force of the army gathered and went into camp amid the ruins, giving a
still greater impetus to trade.

In the Gazette of June 7th, notice was given that the Judges of the
Court of Common Pleas had appointed the house of John Brunson as the
temporary court house. This building stood where the Academy of
Music is now located. It was a wooden tavern and was afterwards known
as the Farmer’s Hotel.

During the month of June, Andrews & Hopkins establishd the cabi-
net-making business at the house of Mrs. Adkins, and Juba Storrs opened
his store in the same house. Mrs. Adkins’ dwelling must have been
either a commodious one, or uncomfortably crowded.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND BUFFALO AS A VILLAGE.

Peace—General Rejoicing over the Event — Departure of the Army from Buffalo — The Second
Newspaper — Prominent Arrivals — Rebuilding of the Village — Revival of Business —
Opening of the Courts — Brickyard Established — A Period of “Hard Times” — The Canal
Project — Incorporation of the Village — New Ordinances Passed — Last Relic of Slavery —
Population in 1820 — The Harbor Project — How the Work was Done — The Terminus of
the Canal — Rivalry between Black Rock and Buffalo — Final Settlement of the Question in
Favor of Buffalo — Millard Fillmore — Completion of the Canal — The Village in 1825 —
The Buffalo Hydraulic Company — Jubilee Water Works — A Disastrous Fire — A Young
City — List of Purchasers of Lots of the Holland Company.

WITH the restoration of peace, the news of which reached Western
New York early in 1815, the history of what may properly be
called the second Buffalo should begin, although previous to that
time and since the burning of the first village, considerable had been
done towards re-building the place.

The brilliant sortie planned and executed by General Porter and his
followers, and the consequent fall of Fort Erie on the 17th of September,
1814, virtually ended the war on the Niagara frontier; and when in the
following January, the news of the signing of the treaty of Ghent reached
Buffalo, a general shout of congratulation and thankfulness went up on
all sides. Emigration westward received a new impetus and Buffalo
shared largely in the results. The troops that had been stationed in the
vicinity were withdrawn, the last of them taking their departure during
the night of July 2d, and little was left but the scars of battle and fire to
indicate that war with all its terrors and hardships, had so recently
swept over the frontier. A salute was fired at Black Rock upon the restoration of peace, and there was an era of general rejoicing. General Porter, who had borne so conspicuous a part in the war, was banqueted at Canandaigua and Batavia, and enthusiastic compliments were showered upon him by the press and people.* Buffalo began to rise from its ashes more rapidly.

The second newspaper was established in April, and in the columns of that and the Gazette were chronicled many new business enterprises and numerous arrivals of men who afterwards became prominent in business and political life. Dr. John E. Marshall came from Chautauqua county and settled in Buffalo in the spring of 1815. He soon occupied a foremost position in the ranks of her citizens. He first located at the house of Jonas Harrison. In March, Dr. Trowbridge informed the public that he had taken the house formerly occupied by E. Hart. Townsend & Coit removed that month to "their old stand next north of S. & S. K. Grosvenor." Charles D. Eaton opened a general store in April. Underhill & Dann began business opposite the Grosvenors, and Vosburgh & Barron started the saddlery business opposite "the printing office."

The Gazette of April 17th, announces that Albert H. Tracy had opened an office over E. Hart & Co.'s brick store.†

Ralph Plumb opened a general store in Buffalo in June, 1815, and in July the first milliner made her appearance in the person of Mrs. Kagle. John Wagstaff opened the first tinware establishment in August, "a few rods east of E. Hart & Co."

In July, 1815, the Gazette boasted that there were as many houses erected in Buffalo, or in process of erection, as were burned a year and a half before. Building was also begun with vigor at the future rival of Buffalo—Black Rock.

A pottery was established in 1815, near Cold Spring, by Armond Parsons, and the first tannery was started the same year in that vicinity, by Jacob Morrison.

* General Porter has been characterized as "the first distinguished leader of American volunteers against a disciplined foe." In recognition of his services he was tendered the position of Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army at the close of the war, by President Madison, but declined. He is certainly entitled to rank as a great military commander, and he was no less honored and successful in civil life. He was twice elected to Congress and was made Secretary of War by President Adams in 1828, the first cabinet officer in Western New York. He was also Secretary of State in 1815, and in 1816 was made one of the Commissioners to determine the boundary between the United States and the British Possessions. General Porter died at his residence at Niagara Falls, on the 20th of March, 1844, at the age of seventy-two years.

† Mr. Tracy was then a young lawyer only twenty-two years old, "tall, straight, vigorous and brilliant in intellect, and thoroughly cultured." He soon became one of the most prominent and successful politicians in the State; was elected to Congress in 1818, by a heavy majority, when he was only twenty-five years old, and was re-elected in 1820. A somewhat celebrated political circle consisted of Mr. Tracy, Dr. Marshall, James Sheldon and a few others, who wielded considerable power and were known as the "Kremlin Janta." Mr. Tracy was elected State Senator in the fall of 1829, by the Anti-Masons; was re-elected in 1833, and retired from public life the following year, at the age of forty-four. He died September 19, 1859.
On the 20th of April the courts were ordered to be held at the house of Gilman Folsom, "at present occupied by Moses Baker & Co., in the village of Buffalo." This house stood on the east side of Main street, between Mohawk and Genesee streets. There all courts were held until the new court house was finished late in the following year. The new structure was erected under an act of Legislature passed on the 17th of April, 1816, by which the State loaned to the county $5,000; Joseph Landon, Samuel Tupper and Jonas Williams were the commissioners named to superintend the construction of the new edifice. The village authorities resolved to continue Washington street directly through the circle on which the first court house stood; this was done and the county acquired title to the portion of it left on both sides of the street. The new court house was built on the part of the block lying east of Washington street, between Batavia and Clinton streets. In the Gazette of September 24, 1816, the following announcement was printed:—

"The walls of the court house, which was commenced in the early part of the season, are erected; we learn that the carpenter and joiner work of the building are progressing. If the house is finished in the style it has commenced, it will be an ornament to the village; uniting elegance with durability, and will be creditable to the judgment and taste of the commissioners."

The summer of 1816 is remembered to this day as "the cold summer." Its effects were seriously felt in Buffalo, through the failure of crops in the surrounding towns. The trade that had fallen off largely with the departure of the army, was now still further reduced, and an era of hard times began that effectually retarded the growth of Buffalo for a period of five years. While money was plenty, many had become involved in debt, which they now found themselves unable to pay. Flour sold in Buffalo at fifteen dollars a barrel and other provisions were comparatively high in price. The Gazette of August 20th, stated that there was "not a barrel of breadstuff in the village for sale." Mr. Sheldon Ball wrote in 1825, that "a scene of insolvency ensued, more distressing, if possible, than even the destruction of the village."

But a project was already being revived, which was destined to put new life into the stagnant village—the construction of a "grand canal" across the State from Lake Erie to the Hudson river, with its western terminus at either Buffalo or Black Rock. The first survey for this great waterway was made from Buffalo to the Genesee in the summer of 1816, and the work was thereafter pushed ahead with vigor, as has been detailed in the preceding volume; but it was not till 1820 that Buffalo and Black Rock were very materially affected by the prospect of an early completion of the canal.

The first movement towards the incorporation of the village of Buffalo, was the passage of an act by the Legislature April 2, 1815; but the
exciting events of that year prevented a consummation of the object. The following year another similar attempt was made and with a like result; the trustees named in the act failed to organize. In April, 1816, a third act was passed under which the incorporation of the village was effected. Oliver Forward, Charles Townsend, Heman B. Potter, Ebenezer Walden, Jonas Harrison and Samuel Wilkeson were named as the trustees. In April, 1822, another act of incorporation was passed, extending the powers of the village authorities and repealing all former acts of incorporation. Ordinances were passed about the last of the year 1816, providing for better security against fire, and the village trustees were authorized to ascertain the practicability of procuring a supply of water by means of the water courses, streams and reservoirs. Twenty-five ladders were ordered made within thirty days and all owners of houses were required to provide "one good leathern bucket for each house, store or shop," to cause their chimneys to be swept and in the future to build all funnels of chimneys large enough for chimney-sweepers to go through them. This action was undoubtedly caused by a fire, as George Badger, in the newspapers of December 17th, publicly thanked the citizens for assistance rendered him at his late fire. Another ordinance was passed about the same time authorizing the raising of a tax of $1,400. On the 26th of July, 1820, ordinances were passed to prevent the selling of damaged meat in the village; ordering the removal of dead animals beyond the city limits; prohibiting the discharge of fire-arms; abating the production of nuisances of all kinds; ordering slaughter-houses to be kept under the inspection of the trustees; prohibiting the beating of drums and blowing of fifes in the streets; fast driving and leading of horses on the sidewalks. On the 10th of June, 1822, an ordinance was passed to prevent the obstruction of the streets with buildings, lumber, teams, earth, etc.; July 15th, an ordinance was passed prohibiting the selling of liquor to Indians and intoxicated persons. Penalties, usually of small fines, were imposed in all cases of infraction of these village laws. These measures for the government of the village were, of course, followed by many others similar in character, which need not be referred to in detail.

As an indication that the people were laboring under a general depression of business and scarcity of money, we may mention that a meeting was called for the 12th of October, 1819, at Cook's* inn, (where the Tifft House now stands,) to take into consideration the pecuniary embarrassments of the county; whether anything effectual was accomplished at this meeting, does not appear.

Under the law of 1818, by which the gradual abolition of slavery was decreed, and which provided that young slaves might be brought from other States, provided their owners filed an affidavit that such slaves would not be held in bondage beyond the ages of twenty-eight

* Raphael Cook, the well known and successful inn-keeper, died in Buffalo, April 15, 1821,
years if males, and twenty-five years if females, General Porter and his southern wife, Mrs. Grayson, daughter of John C. Breckinridge, brought five young slaves to Black Rock in 1820. The affidavits of Mr. and Mrs. Porter appear in the pages of the old town book of Buffalo. As late as July, 1820, a black servant girl was advertised at auction in Buffalo, with other property, by Jonas Harrison—the last flickering embers of slavery in the county. That was only about sixty years ago, and even a year later the wolves were so troublesome not very far from Buffalo, that the bounty on their scalps was raised, while ten years later, William Hodge, as he states, shot deer near the site of the Insane Asylum, and as far south as the Normal School!

Orlando Allen, for many years a prominent and honored citizen of Buffalo, came here in 1819, and entered the office of Dr. Cyrenius Chapin to learn the mysteries of medicine; he was then sixteen years of age.*

In 1820 the population of the entire township of Buffalo had reached but 2,095, including, of course, Black Rock. Most of the business of Buffalo was then done between Exchange street and the court house park. Among the stores and shops on Main street were many dwellings, and others were scattered along Ellicott, Washington, Pearl and Franklin streets; a few houses also were located on the cross streets. Where is now built up the north-eastern portion of the city, was low ground that had not even been tilled, and the boys and girls of the village went to a place not very far up Genesee street, where there was a log causeway, to pick blackberries. The irregular line of the forest came down to within from forty to a hundred rods of Main street, as far southward as Cold Spring. About this time a spring near Delaware street and just north of Virginia, was made the rendezvous of a squirrel hunting party led by Frederick B. Merrill and Joseph Clary. That spot was selected because there the woods extended as far eastward as Delaware street, affording the party a grateful shade.

As early as November 15, 1816, a meeting was held at Pomeroys' tavern, to “take into consideration the improvement of the harbor.” The bar across the mouth of the creek was impassable for vessels of any considerable size, the water at times not being more than two feet deep. The twenty-five or thirty small sloops and schooners then composing the lake marine, were compelled to lay off from the port half a mile or more, or else run down to Black Rock and anchor below the rapids. Most of the lake disasters that occurred in the vicinity were charged directly to the entire lack of harbor improvements. The light-house at the mouth of the creek was finished in July, 1818, and on the 23d of August, the new steamer, Walk-in-the-Water, succeeded, with the aid of Captain Sheldon Thompson’s “horn breeze,” in making her passage up the rapids.

* See biographic sketch in later pages.
and into the lake: this last named event rendered the necessity of a harbor still more apparent.

The citizens of Buffalo now saw that the future growth and importance of the village depended largely upon the immediate construction of a harbor, and various schemes were discussed for the accomplishment of the object—among the plans suggested were a lottery; the formation of an incorporated company; and a petition to the government for aid. This agitation led to the organization of what was known as the Buffalo Harbor Company, in the spring of 1819, comprising originally nine of the foremost men of the village, as follows: Jonas Harrison, Ebenezer Walden, H. B. Potter, J. G. Camp, Oliver Forward, A. H. Tracy, Ebenezer Johnson, E. F. Norton, and Charles Townsend.

These gentlemen applied to the Legislature for the passage of a law (finally passed April 17, 1819,) by the provisions of which the State agreed to loan the Harbor Company $12,000, provided the amount was secured by individual bonds and mortgages of the members of the company for twice the amount of the loan. If the harbor, when completed, proved acceptable to the State authorities, the bonds were to be canceled; otherwise the company would have to pay the bonds and be reimbursed from future tolls. The managers of the company declined to accept this proposition, with the exception of Charles Townsend, (with whom was associated George Coit) and Oliver Forward.* They were joined by Samuel Wilkeson towards the last of 1819, the offer of the State was accepted and the bonds were made. Mr. Wilkeson had, for some reason, declined to join the original company.†

The money was received from the State, and in the spring of 1820, the first work on the harbor was commenced. A superintendent was secured at fifty dollars a month; but he was retained but a short time. After looking in vain for a more suitable man than the first, Mr. Wilkeson himself accepted the superintendency, to the neglect of his personal business.

* "Finding that none of the original Company excepting Townsend and Forward would join in making the security to the State, and that the appropriation would lapse if much more time was lost, I agreed to join those gentlemen in making the security."—Judge Wilkeson.

† After William Peacock had completed his survey of Buffalo Creek, with reference to the construction of a harbor, as described in the accompanying extracts from Judge Wilkeson’s writings, he made a favorable report in which he advised the construction of a stone pier extending into the lake nine hundred feet, at a cost of $12,757; this would give a depth of thirteen feet of water. (It is now claimed by practical men that such a pier would have cost half a million dollars.) In opposition to Mr. Peacock’s report and to the Buffalo Harbor scheme as a whole, a correspondent of the Albany Argus, of February 19, 1819, writing over the signature “Projector,” ridiculed Buffalo Creek as a future harbor. “Two schooners can barely pass each other there,” he wrote, and then proceeded to demonstrate the feasibility of constructing a mile wall with a lock of four feet lift at Black Rock, to overcome the current of the rapids. He would have sold lots on Grand Island, (then the property of the State) to secure a return of the investment. A bridge from the island was to connect it with the “City of Erie,” which would spring up where Black Rock then stood. This was but one of hundreds of schemes that were advanced by the advocates of a harbor at either village.
Some years before the death of Judge Wilkeson, he wrote and published a series of eight brief papers giving a detailed history of the construction of the first harbor and the steps that led to it. These papers bear the impress of impartiality upon their face; they are written by the man who, perhaps, was better informed upon the subject than any other person; they are vivid descriptions of an event that, at least at that period, controlled to a great extent the immediate future of Buffalo. These facts give this series of papers a degree of interest that prompt their publication, almost entire, in this work, especially as they are not now easily accessible to the general public. Judge Wilkeson wrote as follows:—

"The war which had swept over our frontier had impoverished the inhabitants of the little place, that has since grown into the City of the Lakes. Their property had been destroyed, they were embarrassed by debts contracted in rebuilding their houses which had been burned by the enemy; they were without capital to prosecute to advantage mechanical or mercantile employments; without a harbor or any means of participating in the lake trade, and were suffering with the country at large, all the evils of a deranged currency. In the midst of these accumulated embarrassments, the construction of the Erie canal was begun and promised help, however distant might be the time of its completion, Buffalo was to be its terminating point;—and when the canal was completed, our village would become a city. But no craft larger than a canoe could enter Buffalo creek. All forwarding business was done at Black Rock, and the three or four small vessels that we owned in Buffalo received and discharged their cargoes at that place. A harbor was then indispensably necessary at the terminus of the canal; and unless one could be constructed at Buffalo before the western section of the canal was located, it might terminate at Black Rock. This was the more to be apprehended, as an opinion prevailed that harbors could not be made on the lakes at the mouths of the rivers. But a harbor we were resolved to have. Application was accordingly made to the Legislature for a survey of the creek, and an act was passed on the 10th of April, 1818, authorizing the survey and directing the Supervisors of the county of Niagara to pay $3 a day to the surveyor and to assess the amount to the county. The survey was made by the Hon. William Peacock, during the summer of that year, gratuitously. Then came the important question, where to get the money to build this harbor. At that day no one thought of looking to Congress for appropriations, and there was no encouragement to apply to the Legislature of the State; the citizens could not raise the means, however willing they might have been. A public meeting was called and an agent (the Hon. Charles Townsend) was appointed to proceed to Albany and obtain a loan. Jonas Harrison, Ebenezer Walden, H. B. Potter, J. G. Camp, Oliver Forward, A. H. Tracy, Ebenezer Johnson, E. F. Norton and Charles Townsend were the applicants. Judge Townsend, after a protracted effort succeeded, and an act was passed, April 17, 1819, authorizing a loan to the above mentioned persons and their associates of $12,000, for twelve years, to be secured on bond and mortgage to double that amount, and applied to the construction of a harbor, which the State had reserved the right to take when completed, and to cancel the securities. The year 1819 was
one of general financial embarrassment, and no where was the pressure
or want of money more sensibly felt than in the lake country. It had
no market, and its produce was of little value. Some of the associates
became embarrassed and others discouraged. The summer passed
away, and finally all refused to execute the required securities, except
Judge Townsend and Judge Forward. Thus matters stood in Decem-
ber, 1819. Unless the condition of the loan should be complied with,
the appropriation would be lost, and another might not be easily
obtained; for the project of a harbor at Black Rock, and the termina-
tion of the canal at that place, was advocated by influential men, and the
practicability of making a harbor at the mouth of Buffalo creek was
seriously questioned. At this crisis, Judge Wilkeson who had declined
being one of the original company, came forward and, with Messrs.
Townsend and Forward, agreed to make the necessary securities. This
was perfected during the winter of 1820—each individual giving his
several bond and mortgage for $8,000. The money thus loaned was
received in the spring. By an arrangement between the parties, it was
disbursed by Judge Townsend. An experienced harbor-builder was to
be obtained to superintend the work. One was engaged who had
acquired reputation in improving the navigation of some river
down east. He was to receive $50 per month. Under his advice,
a contract was made for a hundred cords of flint stone from the Plains,
at 85 per cord, and four hundred hemlock piles, from twenty to thirty-
six feet long at thirty-one cents each. While the stone and piles were
being delivered, the superintendent with several carpenters, was em-
ployed in building a pile-driving machine and scow. An agent was
dispatched to the nearest furnace (which was in Portage county, Ohio,) to
provide the hammer and machinery.

"Mr. Townsend, with much solicitude, continued to watch the
movements of the superintendent for a few weeks, making himself fully
acquainted with his plans and management. He became satisfied that
the superintendent, if not incompetent, was not such an economist as our
limited means required, and that if we retained him, the money would be
spent without getting a harbor. The Judge was decided that it was
better to abandon the work than to pursue it under the then existing
arrangements. His associates concurred; the superintendent was dis-
echarged; but no substitute could be obtained. West Point engineers
were scarce at that time, and if one could have been found, $12,000
would have been but a small sum in his hands. The situation of the com-
pany was embarrassing. Private property had been mortgaged to raise
the money, nearly $1,000 had been spent in preparations to commence a
work that neither of the associates knew how to execute, nor could any
one be found, experienced in managing men, who would undertake the
superintendence. Mr. Townsend was an invalid and consequently unable
to perform the duty. Mr. Forward was wanting in the practical expe-
rience that was necessary. Mr. Wilkeson had never seen a harbor, and
was engaged in a business that required his unremitting attention; but
rather than the effort should be abandoned he finally consented to under-
take the superintendence.

"Having abandoned his own private business, Mr. Wilkeson called
his men out to work the next morning by daylight—without suitable
tools, without boats, teams or scows. Neither the plan of the work, nor
its precise location were settled. But the harbor was commenced. Two
plans had been proposed for the work; one, by driving parallel lines of
piles, and filling up the intermediate space with brush and stone, and
the other by a pier of hewn timber filled with stone. The latter plan was
adopted, and the location of the pier having been settled, the number of
laborers was increased, and contracts immediately made for suitable
timber and stone, to be delivered as fast as they might be required. In
the meantime, the timber intended for the piles was used in the con-
struction of cribs, three of which were put down the first day. The first
two days after commencing the work, the lake was calm; but the suc-
ceeding night a heavy swell set in; the waves acting on the outside of
the crib, forced the sand and gravel from under them, sinking the ends
of some, the sides of others, and throwing them out of the line—the
whole presenting a most discouraging appearance. Fortunately a little
brush had been accidentally thrown on the windward side of one of the
piers, which became covered with sand, and preserved this pier from the
fate of the others. Profiting by this discovery, every crib subsequently
put down, was placed on a thick bed of brush extending several feet to
the windward of it. But other unforeseen difficulties were soon
experienced. The cribs could be put down only when the lake was per-
fectly smooth. However fine the weather, the swell raised by an ordinary
sailing breeze suspended the work in the water. To obviate this diffi-
culty, the cribs, (which after the first week, were formed of large, square
timbers,) were put up and completed on shore. The timbers were
secured by ties six feet apart, made to fit so tight as to require to be
driven home with a sledge, and were bored with a two-inch auger ready
for the trunnels, which were two feet long, and made of the best oak or
hickory. The timbers were marked and numbered, so that when required
for use, could be taken apart, floated out to their place, and put together
in an hour, even in ten feet of water, and secured with stone the same
day. The manner of constructing the pier is thus particularly described,
as it so effectually secured the timbers together, that when the west end
of the pier was undermined by the high water of the creek and turned
over, so that the sides became the top, not a stick was separated. After
the prevalence of a west wind for several days, the water became smooth,
but it rained severely and the workmen justly claimed exemption from
labor. To be interrupted by swells in fair weather, and by the rains
when the lake was smooth, would never answer. Every day's experience
admonished the company of the necessity of economizing their means,
and it was already feared that the fund provided would prove insufficient
for the object to be accomplished. A new contract was, therefore, made
with the workmen, by which their wages were raised two dollars a month,
in consideration of their working on rainy days; and from that time
until the harbor was completed, the work was prosecuted without
regard to the weather. * * * * * * After the pier was
extended about thirty rods into the lake, and settled as well as the limited
time would allow, a carpenter was employed at one dollar per day, to
superintend the raising of the pier from the surface of the water, to its
full height. * * * * As the work advanced into deep
water, the bases of the cribs were enlarged, and the cost of the work
alarmingly increased. It was resolved to suspend operations for that
year, on reaching seven and a half feet of water. On the 7th of Septem-
ber, after the timber work was completed, and while the pier was but
partially filled with stone, two small vessels came under its lee and made
fast. Towards evening, appearances indicated a storm, and while the superintendent and captains were deliberating whether the vessels might not endanger the pier, and perhaps carry away that part to which they were fastened, the gale commenced, rendering it impossible to remove the vessels otherwise than by casting them loose, and letting them go on the beach. This was proposed by the superintendent, and agreed to by the captains, on condition that the safety of the pier should appear to be endangered by the vessels. Both the pier and the vessels, however, remained uninjured through the storm, which was regarded as no mean test of the utility and permanency of the works. The pier, which at this time extended fifty rods into the lake, was in a few days filled with stone, and the operations upon it suspended for the season.

"It may not be out of place here to name the captains of the two first vessels which found shelter in Buffalo harbor—Austin and Fox. The former was an old Point Judith fisherman who, after spending most of his life on the ocean, removed to the Vermilion river and settled on a farm. But yielding to his yearning for the water, he built a small vessel, of which he was captain and his sons the crew, and engaged in the lake trade. He was a shrewd, observing man, had seen and examined many artificial harbors, and his advice contributed much to the correct location and permanent construction of Buffalo harbor. Fox, long known as a successful captain on the lakes, took a deep interest in the construction of the work, and during the three years that it was in progress, frequently aided by volunteering his own labor and that of his crews. Trifling as this circumstance may appear, it gave at the time no small encouragement and has been gratefully remembered.

"Although the pier had been successfully extended over nine hundred feet and was believed to be sufficiently strong to resist the force of the waves, still it was but an experiment. The situation was the most exposed of any on the lake, and no similar work had been constructed. Should the whole, or any considerable part of the work be destroyed by the gales of wind, or by the ice, the fund remaining would be insufficient to repair the damage, and extend the work to the requisite distance to make a harbor. Should the experiment of the pier prove ever so successful, a most difficult part of the plan for forming a harbor was yet to be executed, and the more difficult because the expense would depend on contingencies which the company could not control. Buffalo creek, in 1820, entered the lake about sixty rods north of its present mouth, running for some distance parallel with the shore. A new channel had to be made across the point of sand which separates the creek from the lake. This point was about twenty rods wide, and elevated about seven feet above the level of the lake. It was proposed to remove the sand by scrapers to the level of low water, dam the mouth of the creek by brush and stone, and trust to the action of the spring flood to form a straight channel in a line with, and near to, the pier. The scraping was commenced in November, by the voluntary labor of several of the citizens; but instead of finding the point composed of fine sand, as had been expected, when a few feet of the top was removed, a heavy, compact body of coarse gravel and small stones was found, which, if removed by the current of the creek, instead of being carried into the deep water of the lake, would be deposited to the leeward of the pier in the very place our channel must be, and from whence there was neither money nor machinery to remove it. The scraping was therefore given up, and the
subject of forming a new channel, proving a very serious one, laid over for further consideration, in the expectation that some plan could be devised to overcome the seemingly insurmountable difficulty. The company had the satisfaction to see the fall gales pass away without doing any damage to the pier, not even removing a single timber, and it was loaded with so great a body of ice that no apprehension was entertained of damage from the breaking up of the lake in the spring.

"Favorable contracts were made for timber during the winter, and ties to complete the pier; and as it was sufficiently extended to protect the pile-driving scow, and as the use of this machine would be important in farther prosecuting the work, it was determined to finish it. A hammer and gearing, however, were wanted. These had been contracted for in Ohio, but, owing to a misunderstanding, had not been received. The iron gearing could be dispensed with, and a good substitute for a hammer was found in a United States mortar, used during the last war, but which had lost one of its trunnions. After breaking off the other, two holes were bored through the ends for the staple by which to hoist it. The ends of the staple projecting into the chamber were bent, and the chamber itself filled with metal. Similar holes were bored on each side, and two bars of iron between two and three inches square, firmly secured, to act as guides. The hollow part being filled with a hard piece of wood, cut off even with the end, it proved to be an excellent hammer of about two thousand pounds weight.* The machinery to raise the hammer was the cheapest and simplest kind, and worked by a single horse. Before attempting the farther extension of the pier, it was resolved to attempt the formation of a new channel. About the 20th of May, laborers were engaged, and the pile-driver put in operation. Two rows of piles, six feet apart, were driven across the creek, in a line with the right bank of the intended channel, and the space between these rows of piles was filled with fine brush, straw, damaged hay, shavings, etc. This material was pressed down by drift logs, which were hoisted into their places by the use of the pile-driver. On the upper side of the work a body of sand was placed, making a cheap and tolerably tight dam, by which the creek could be raised about three feet. Then by breaking the bank at the west end of the dam, a current was formed sufficiently strong to remove about fifteen feet of the adjoining bank, to the depth of eight feet. The success of the first experiment was most gratifying. The dam was extended across the new made channel, and connected with the bank, with the least possible delay, and every dam full of water let off removed hundreds of yards of gravel, and deposited it not only entirely out of the way, but at the same time filled up the old channel. While this plan was in successful operation, and when the new channel had been pushed to within a few feet of the lake, and the strongest hopes were entertained that, by the same process, the sand and gravel, even under the shoal water of the lake, could be removed and the channel extended to the end of the pier, and the harbor rendered immediately available, the work was arrested by one of the most extraordinary rises of the lake ever witnessed. About seven o'clock in the morning, the lake being entirely calm, the water suddenly rose, and by a single swell swept away the logs that secured the materials in the dam, broke away the dam on the east side, fully destroyed the west end, which was made of plank, and left the whole a total wreck. A more discouraging scene can

*This old mortar now stands on the sidewalk at the corner of Main and Dayton streets.
CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIRST HARBOR.

scarcely be imagined. The pile-driving scow, without which the damage could not be repaired, narrowly escaped destruction. The blind horse which worked the pile-driver, was thrown from the platform on the scow, and, swimming in his accustomed circle, came near drowning. All the lumber, timber, piles prepared for use, with the boats, scows, and every floating article within the range of the swell, were swept from their places and driven up the creek. It was afterwards ascertained that an extraordinary vein of wind had crossed the lake a few miles above this place, and proceeding eastward, prostrated the timber in its course, and marked its way with fearful destruction. This was supposed to have caused the swell referred to.

"After securing the scows, boats and lumber which had been put afloat, the condition of the dam was examined. About thirty feet of the east end was entirely gone, and the injury to other parts was greater than was at first anticipated. * * * Although a flood had been wished for, to aid in deepening and widening the new channel, yet the disastrous accident which had just occurred destroyed the only means of controlling it and turning it to account. A freshet then, might open the old channel, or perhaps enlarge the new one in a wrong direction and even undermine the pier. It was therefore resolved to repair the damage if possible. The pile driver was put in operation to restore the breach at the east end of the dam, and the men set to work to collect materials; but the rain increasing, and the weather being uncommonly cold, it was soon discovered that without a large additional force the dam could not be so far repaired as to resist the flood, which might be expected within twenty-four hours.

"The recent disaster and the importance of immediate help was communicated to the citizens, a large number of whom, notwithstanding the rain fell in torrents, repaired to the dam. They were distributed in parties, some getting brush, others collecting logs, some placing the materials in the dam, while others aided in working the pile-driver. * * * Without this help of the citizens, it would have been impossible to make the necessary repairs on the dam; with it, and by continuing the labor of the harbor workmen by torch-light until late at night, all was done that human effort could do to prepare for the flood.

* * * The rain having continued through the night, in the morning the flood was magnificent. The strong northeast wind which had prevailed for nearly twenty-four hours, had lowered the lake two or three feet and added much to the effect of the water in forming a new channel. The barrier erected had produced the desired effect, the gravel removed out of the new channel was carried down the lake, and in fact the whole operation was so favorable that it seemed as though Providence had directed this flood in aid of the great work of forming a harbor. The breaking up of the dam had disheartened the men, and their extraordinary efforts to repair the damage had exhausted them; but a day's rest and witnessing the triumphant success of the plan for opening a channel, restored them to cheerfulness. The doubts and fears that were entertained of ultimate success in making a harbor were dissipated. When the freshet had subsided, it was found that the average width of the new channel was about ninety feet at the bottom, and for the first twelve rods it was as deep as the creek, and nowhere less than five feet, furnishing a straight channel. From this time, small vessels could enter and depart from Buffalo harbor without interruption."
"Much yet remained to be done. The lines of piles in extension of the dam were continued and filled up with brush and stone, intended to form a permanent margin for the north bank of Buffalo creek. This work was extended forty-six rods from the east bank of the creek, the dam was strengthened, the number of men increased, and preparations made for recommencing the pier. On a careful examination and measurement of the water, it was found that the pier, if extended in the direction of that already built, would require to be carried out much farther than had been anticipated. This discovery was the more embarrassing, as the company had become satisfied that they would be unable, with the fund provided, to complete the pier even to the extent at first contemplated, and it had been resolved to apply to the citizens for aid, which was subsequently done. Scrip was issued entitling the bearer to a pro rata interest in the harbor. Over $1,000 of this scrip was disposed of for a small part of which cash was received, but the greater part was received in goods, etc. For the sums thus advanced no consideration was ever received by the holders of the scrip, and perhaps some of them to whom no explanation has been made, may have felt themselves aggrieved. For the satisfaction of such, it may be well here to state how this business was closed. The act of the Legislature creating the Buffalo Harbor Company and making the loan, provided that if the Legislature did not accept the harbor, it should be and remain the property of the company, and that the canal commissioners should settle the rate of tolls to be paid by all boats and vessels entering it. The issue of the scrip was predicated on this provision; and it was believed that if the State accepted the harbor, they would willingly pay the extra cost of its construction, over and above the loan of $12,000 (which was to be canceled). This no doubt would have been done but for the provisions of a law passed in the spring of 1822, entitled, 'An act for encouraging the construction of harbors at Buffalo and Black Rock.' This act provided to pay the two harbor companies, Buffalo and Black Rock, each $12,000 on completing their harbors, thus limiting the sum to the amount already loaned to the Buffalo Harbor Company, and cutting off all hope of remuneration from the State for any amount that might be expended beyond that sum. ** The company could not retain the harbor as private property and impose tolls on vessels entering it, without driving the business to a rival port. Application was therefore made to the Legislature in the spring of 1825, which passed a resolution to cancel the bonds and mortgages given to secure the loan, but refused to allow the claim for the additional sum expended; which sum included not only the money received for the scrip, but several hundred dollars advanced by Townsend,* Forward and Wilkeson, beside contributions by other individuals.

* After ascertaining the distance to which it would be necessary to extend the pier, and estimating the cost of completing it, the continuous line was abandoned, and it was resolved to lay down a pier two hundred feet long, several rods south and west of the pier already built, but in the same direction. This pier would form the western termination of the harbor, and was to be connected with the other by two lines of piles eight feet apart. ** Both pile-driving and pier work

* In a foot note Mr. Wilkeson offers apology for injustice done to Mr. George Coit in not connecting his name with that of Judge Townsend in the responsibilities assumed and moneys advanced for the construction of the harbor.
The First Harbor Completed.

were commenced and prosecuted with vigor and economy suited to the scanty funds of the company. * * * * In attempting to put down the first crib which was to form the eastern end of the block, in about ten feet of water, the current was found so strong that it was found impossible to keep the brush in line on which to place the crib. To obviate this difficulty, piles were driven ten feet apart, on the north line of the proposed pier. This not only secured the brush, but served as a guide in putting down the cribs, which for this block were forty feet long, twenty feet wide at the bottom, and eighteen at the surface of the water. * * * * A slight rise in the creek about the middle of July, encouraged a hope that by a temporary contraction of the channel, it might be deepened. About fifty of the citizens volunteered their aid for a day, and a foot of additional depth was gained. * * * * Thus was completed the first work of the kind ever constructed on the lakes. It had occupied two hundred and twenty-one working days in building, (the laborers always resting on the Sabbath,) and extended into the lake about eighty rods, to twelve feet of water. It was begun, carried on and completed principally by three private individuals, some of whom mortgaged the whole of their real estate, to raise the means for making an improvement in which they had but a common interest."

On the first day of November, 1821, the steamer Walk-in-the-Water, the building and launching of which three years before, is described in another chapter, was driven ashore nearly opposite the foot of Main street, about a mile above the light-house, and wrecked. This led to the building of another steamer, which event had a strong influence in deciding the question of the permanence and efficiency of the Buffalo harbor, and consequently, upon her immediate commercial prospects also. The steamer was the property of New York capitalists, and an agent was sent on at once to make arrangements for the construction of a new craft. His instructions were to build the boat at Buffalo, unless he found the harbor unavailable. He first visited Black Rock, where the people convinced him that the Buffalo harbor would prove a failure, especially as it would remain filled with ice long after the lake was clear in the spring. The agent accordingly decided to have the new boat built at Black Rock, and came on to Buffalo to draw the necessary papers. But there were men in Buffalo, who had the fullest faith in their harbor; at least they saw that the time had come when it must be tested, and they must stand or fall with it, to some extent. Judge Wilkeson was deputized to wait on the agent at his hotel, with the general instructions to secure the building of the steamboat at Buffalo, at all hazards.

The "committee" and the agent discussed the matter briefly, the latter giving as his chief reason for not building the boat at Buffalo, the fear that she would be detained in the harbor in the spring by the ice. Mr. Wilkeson was not long in proposing to the agent such terms as he thought must induce a change of decision. Said he:—

"We will furnish timber at a quarter less than the Black Rock prices, and will give you a bond with ample security, for the payment of
one hundred and fifty dollars a day for every day the boat may be detained in the creek beyond May first."

The offer was accepted, the bond was signed by most of the responsible citizens of the village and the building of the boat begun.

Of the passage of the Superior out of the harbor and the incidents connected therewith, and other harbor matters, Mr. Wilkeson's papers continue to speak as follows:—

"Buffalo having completed a harbor and established a ship-yard began to assume new life. Brighter prospects opened and it only remained to secure the termination of the canal at this place, of which there was a fair prospect. David Thomas, an engineer in the employ of the Canal Board, had been occupied the preceding summer in making surveys preparatory to a location of the canal from the lake to the mountain ridge. He had spent some time in examining the Niagara river and Buffalo creek and harbor. He was known to be opposed to the plan of terminating the canal in an artificial basin at the Rock, and it was presumed that he would report decidedly in favor of terminating the canal in Buffalo creek. This encouraged the citizens to send an agent to Albany to represent to the president of the Canal Board, DeWitt Clinton, the fact that a harbor had been completed, and to urge the immediate location of the canal to Buffalo. This subject was considered by the Board and the canal report of that year, (1823) contained their decision in favor of Buffalo.

Although this decision was not unexpected, it occasioned great rejoicing to the citizens, who, burnt out and impoverished by the war, and disappointed in their just expectations of remuneration from the government, had for years been battling manfully with adversity, cheered on by hopes which were now about to be realized. While congratulating themselves on the prospect of still better times, the expected flood came and removing a large body of sand and gravel, opened a wide and deep channel from the creek to the lake. But, unfortunately, a heavy bank of ice resting on the bottom of the lake and rising several feet above its surface, had been formed during the winter, extending from the west end of the pier to the shore. This ice bank arrested the current of the creek, forming an eddy along side of the pier, into which the sand and gravel removed by the flood were deposited, filling up the channel for the distance of over three hundred feet, and leaving little more than three feet of water where, before the freshet, there was an average of four and a half feet. It was attempted to open a channel through the ice by blasting, but this proved ineffectual; no other means were tried and it was now feared that the predictions of our Black Rock neighbors were about to be realized.

"This obstruction of the harbor produced not only discouragement, but consternation. A judgment bond had been executed, which was a lien upon a large portion of the real estate of the village for the payment of $150 per day, from and after the first of May, until the channel could be sufficiently opened to let the steamboat pass into the lake. To form a channel even eight rods wide and nine feet deep, would require the removal of not less than six thousand yards of gravel, for which work there was neither an excavator, nor time, skill or money to procure one. The superintendent of the harbor was absent; as soon as the news