Map of the
Village of New Amsterdam
(now the City of Buffalo)

Made for the Holland Land Company

by

JOSEPH ELLICOTT, Surveyor.

1804
jail—a less noble purpose than that for which they were intended. In the year 1809, the Highway Commissioners decided to straighten Main street, thus cutting off the semi-circular front of Mr. Ellicott's lot. This action Mr. Ellicott held to be illegal, but he did not actively oppose it; it has been claimed with some degree of authority, that the interference with his plans through this change in the street, led Mr. Ellicott to abandon his intention of making Buffalo his home, and to remain in Batavia.

Joseph Ellicott was born in Buck's county, Pa., on the first day of November, 1760. His early education was acquired in common schools, but was afterwards broadened and deepened by extensive reading and well-directed observation. In early life, while assisting his father on the farm and in the mills of the latter, he began the study of surveying, which he soon mastered; he was then often called by his older brother to assist him in that profession. Joseph Ellicott surveyed the disputed line between South Carolina and Georgia, during which task he was attacked by fever and for a time his life was despaired of. After being the chief surveyor of the Holland Purchase, he was for years the trusted local agent of the Holland Land Company, a position of great responsibility.* About the year 1824, his health became much impaired, his mind was seriously affected, and he finally settled into hopeless hypochondria. By advice of his physicians, he entered the Bloomingdale asylum at New York, but his malady increased, and on the 19th of August, 1826, Joseph Ellicott, the founder † of the city of Buffalo, ended his life by his own hand. He was never married.

In the year 1803, we find recorded the arrival in Buffalo of David Reese, blacksmith. He came in the employ of the government for the benefit of the Indians. He was the first blacksmith in Buffalo. In 1806, Mr. Reese bought outer lot 176, on Seneca street, and built a frame shop on the corner of Washington and Seneca streets. This little shop was one of the two wooden buildings left standing after the burning of Buffalo in 1813. Mr. Reese's ‡ dwelling was erected on the opposite corner of

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* He was also an active promoter of the Erie canal, and was one of the first commissioners appointed by the Legislature.

† Mr. Ellicott's right to the title is disputed by some excellent authorities, who insist that, while he evidently saw all the possibilities of the locality as a site for a large commercial city, and surveyed it, yet the Company for which he was agent never contributed in any way, either to the founding or the after-growth of Buffalo; but it is certain that he personally selected the site of the city, urged the Company to secure it, induced the Indians to leave it out of the reservation, and designed the plan of the future city.

‡ David Reese had an unfortunate quarrel with a Seneca chief named "Young King," in 1815. A dispute arose between Reese and an Indian over work that the blacksmith was to do for the latter, and Reese knocked the Indian down. At this juncture Young King rode up and took part in the quarrel, condemning Reese for what he had done. In response to this, Reese threatened to serve the chief in the same manner. Young King then dismounted and struck the blacksmith with a club, upon which Reese seized a scythe and with it nearly severed one of the Indian's arms; it was amputated the next day. Soon after John Jemison, a half-breed son of the celebrated "White Woman," a man of fierce passions, came on from the Genesee at the head of a party of Indians for the purpose of killing Reese. The blacksmith was, however, either secreted by his friends or hid himself away, and the matter was finally settled by referring it to Judge Porter. Joshua Gillett and Jonas Williams, both parties signing an agreement to abide by the decision of these arbitrators. Reese probably paid the Indian a sum of money in settlement of the affair.
Seneca street, on a part of Johnston's lot. He carried on the business in the old shop until about 1823.

Dr. Cyrenius Chapin, to whom we have before referred, returned to Buffalo from the East, and made it his permanent residence in 1803. No house being then obtainable, Dr. Chapin went with his family to Fort Erie, where they remained nearly two years. In the meantime he purchased inner lot 40, on Swan street, where he built, and in 1805, installed his family. Dr. Chapin was a remarkable man, as the reader of the preceding volume has learned, and his wonderful activity and energy, though sometimes erratic, perhaps, were for years instrumental in advancing the best interests of the place. Mr. William C. Bryant read a very interesting paper before the Buffalo Historical Society in April, 1877, upon Orlando Allen, in which he thus pleasantly refers to Dr. Chapin:—

"Doctor Chapin was, in truth, the most considerable person in the village at this era. His gallant achievements and sacrifices in the second struggle for independence, when he had exchanged his perilous drugs for the still deadlier implements of war, are fresh in every memory; and his brusque but honest ways, practical benevolence and sturdy character, won for him a place in the hearts of the pioneers of this region. His professional services were sought throughout a vast region, lapping far over into the heart of Canada, and extending as far south as Erie. When it is remembered that these visits were accomplished on horseback, and that there were no macadam or plank roads in those days, the arduous nature of the Doctor's professional duties will be easier comprehended."

At the time of the British assault on Buffalo, and its destruction by fire, Dr. Chapin was taken prisoner and confined in Canada more than a year. He died in February, 1838, and was followed to the grave by a large concourse of his former friends and fellow citizens. Mrs. Thaddeus M. Weed is a daughter of Dr. Chapin. She was born in 1803, and still resides in the city. Erastus Granger was another important accession to Buffalo, in 1803. Mr. Ketchum says, in his history of Buffalo and the Senecas:—

"Previous to the election of Mr. Jefferson, the Grangers, then young men, had been engaged in the examination, and perhaps survey of Virginia lands. During their sojourn in Virginia, they became acquainted with Mr. Jefferson, and on his becoming a candidate for the presidency, the Grangers warmly espoused his cause, and after his election, he offered to do anything in his power for them. Mr. Erastus Granger was sent to Buffalo, to exert his political influence in favor of the party which had elevated Mr. Jefferson to power. Mr. Granger had been quite recently married, and his wife had died before he came to Buffalo. He located himself at John Crow's tavern, as a boarder, it being the only place where he could obtain even..."
the scanty accommodations afforded him. He was appointed Superintendent of Indian affairs, was the first postmaster, and, on the organization of the district of Buffalo Creek, he was appointed Collector of Customs for that district. * * Mr. Granger became the leader of the Democratic party in Western New York."

The first purchase of land by Mr. Granger, is recorded as inner lot 31, corner of Pearl street and the Terrace, in July, 1805. He afterwards took up a large tract of land now partly embraced in Forest Lawn Cemetery and the park. Mr. Granger was first married March 21, 1813, and married a second wife in the person of a daughter of Nathaniel Sanborn, of Canandaigua, an estimable and accomplished woman. Mr. Granger was afterwards honored with the office of Judge, and he filled the different positions of trust in which he was placed, with distinguished ability. He resided until his death at "Flint Hill," (Main street,) a little west of the stone house erected by his son, Warren Granger, now a citizen of Buffalo. Judge Granger died December 26, 1826.

As we have said, the survey of the village was completed in 1804, and the lots placed in market for the first; this action gave an impetus to the growth of the settlement. The following lots were sold during that year, being the first regular conveyances of land in the village plot: Nathan W. Sever, outer lots 55 and 56, sixty-three and one-half acres, $115; Zerah Phelps, June 1, inner lot 1, for $112; Sylvanus Maybee, August 6, inner lot 35, $135; Samuel McConnell, outer lot 84, May 19, $191.50. The preceding maps show the location of these lots.

Following is a list of owners of land located in Buffalo, in 1804, as given in Turner's History of the Holland Purchase: "William Robbins, Henry Chapin, Sylvanus Maybee, Asa Ransom, Thomas Stewart, Samuel Pratt, William Johnston, John Crow, Joseph Landon, Erastus Granger, Jonas Williams, Erastus Keane, Vincent Grant, Louis Le Couteulx." These purchasers had not all yet become residents, several of them having improved their property under pre-emption arrangements.

The reader will be interested in learning some of the prices that were paid for lots in Buffalo, in early days. In 1804 lot 1, the site of the Mansion House, brought $140. In 1805, Thomas Sidwell paid $35 and $45 respectively for lots 75 and 76, on Pearl street. In 1806, David Mather paid for lot 38, on Main Street, $120.25 in advance. Soon after the close of the war of 1812, Smith H. Salisbury paid for lot 183, on Main street, $480.80, and agreed to erect a house twenty feet square. In 1817, Frederick B. Merrill paid for lots 87 and 88, $580, and agreed to erect a house twenty by twenty-four. In 1818, there were no sales, and but one in 1819, of outer lot 115, at $20 per acre, and for parts of inner lots 87 and 88, (thirty-five feet,) $175. In 1821, Roswell Chapin paid for inner lot 133, $250. Gilman Folsom bought lot 198, for $150, agreeing to have a frame house built within one year. In the year 1822, under the
more liberal policy of the new local agent, Mr. Otto, and the prospect of the canal soon being built, sales largely increased, and the entire remainder of the original plat of New Amsterdam was sold. It is explained in Turner's History of the Holland Purchase, that Mr. Ellicott's policy of insisting of settlers building on their lots, was more to secure actual settlements, than to increase the value of lots sold.

Outer lot 93 was deeded to William Johnston, October 27, 1804. Ketchum's "Buffalo and the Senecas," states it as probable that an arrangement was made with Johnston whereby he relinquished his claim to a part of the land on the flat bottom between the Big and Little Buffalo creeks, west of Main street (see maps) as only "outer lot 85 was conveyed to him in 1804, but inner lots 3, 30 and 32 were conveyed to him at the same time; whereas outer lot 86, the remaining portion of the land in the triangle, was conveyed to Isaac Davis, June 29, 1814."

Samuel Pratt, a man of commanding influence, became a resident of Buffalo in 1804. He had made a trip through this region in 1802, on a fur-buying expedition, when he became convinced of the future greatness of Buffalo. Mr. Pratt located himself upon inner lot No. 1, on one corner of which the Mansion House now stands.* On the Holland Company's map this lot appears as inner lot 2, but on later maps it is designated as number 1. He afterwards purchased several other lots. Mr. Pratt and his family made the long journey from his former home in New England in an old fashioned coach which he had built for the purpose. This removal into the wilderness brought down upon him the ridicule of all his eastern friends; but "Captain" Pratt was not of the material that is turned from a settled purpose by ridicule.

One day in September of that year (1804) the dwellers in Buffalo were astonished at beholding a coach, followed by one or two open wagons, loaded with furniture, coming jolting and swaying down Willink avenue (Main street) dodging the stumps and other obstacles as best they might. This coach was the first carriage that was ever seen in Erie county, and it contained, with the other wagons, the family and outfit of Mr. Pratt. No other event, perhaps, that had yet occurred in the little village caused more surprise of an agreeable character than the arrival of this unpretentious retinue. The vehicles stopped in front of John Crow's tavern, where the inmates were met by Erastus Granger, who greeted them warmly and generously placed at their disposal his

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*As an indication of the interest displayed by Mr. Pratt in the advancement of his adopted home, we quote the following letter, written but a few months after his arrival at Buffalo:—

NEW AMSTERDAM, December 2, 1804.

Sir:—Mr. Spicer has requested me to write to you, to inform you that he wishes to purchase Lot No. 15, in the back street. This Mr. Spicer is a carpenter by trade. He has been in my employ and has behaved himself like a very sober man. His work is much wanted here, and I should be very glad to have him accommodated. Your advance money will be paid when you give him a "refusal" of the lot.

With sentiments of esteem, I remain your friend,

JOSEPH ELICCOPTT, ESQ.

SAMUEL PRATT.
own room in the tavern. While Mr. Pratt was expressing his warmest thanks for Mr. Granger's generosity, Mrs. Pratt inspected the apartment which was for a time to be her home. It may be conceived that her heart failed when she saw a room perhaps twelve feet square, the walls of rough logs and the floor of split logs, with a bedstead made of poles in one corner. It is little wonder that one of the Pratt children, as it is related, could not refrain from laughter over the enthusiastic expressions of gratitude made by her father for Mr. Granger's kindness in giving up this primitive parlor, and the no less earnest declarations of the latter that he felt honored in thus giving up his room.

Soon after Mr. Pratt's arrival he built a frame house, the first one of considerable size in the place, and a store in which he began trading with the settlers and Indians. He also built a large barn on the corner of Seneca and Ellicott streets. The frame, it is said, was made of green timber and consequently stood through the fire of 1813, the rest of the structure being destroyed, and was afterwards covered and used as a stable for the Franklin House. Mr. Pratt had a large family of children, the youngest of whom, Mrs. Orlando Allen, still lives in Buffalo. One of his sons, Hon. Hiram Pratt, was twice elected Mayor of Buffalo, and was extensively engaged in commercial enterprises. Captain Pratt is remembered as a man of great energy and business activity, and one who displayed commendable public spirit in whatever related to the improvement of the village. His store was for years the principal rendezvous of the Indians and where they did a large share of their trading. Capt. Pratt enjoyed the Indian title of "Negurriyu," or "honest dealer;" or, as Mr. Letchworth's history of the Pratt family gives the name, "Hodandoah," or "merciful man."*

An incident is related of Captain Pratt's intercourse with the Indians that reflects still less credit upon the latter and came very near resulting in a serious trouble. It occurred while Captain Pratt was building his house; Mrs. Pratt had put some meat boiling out of doors, when an Indian named or known as "Peter Gimlet," probably overcome by the appetizing smell, suddenly snatched the largest piece of meat from the pot and started for the reservation. Little Esther Pratt saw the theft, ran to the store and told her father that "Peter Gimlet" had stolen their meat. Captain Pratt sent his son Asa after the thief, and he was soon brought back. When Peter's blanket was opened and the meat discovered, the Captain took his horsewhip and laid it vigorously about the Indian's legs.

* Some of the Indians in those days exhibited capacity for sharp business practice that would seem more adapted to those later times. All furs were then bought by weight and the Indians sometimes brought in beaver skins with the claws filled with lead. In order to not make his discovery of this species of fraud in a public way, which would have mortally offended the delinquent, Capt. Pratt would cut off the loaded claws with a hatchet, with a remark that he would allow for them in the weight. If the Indian demurred to this, Mr. Pratt would offer to weigh the claws separately; as this would certainly result in exposure, the tricky customer would have to submit to Capt. Pratt's method of weighing the furs.
Captain Pratt and the Indians.

Peter endured the punishment for a moment and then bounded away toward his home, yelling with pain.

Not long after, a large number of Indians began to arrive in front of Captain Pratt's store, where they seated themselves on the ground in their customary attitude. Then followed squaws, then chiefs and more Indians of all stations who squatted down in front of the store in a circle. By two o'clock in the afternoon two or three hundred Indians had arrived. At this juncture Captain Pratt was sent for and the proceedings began. "Farmer's Brother," the noted Chief, addressed Captain Pratt and narrated the story as told by "Peter Gimlet," to the effect that he had been ignominiously whipped without cause, and closed by demanding redress. Captain Pratt then gave a statement of the case as it had actually occurred and called his little daughter to corroborate him.

After an impressive consultation by the Chiefs, Farmer's Brother arose with all his native dignity and delivered the judgment, which was in substance that Peter Gimlet (giving him his Indian name) had stolen Negurriyu's meat and Negurriyu had inflicted only deserved punishment, and if he desired, Negurriyu might whip him again. The offender was also banished from the reservation and was not seen there for two or three years. Captain Pratt then rolled out a barrel of salt from which the Indians helped themselves until it was all gone. This proceeding undoubtedly had its effect on the jury!

On another occasion Esther Pratt* had carried her infant sister into the store where she seated her on the counter. A Seneca squaw suddenly entered the store, caught up the child and fled away towards the forest. She was soon caught and the child rescued. The squaw gave as her motive for the act, that she had lately lost her own child and wanted another to take its place.

A still more startling incident occurred in the Pratt family at another time. The family were at the dinner table, when one of the boys, Benjamin, rushed into the house, closely pursued by an Indian warrior who was generally known as "The Devil's Ramrod;" the Indian was brandishing his knife and threatening to kill the boy. After the Indian had been with some difficulty appeased, it was learned that the boy had been annoying him until he had become enraged. The Indian finally thrust his knife savagely into the door-post and strode away exclaiming, "Me no kill Hodanidoah's boy."

In Buffalo business circles the name of Pratt has always been conspicuous, and descendants of Captain Pratt are now prominently connected with the manufactures and trade of the city. Captain Pratt died August 31, 1812.†

* Esther Pratt, the young participant in these incidents, became the wife of Mr. Augustus C. Fox, and lived most of her life in Buffalo. She died in Springfield, Ill., in 1882.
† See biographical sketches of P. F. Pratt and Samuel F. Pratt, in subsequent pages.
William Hodge came to Buffalo in 1804, having the year previous taken up the farm lot that embraced within its boundaries the premises now occupied by his son, the venerable William Hodge, on Hodge avenue; the latter was six months old when his father came to Buffalo. William Hodge came from Otsego county and early engaged in the planting of a nursery, which business has been perpetuated by his son, down to the present time. In 1811, Mr. Hodge built a large brick hotel on what is now the corner of Main and Utica streets. This was the first brick building in the county and became widely known as "The Brick Tavern on the Hill." It was the last building destroyed when the village was burned two years later. After Buffalo was burned, Mr. Hodge was one of the first to return to the desolate ruins, and he did not wait a single day before beginning the reconstruction of his home. There was something of a strife between Mr. Hodge and Ralph M. Pomeroy as to who should succeed in getting a building up first; Mr. Pomeroy was a day or two ahead of his neighbor in the undertaking.

Louis Stephen Le Couteux de Caumont, a French gentleman of excellent family, arrived in Buffalo in 1804 and became one of her most prominent citizens. He built a frame house on Crow (Exchange) street, opposite Crow's tavern, on the site of what was afterwards known as the "Le Couteux Block;" in a part of this building he established the first drug store in the county. He was soon after appointed local agent for the sale of Buffalo lands, by the Holland Land Company. He is represented as having been a "gentle, genial spirit—a gentleman of the old school—and a Frenchman in his manners and address." He was the founder of the St. Louis Catholic church, the lot for which was donated by him. Mr. Le Couteux died October 16, 1839, at the age of eighty-four, regretted by all who were capable of appreciating his good qualities. As a private citizen no one was more worthy of the general esteem and consideration in which he was held. * * * In the discharge of his public duties he was distinguished for his integrity, his zeal and his affability.

Zerah Phelps has been mentioned as the purchaser of inner lot No. 1, (just east of the Mansion House,) in June, 1804. As an evidence that the Holland Land Company appreciated the fact that the immediate improvement of the lots sold by them was the surest road to other sales, it is said that Mr. Phelps was compelled to agree that he would "build a house twenty-four feet square and clear off half an acre of land." Similar agreements are said to have been entered into by other purchasers. As has been shown, however, the prices of lots were not exorbitant.

The year 1804 was made further notable by the establishment of a post route from Buffalo. A law was passed in the spring establishing a route from Canandaigua to Fort Niagara, by way of Buffalo creek. This route was put in operation the following September, with Erastus Gran-
GER as postmaster. "Once a week a solitary horseman came from Canandaigua with a pair of saddlebags containing a few letters and a few diminutive newspapers scarcely larger than the letters, and once a week he returned to Fort Niagara with a still smaller literary freight."* The first mail carrier was Ezra Metcalf.

The Rev. Timothy Dwight, a former president of Yale College, visited Buffalo in 1804, and remarked thus of its general appearance at that time:—

"Buffalo Creek, otherwise New Amsterdam, is built on the north-east border of a considerable mill stream which bears the same name. * * The south-western bank is here a peninsula, covered with a handsome grove. Through it several vistas might be cut with advantage, as they would open fine views of the lake—a beautiful object. * * The village is built half a mile from the mouth of the creek, and consists of about twenty indifferent houses. * * The streets are straight and cross each other at right-angles, but are only forty feet wide. What could have induced this wretched limitation, in a mere wilderness, I am unable to conceive. The spot is unhealthy, though of sufficient elevation and, so far as I have been informed, free from the vicinity of stagnant waters. * * The inhabitants are a casual collection of adventurers, and have the usual character of such adventurers thus collected, when remote from regular society, retaining but little sense of government or religion. * * We saw about as many Indians in the village as white people. The prospect presented at Buffalo is most attractive. Directly opposite, at the distance of two miles, but in full view, stands Fort Erie, a block-house, accompanied by a suit of barracks and a hamlet. This collection of houses is built on a beautiful shore, wears less the appearance of a recent settlement, and exhibits a much greater degree of improvement than anything which we saw west of Genesee river. Beyond this hamlet, a handsome point stretches to the southwest and furnishes an imperfect shelter for the vessels employed in the commerce of the lake. Seven of these vessels (five schooners, a sloop and a pettagare) lay in the harbor at this time, and presented to us an image of business and activity, which, distant as we were from the ocean, was scarcely less impressive than that presented by the harbor of New York, when crowded with almost as many hundreds. Behind this point another much more remote stretches out in the same direction, exhibiting a form of finished elegance, and seeming an exactly suitable limit for the sheet of water which fills the fine scope between these arms. Still further southward the lake opens in boundless view and presents in a perfect manner the blending of unlimited waters with the sky. Over these points, assembled as if to feast our eyes at the commencement of the evening after our arrival, was one of the most beautiful collections of clouds ever seen by the votary of nature. They were of elegant form and of hues intense and refulgent. The richest crimson fading into the tinges of pink and the rose, adorned them on the one side, and gold burnished into the brightest brilliancy on the other. * * Towards the southwest and the northeast, two long ranges of leaden colored clouds, with fleeces of mist hanging beneath them, reached round two-thirds of the horizon. * * The sky above of that pure, bright aspect

* Johnson's History of Erie County.
which succeeds a storm, when it becomes clear with a soft serenity, was varied from a glowing yellow, a brilliant straw color and a willow green into a light and finally into a dark azure, the beautiful blue of autumn. Beneath all this glory, the lake, a boundless field of polished glass, glimmered alternately with the variegated splendor of the clouds and hues of the sky, softening the brilliancy of both with inimitable delicacy, and leaving on the mind the impression of enchantment rather than reality. * * A lively imagination would easily have fancied that a paradise might be found beyond this charming expanse."

If the Rev. Mr. Dwight erred in his estimate of the width of the streets laid out by Joseph Ellicott, he certainly viewed the scene with the eye and appreciation of an artist, and many residents of Buffalo in these many years later will sympathize with his ardent description of its natural beauties. Mr. William Hall, then of Cleveland, O., who visited Buffalo in 1804, wrote of the place, in 1863, in a more practical vein, as follows:—

"At Buffalo there were perhaps twenty houses, of which only three or four were frame, one of which was occupied by a Mr. Pratt, who kept a small store. He had his aged parents with him, whom I saw. Some streets were partially laid out, but the whole were full of stumps, and no fences. We rode up the creek some mile or two and crossed to see a Mr. Leech, who was from Connecticut. * * Leaving Buffalo, we went to Black Rock through woods—a small pathway trodden mostly by Indians, with some appearance of wagons having passed that way."* 

The first baker in Buffalo, was John Despar, a Frenchman, who established his business on Johnston's lot, a little north of Reese's dwelling house, on Washington street, between Seneca and Exchange streets. In 1807, Despar purchased outer lot 31. He continued his business until after the war of 1812. In 1820, he removed to a lot on what is now High street, where he soon after died.† 

As far as may be judged by recorded events, the year 1805 opened auspiciously for the village of Buffalo. The town of Erie, which included the village, had been erected by the legislature the preceding year, and the first town-meeting was held that year at Crow's tavern, but the record was burned in 1813, with nearly all other similar ones. A little memorandum book, inscribed, "Eric Town Book," now in possession of the Buffalo Historical Society, shows that Joshua Gillett was granted a license to sell liquor in the village, and one was also granted to "The Contractors, by S. Tupper." Others were probably granted, as we may presume that landlord Crow had one. The price of the licenses was five dollars each.

"The Contractors Store," which was opened in 1804, or spring of 1805, became quite a noted establishment. It was conducted by the men

* This was probably on or near the line of Niagara street.
† It is said that Despar sold his land to William Smith, who first supplied milk to the village. Smith was to pay Despar $200 annually as long as the latter and his wife lived; they were both dead before the second payment became due.