by Washington street, south by Little Buffalo creek, and cast by a line that would include the requisite number of acres. The four-acre tract was bounded east by Main street, southwesterly by Buffalo creek, and northwesterly by Little Buffalo creek.

"William Johnston may be considered the first land owner in Buffalo. He had been employed in the British service in what was termed the Indian Department, from the first breaking out of the Revolutionary war. Upon the surrender of Fort Niagara to the Americans in 1796, and consequent extinguishment of British rule over the Indians, instead of withdrawing with the rest of the British officers, he chose to remain with the Indians, with whom he had become identified by the strongest of ties known to our nature. He was, in fact, the leading man at Buffalo Creek at the time of the survey and settlement of Buffalo. He was respected by the early white inhabitants, as well as by the Indians, and died in 1807, at the age of about sixty-five years. His son John, or "Jack," as he was familiarly called, survived him and inherited his property here, and incumbered it by a mortgage to Joseph Parrish, as agent and trustee for the Cayuga Indians. John Johnston married Ruth Barker, daughter of Judge Zenas Barker, in 1808 or 1809; he lived but

* This "Prince Edward" was, doubtless, Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria.
a short time after and died, leaving no children, willing his property to his wife, who afterwards married Elisha Foster. John Johnston had much pains taken with his education, pursuing his studies for a time at Yale College. He was a young man of fine acquirements and address, and after his return from school was employed by Captain Pratt, in his store, and at the time of his marriage with Miss Barker, was considered one of the most accomplished young men in the place.”

About the year in question (1794), or a little later, Johnston gave consent to Martin Middaugh, who, like Winney, was a Hudson River Dutchman, to build a log house near Johnston’s block house. Middaugh had come over from Canada with his son-in-law, Ezekiel Lane,† and was a cooper—the first mechanic in Buffalo. At a later date, Middaugh left his first location and “squatted” on the south side of Buffalo creek, where he died without children, in 1825. Ezekiel Lane died in Buffalo in 1865, leaving children. A claim was made by Lane or his descendants, to the land upon which Middaugh ‡ lived. The courts decided adversely to their claims.

In 1795, a French nobleman, Duke De la Rochefoucauld Liaincourt, paid a visit to the little settlement, and said of it:—

“At the post on Lake Erie, there was a small collection of houses.”§

There was at that time some kind of a public house kept where travelers were entertained; but its larder must have rivaled the famous one of Mother Hubbard, for the French visitor writes of it:—

“There was literally nothing in the house, neither furniture, rum, candles nor milk.”

The public house in those days without rum was in a destitute condition indeed.

Following is the distinguished Frenchman’s further description of Buffalo as he then found it:—

“We at length arrived at the post on Lake Erie, which is a small collection of four or five houses, built about a quarter of a mile from the lake. We met some Indians on the road, and two or three companies of whites. This encounter gave us great pleasure. In this vast wilderness a fire still burning, the vestiges of a camp, the remains of some utensil that has served a traveler, excite sensations truly agreeable, and which arise only in these immense solitudes.

“We arrived late at the inn, and after a very indifferent supper, we were obliged to lie upon the floor in our clothes. There was literally nothing in the house; neither furniture, rum, candles nor milk. After much trouble the milk was procured from the neighbors, who were not as

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*Ketchum’s “Buffalo and the Senecas.”
† In a paper now in the archives of the Young Men’s Association, Judge Augustus Porter states that he passed through Buffalo in 1795, and that there then were living there “a man by the name of Johnstone, the British interpreter; also, a Dutchman and his family, named Middaugh, and an Indian trader, named Winne.”
‡ Middaugh and Lane’s double house was sold to Judge Barker, in 1807 or 1808.
§ Mr. Ketchum says, in referring to the year 1796, “It is quite certain there was no other house (than Johnston’s, Middaugh’s and Winne’s) here till sometime after this.”
accommodating in the way of rum and candles. At length, some arriving from the other side of the river (Fort Erie), we seasoned our supper with an appetite that seldom fails, and, after passing a very comfortable evening, slept as soundly as we had done in the woods.

"Everything at Lake Erie,—by which this collection of houses is called—is dearer than at any other place we visited, for the simple reason that there is no direct communication with any other point. Some were sick with fever in almost every house."

The public house or tavern referred to is supposed to have been kept by a man named Skinner, as he is mentioned as a landlord there at a little later date. Mr. Ketchum, however, infers that John Palmer who, "according to Liaincourt, built his house here before 1795," was the landlord with whom the French visitor found such meagre accommodations. Ketchum says, "Palmer was undoubtedly the first inn-keeper in Buffalo." This point cannot, probably, be any more definitely settled.*

Sometime in the year 1796, probably towards the close, the little settlement on Buffalo Creek received an addition to its population by the arrival of Asa Ransom, a silversmith, who came from Geneva, with a delicate young wife and an infant daughter named Portia. Ransom erected a log house near the liberty pole, corner of Main street and the Terrace, and there began the manufacture of silver trinkets for the Indians. Ransom and his family are credited with being the first to bring into Buffalo the simplest refinements of civilized life.

At this date (1796) a negro who was known as "Black Joe," or Joseph Hodge, lived in a cabin a little west of Winney's. He had an Indian wife who bore him children. He understood the Seneca language and was often employed as an interpreter. He was supposed to be a runaway slave, and died at an advanced age, on the Cattaraugus Reservation.

It was not very long after the arrival of Mr. Ransom at the little settlement that an incident occurred which is worthy of narration. Mr. Ransom and the other few men in the settlement had gone over to Canada to mill, with the exception of Winney and "Black Joe." During their absence several Indians came and demanded rum of Mrs. Ransom. They were told that she had none, which they disputed. Upon her persisting in her statement, one of the Indians suddenly seized her little girl, then two years old, and raised his tomahawk threatening the child's life. Although frightened almost beyond expression, Mrs. Ransom's presence of mind enabled her to immediately promise the Indians the rum as best she could by signs and the few words she knew, and then asked them to allow her to go up stairs after the liquor. They assented,

* Palmer remained in Buffalo until 1802, about which time he removed to near Fort Erie, where he died. His first wife was a daughter of Lewis Maybee, brother of Sylvanus Maybee, who is mentioned elsewhere as one of the early settlers. Lewis Maybee lived a few miles below Black Rock, on the Canada side. While Palmer was living in Buffalo, his first wife died and he afterwards married her sister.
but insisted on retaining the little girl as a hostage. Mrs. Ransom then took her niece, a brave girl of twelve years, and together they went up stairs. Once there she quickly tied together a pair of sheets from the bed and with them lowered the girl from the window to the ground, directing her to hasten to Mr. Winney, hoping that his influence with the savages would be sufficient to turn them from their purpose.

Then the mother waited in a wild fever of anxiety, fearing every moment that she would hear the screams of her only child below. Finally her fears were increased by the Indians who began pounding on the door with their tomahawks; but before they had beaten it down, Winney arrived and induced them to leave the house. The little heroine of this event afterwards became Mrs. Christopher M. Harvey.

In 1797, the “Lake Erie” settlement was further increased by the advent of a little daughter in the Ransom family. She was the first white child born in Buffalo, or in Erie county. She afterwards became Mrs. Frederick B. Merrill, who was long a respected citizen and attorney of Buffalo, and was one of the early clerks of Niagara county.

James Brisbane, one of the pioneers of Batavia, first saw Buffalo in October, 1798. He afterwards wrote of it as follows:—

"There was then the log-house of Middaugh and Lane—a double log-house—about two squares from Main street, a little north of the present line of Exchange street. Captain Johnston's half log and half framed house stood a little east of the main building of the present Mansion House, near Washington street. There was a two-story hewed log-house, owned by Captain Johnston, about where Exchange street now is, from six to eight rods west of Main street, where a tavern was kept by John Palmer. This was the first tavern in Buffalo. Palmer afterwards moved over to Canada, and kept a tavern there. Asa Ransom lived in a log-house west of the Western Hotel. Winne had a log house on the bank of Little Buffalo, south of the Mansion House. A Mr. Maybee, who afterwards went to Cattaraugus, kept a little Indian store in a log building on the west side of Main street, about twenty rods north of Exchange street. There was also a log house occupied by a man by the name of Robbins. The flats were open grounds; a portion of them had been cultivated. Such was Buffalo—and all of Buffalo—in 1798."

Asa Ransom left the little settlement in 1799, and went to live, at what is now Clarence Hollow, where he became a prominent citizen, being four times sheriff of Niagara county. He died in 1837, aged 70 years. Mrs. Catharine Stevens and Mrs. Mary R. Turney, daughters of Asa Ransom, are now living in Buffalo. In the year 1797, or 1798, Sylvanus Maybee came to the embryo city, and established himself as an Indian trader, probably in a log building on the west side of Main street, about twenty rods north of Exchange street. In 1804, he bought inner lot 35.* Maybee came from Canada, and originally from the Mohawk valley. In 1807,

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* The terms "inner" and "outer" lots were applied in the original survey of the village, to designate their location with respect to the village boundaries. These terms, and the numbers given here, will be used hereafter in this work, and will be understood by reference to the maps herein.
he, being then a Major of Militia, challenged his superior officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Ransom, to fight a duel. For this he was cashiered, and not long afterwards removed to Cattaraugus Creek, and his lot passed into the hands of James McMahan.

During the years 1797 and 1798, Joseph Ellicott, with a small army of assistants, was engaged in surveying the Holland Land Company's tract, as detailed in the preceding volume. He was a brother of Andrew A. Ellicott, the first Surveyor-General of the United States. When Joseph Ellicott reached the locality where now stands the proud city of Buffalo, it is clear that he saw with almost prophetic vision, the future importance of the spot, and realized its numerous advantages as the site for a great commercial city. To the day of his death, he never relinquished the faith that was undoubtedly born within him at that time; he certainly had little cause to do so. During the surveying campaign of 1798, Ellicott made his headquarters at Buffalo Creek. The surveys were pushed forward through the year 1799, and the belief that there would sometime be a great city on his favorite location, grew stronger and stronger in Ellicott's mind.

William Robbins established himself as a blacksmith in Buffalo, probably, as early as 1798. He appears as the purchaser of a lot in "New Amsterdam," in 1804. He had a shop on the west side of Main street, in 1806.

In a letter from the late William Peacock to Mr. William Ketchum, he refers to his horseback ride through Buffalo in 1794, as follows:

"In passing along the Indian path (now Main street) to the Terrace, the land was covered with a very thick underbrush, small timber and some large old oak trees. There was a little cleared spot on the Terrace bank on which is now erected the Western Hotel. That little spot was covered with a green sward on which the Indians on a fine day would lie and look off from the high Terrace upon Lake Erie; and I must say that to me it was one of the most beautiful views I ever put my eyes upon. Coming out of the woods it burst on my vision—the large and beautiful sheet of pure water, Lake Erie. It made an impression on me that will always remain, with most devout and religious remembrance."

In 1801, Joseph R. Palmer, a younger brother of John Palmer, the inn-keeper, resided with the latter. At this time he wrote the following letter, which is self-explanatory:

BUFFALO, 11th Aug., 1801.

"Sir—The inhabitants of this place would take it as a particular favor if you would grant them the liberty of raising a school house on a lot in any part of the town, as the New York Missionary Society have been so good as to furnish them with a school master clear of any expense, except boarding and finding him a school house—if you will be

*The Western Hotel stood on what was once rather low ground; there was once quite a considerable and abrupt slope, from about the center of the Terrace, down to the line of the front of the hotel. What used to appear as quite a hill, has been leveled, as far to the northwest as Eagle Street.
so good as to grant them this favor, which they will take as a particular mark of esteem. By request of the inhabitants.

Jos. Ellicott, Esq.

"N. B.—Your answer to this would be very acceptable, as they have the timber ready to hew out." *

That this very reasonable request was promptly granted is shown by the following entry which appears in Ellicott's diary under date of August 14, 1801:

"Went to Buffalo, alias New Amsterdam, to lay off a lot for a school house, the inhabitants offering to erect one at their own expense."

The school house was built on Pearl street near No. 104, but it was not finished till 1809.

When Joseph Palmer wrote the above quoted letter to Ellicott, he dated it "Buffalo," instead of New Amsterdam, the name that Ellicott's principals gave the settlement, and he did so in spite of the fact that he was soliciting a favor. This indicates quite clearly that the settlers even as early as that, preferred the name, "Buffalo," and that "Buffalo" it was to be. This brings us to the vexed question of the origin of the name—a question that has commanded the attention and investigation of some of the ablest minds in the county, and yet is unsettled. As far as the city itself is concerned, the matter may be dismissed by the simple statement that it received its name from the adjacent creek: but who named the stream and why it was called after the monarch of the prairies, seem, unfortunately, to be questions that must go back into the past without satisfactory or conclusive answers. The principal arguments of the ablest writers on the subject, in favor of the different theories that have been advanced, have already received proper attention in the preceding volume, and hence need not be further referred to. It will suffice to state that from about the beginning of the century the little village in the wilderness gradually became more and more widely known as Buffalo, and in a few years "New Amsterdam," and "Lake Erie," as applied to the village, were heard no more.†

Down to about the date under consideration (1801), the principal and almost the only source of supplies for the settlers on Buffalo creek,

* Joseph Richard Palmer, it is said, taught school for the garrison children at Fort Erie, before he located at Buffalo. He died in Buffalo in 1813.
† While this work was going through the press, the editor received a letter signed "An Old Settler," the substance of which is, that Buffalo received its name from the Creek, which stream was named "Tusawa," or Buffalo, from the fact that droves of that animal once came to the mouth of the Creek to drink. "Old Settler," says, "I had a cousin who traveled on horseback through Buffalo and other places, following the lakes, when there was nothing but a foot-path and no inhabitants but the Indians. I have heard him tell of seeing the Buffalo herds and just where their hard-beaten path lay; but that I have lost track of." This is given merely as another contribution upon the vexed question, and may or may not be of value.
was Fort Erie. The western shore of the river from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario was largely cleared, settled and cultivated, while on this side the forest was almost unbroken. In going to Fort Erie for supplies the settlers at Buffalo usually passed directly from the mouth of Buffalo Creek across to the Fort.

From the eastward an Indian trail came in to Buffalo creek nearly on the present line of Main street. A branch diverged not far above the present junction of North street, passed near the site of the Catholic church, on York street, and over or very near the site of the reservoir, and thence down to the river. In the spring of 1798, the main trail was improved and made a tolerable wagon road, under direction of Joseph Ellicott. Then, or a little later, a road was cut out so as to be passable for trains near the line of the branch trail just mentioned, and a dugway was made near where the street railroad buildings are located, on Niagara street. This was known as the Guide-Board road, from the guide-board on Main street, pointing the way to the ferry. In going from the ferry to the Buffalo settlement, the travel was at that time mostly under the bluff of the lake shore, and then along the hard, sandy beach of the lake, to the Terrace. After Niagara street was surveyed and cut out, it was for a long time almost impassable, or account of the swampy character of the ground; its course was also crossed by numerous small brooks having steep banks; it was afterwards improved by making it a corduroy road. Another trail, diverging from the main road at what was then called Four-Mile creek, (the Scajaquada,) followed nearly the line of Bouck avenue, to the river.

Dr. Cyrenius Chapin, a man who was destined to wield a great deal of influence upon the early history of Buffalo, came from Oneida county, in 1801, on a prospecting tour. He was evidently well pleased with what he saw, for after his return home, he wrote Mr. Ellicott that he and a few of his friends purposed to purchase a whole township at the mouth of Buffalo creek. He added:

"Forty respectable citizens that are men of good property, have signed articles of agreement to take a township, if it can be purchased, and will pay the ten per cent. when we receive the article."

Joseph Ellicott entertained brighter anticipations for that locality; the land was not yet surveyed, and Dr. Chapin's proposition was rejected. It is supposed that Zerah Phelps and John Crow, were parties to this proposed agreement. Crow came to Buffalo, from Oneida county, in 1801, or 1802. He occupied a house on inner lot number 1, near the corner of Washington and Crow, (now Exchange streets.) The original house was of logs, to which Crow built a frame addition. He was an inn-keeper, and remained in Buffalo until 1806; he died in 1830, in Pennsylvania. Zerah Phelps left Buffalo not long after 1804, removing to near Batavia.
The First Preacher.

The journal of Mr. Ellicott indicates that Henry Chapin was living in Buffalo, as early as 1801. The journal says, under date of January 5, of that year:

"* * In the evening, rode out with Mr. H. Chapin. He overset, and I unfortunately fell with my side on a sharp stump, and much bruised and injured my ribs."

This journal also notes what was doubtless the first church service in Buffalo. He says:

"* * This day, (January 11th,) Rev. Elkanah Holmes, an ana-
baptist preacher and missionary among the Indians, preached for the
inhabitants of New Amsterdam. His sermons were well adapted to the
situation and the capacity of the people he preached to. Appears to be
a good man—worthy of the charge entrusted to him."

Another missionary, named Palmer, is also mentioned by Mr. Ellicott, in his journal. Palmer was sent out to the Indians about this time, by
the Dutch Reformed church; but Mr. Holmes is undoubtedly entitled
to the distinction of being the first preacher in Buffalo. He labored
among the Indians until 1812. He was a Calvinistic Baptist. A son of
Mr. Holmes married a daughter of Dr. Chapin.

It was in January, 1801, that Joseph Ellicott entered upon the duties
of local agent for the Holland Land Company, in which capacity he
visited Buffalo. He removed to Ransomville (Clarence Hollow,) on
the 21st of the same month. As an indication that the tide of emigration
was already setting strongly westward, Mr. Ellicott recorded in his
journal, on February 26th:

"Last night lodged at this house (Ransom's), upwards of forty
people—men, women and children—moving principally to New Con-
necticut and Presque Isle," (Erie.)

In July, 1801, an event occurred in Buffalo, which for a time created
intense excitement. John Palmer was sitting on a bench in front of his
inn, with William Ward and another man; it was in the evening. Su-
ddenly a young Seneca warrior, called by the whites "Stiff-armed George,"
rushed up and made a desperate effort to stab Palmer, without any
known provocation. The inn-keeper avoided the blow, upon which the
angered Indian turned upon Ward, and stabbed him in the neck. An
alarm was raised, the whites hurried to the spot, and the Indian was
finally secured, but not until he had fatally stabbed a man named John
Hewitt. The culprit, as near as can be learned, was sent away at once
to Fort Niagara, and placed in charge of Major Moses Porter, then in
command there. The next day, a body of Indian warriors numbering
fifty or sixty, appeared in the village, armed and painted, and threatened
that if the culprit was executed, they would massacre all the whites. A
pow-wow was then held over some blood that had flowed from a wound
inflicted on "Stiff-armed George," and the howlings and flourishings of
weapons by the warriors, frightened the people beyond expression; many
left the settlement for safety. Benjamin Barton, Jr., was then Sheriff of the county. He soon arrived at the village, and proposed to take the assassin and remove him to the jail at Canandaigua. This course was fiercely opposed by the Indians, who argued that when the crime was committed, their brother was drunk, and, therefore, was excusable; the whites insisted that the culprit was sober, when he did the deed, and that it made little difference whether he was or not.

Finally, Sheriff Barton, accompanied by some of the Chiefs, went to Fort Niagara, and held a consultation with Major Porter. It was finally agreed that "Stiff-armed George" should be allowed to go at large, the Chiefs pledging themselves that he should be forthcoming on the day set for the trial, which pledge was fulfilled. The trial was held at the Canandaigua Court of Oyer and Terminer, in the following February. Red Jacket addressed the jury with his accustomed power and eloquence, citing the numerous murders of Indians by the whites, which had been followed by no punishment, as grounds for acquitting the prisoner; but the Indian was convicted. He was, however, afterwards pardoned by the governor,* on condition of his leaving the State—undoubtedly an act of wisdom at that time. The above are the most reliable details to be obtained of an event that might easily have resulted in a bloody massacre. The killing of John Hewitt, was the first recorded murder in Buffalo. So strong was the influence of this event upon the minds of the whites, that a petition was immediately prepared and forwarded, asking for "a small garrison of troops at the village of Buffalo Creek, alias New Amsterdam."

Down to May, 1802, Ellicott's anxiety as to the future growth and importance of the village and city which he had pictured in his mind upon his favorite site, must have increased somewhat, for in that month he wrote Paul Busti, the general agent of the Holland Company, as follows:

"While speaking on the subject of taking things in their proper time, I cannot refrain from mentioning that the Company delaying in opening their lands for sale in New Amsterdam, and the lands adjoining thereto, I fear the nick of time will pass by, at least for making a town of New Amsterdam."

This expression was undoubtedly called out in part by Mr. Ellicott's forebodings of the rivalry of Black Rock, to which he referred in the same letter as "equally or more advantageous for a town than Buffalo." That was only eighty-one years ago—little more than a man's allotted lifetime—and an ordinance was then in force, offering a bounty of five dollars each for wolf scalps, "whelps half price," and half a dollar each for foxes and wildcats.

*The original pardon granted in this case by Governor Clinton, is now in the rooms of the Buffalo Historical Society.
Joseph Wells settled at Buffalo creek, in 1802, coming over from Canada. He had passed by Buffalo creek in 1800, on his way to Canada with his brother. His son, Aldrich Wells, was born in August, 1802, and was the first white male child born in Buffalo. Joseph Wells occupied a fifty-acre tract of land on the east side of Main street, just south of High street: there the venerable William Wells was born, who is now the oldest native resident of Buffalo. Joseph Wells afterwards removed to Niagara street, where the First Congregational church now stands. He was engaged in brick-making, about 1819, where the Bennett elevator is now located. He raised and commanded a company of light infantry, which took part in the war of 1812. Chandler J. Wells, Esq., is another son of Joseph Wells.*

In 1803, the village was partially surveyed by William Peacock,† under the general direction of Ellicott, and was finished by Ellicott in person, in 1804. The streets were laid out substantially as they exist today, as far as they were then defined. In referring to this labor by Mr. Ellicott, the Rev. George W. Hosmer, D. D., said in his very interesting paper read before the Buffalo Historical Society, January 13, 1864:—

"We should like another picture of him (Ellicott), standing by his compass in what is now Main street, in front of the churches; so confident is he that commerce must come and pour out her horn of plenty, that he has resolved to lay out a city; so delighted is he with the grandeur of the situation, that he thinks he will make his home here; he selects for himself a noble mansion, one hundred acres of land, between Eagle and Swan streets, and from Main nearly to Jefferson street—almost enough for a principality in Germany—and determines to build upon the western front, looking towards the lake. So here, upon what is to be the site of his house, he stands by his compass, indicating the lines which now are our streets. * * * Mr. Ellicott, in laying out our city, had large ideas, and worked upon a magnificent scale.‡ He did not bring a map of New York, or Boston, or Albany, and lay it down here; he wrought upon the inspiration of a magnificent hope, and we are greatly indebted to him for the open, handsome face of our city."

In an early letter to Theophilus Cazenove, the first general agent of the Holland Company, Mr. Ellicott thus describes the spot he had selected for the future city:—

"The building spot is situated about sixty perches from the lake, on a beautiful elevated bank, about twenty-five feet perpendicular height above the surface of the water in the lake, from the foot of which, with but little labor, may be made the most beautiful meadows, extending to the lake and up Buffalo creek to the Indian line. From the top of the

*See biographic sketch of C. J. Wells, in subsequent pages.
† William Peacock married a niece of Joseph Ellicott. He was a man of prominence, and was conspicuous in connection with Mr. Ellicott and others, in the explorations and surveys for the Erie canal. Mr. Peacock’s later life was spent in Mayville, Chautauqua county, N. Y.
‡ From the fact that Joseph Ellicott assisted his brother Andrew in the survey of the city of Washington, it is supposed that he adopted the similar plan of radiating streets in Buffalo, from the one used in the former city.
bank there are few more beautiful prospects. Here the eye wanders over the inland sea to the southwest, until the sight is lost in the horizon. On the northwest are seen the progressing settlements in Upper Canada, and southwesterly, with the pruning of some trees out of the way, may be seen the Company's land for the distance of forty miles, gradually ascending, variegated with valleys and gentle rising hills, until the sight passes their summit, at the sources of the waters of the Mississippi. *8*

The accompanying map of the village, as first surveyed, shows its boundaries and extent quite clearly.

In naming the streets of Buffalo, Ellicott, or his superiors, honored the names of the Hollanders who formed the company owning the lands, and those of well-known Indian tribes. A reference to the map of 1804, will show that Main street as far up as Church, was called Willink avenue, while above Church street it was called Van Staphorst avenue. Niagara street was Schimmelpennick avenue; Erie street was Vallenhoven avenue; Court street was Cazenove avenue; Church street was Stadnitski avenue; Genesee street was Busti avenue. Busti and Cazenove were further honored by having the name of the former attached to the Terrace above Erie street, while below that street the latter's name was applied. In the use of Indian names, Ellicott street was called Oneida street; Washington street was Onondaga; Pearl street was Cayuga; Franklin street was Tuscarora, and Niagara street was Mississaugua. Delaware, Huron, Mokawk, Eagle, Swan and Seneca were given their present names, and Exchange street was called Crow, in honor of John Crow. North and South Division streets were not laid out on the original map, for reasons that will presently appear. The changes in street names, as noted, were made in the year 1825-26.

When Ellicott laid out the streets of the village and reserved intact the hundred acre "outer lot 104," he undoubtedly intended to build thereon a home for his declining years. As may be seen on the map of 1804, he included in the boundaries of his lot a semi-circular piece of ground on its front, around which he curved what is now Main street. This curve was directly in front of "the churches," and from it a grand and unobstructed view was obtained down Main street north and south, Niagara street, Church street and Erie street. If this curve in Main street was not a wise provision from a commercial point of view, it certainly improved what would have made one of the most eligible and sagaciously planned sites in the country for a palatial residence. It is said that Mr. Ellicott had expressed his intention of bequeathing his grounds and their improvements to the city at his death, for a permanent museum and park. But he was destined to never build on his favorite site, although he went so far as to gather more or less materials for that purpose, some of which afterwards went into the construction of the first

* Mr. Ellicott is reported to have said after he went to Batavia to live—"God has made Buffalo, and I must try and make Batavia."