

Old Homesteads I

The first of the old homesteads which I will mention, and the most important in my mind, is the Spees Homestead, which has recently been sold by John Lowe. The land for this farm, which contains 120 acres, was taken from the Prevost Patent and deeded to my great, great grandfather Benjamin Spees, who was one of the three men who came to Greenville from Connecticut on horseback in 1781. He purchased 600 acres of land and moved into a log cabin on the land, which had been built by a squatter and was used to secrete stolen goods.

In 1789 the first sermon preached in connection with the Pres. ((Presbyterian)) Church was by Rev. Beriah Hotchkin in the barn on the Benjamin Spees farm. What is now the corn house on this farm was, I believe, the first store in Greenville and stood on the bank across the creek. When I left the farm the original sign on the store, "Spees Inn" was still up stairs in the corn house. The dwelling on this farm, built in the early 1800's, I can probably better describe than any of the other "Old Homesteads" because I was born there and lived in it as it was originally for over 25 yrs. There were 6 fire places with marble hearthstones and in connection with one in the kitchen the old oven. In one end of the kitchen was the old bucket well, a dug well 32 ft. deep. I remember when it was replaced by a chain pump, and in the process of cleaning, pieces of table silverware and china were recovered - one an old blue cup made before handles were used on them. This was intact. There was quite a large pantry with cupboards below and shelves above. There was a meal room opening out of the kitchen where the flour and meal were kept. There were two large halls which were very cold as were all of the bedrooms unless fires were lighted in the fireplaces. As the years went by holes were made in the chimneys for stove pipe and wood stoves were used and the modernizing of the Old Homestead began, which many of us were reluctant to see until in below zero weather we made a trip to the outhouse which seems to be about a mile from the house. The early dwellings all had many cupboards and cubby holes which made wonderful places for children to play. I can well remember one cubby hole in particular where my older sister and I played and had all of the old bustles we could find in the attic hanging up to make believe we were smoking hams. This idea we got from seeing ~~XXXXXX~~ all the hams father had hung in the old stone smoke house near the dwelling. As long as I lived in the "Old Homestead" the bedrooms were designated by the names of their former occupants as "Uncle

Roberts" room, "Aunt Mary's" room, and "Aunt Ellen's" room. The house where Miss Chatterton now lives is another "Old Homstead" and was built, by a Mr. Lake but has since been owned and occupied by descendants of the Spees family.

The old hom^esteads had windows containing 24 small panes of glass, and people who have to wash them in these days spell them "pains" instead of panes.

Eleazer Knowles another of the three men built his cabin on the East brow of Budd's Hill, now Fishe's Hill, where he bought 600 acres of land. The old "Shaw Place" where Mr. Carelas now lives is one of the old homes ((and)) was formerly called the "Bud House."

The third man of the party, Edward Lake, made his purchase and built his log cabin where Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Brown now live..I do not know the date of the erection of the present ~~XXXXXXXX~~ dwelling but it is one of the older ones as are the homes of the late Edwin Lampman now occupied by William Butler, and Hezekiah Palmer, now occupied by Mr. Willig. (and which has been changed but little inside or ou

The grants in the northern part of the Town were purchased from the Prevost Patent while those in the Southern and Eastern part were purchased from the Coeymans Patent.

The Prevost Patent covered 7000 acres and was owned by Augustine Prevost, who was born at Geneva Switzerland in 1744. He entered the English Army at an early age. His services were principally in the French and Indian war, and the probabilities are that at its close he did not return to England but remained in America. He came to Greenville in 1794, having previously resided for a short time in Catskill. He immediately commenced improving his domain by erecting a moderate sized frame dwelling near the center of his tract, which is still standing, and comprises the east wing of the present Provost mansion. After a short time the house was enlarged, and the grounds for some distance around were adorned with choice foreign plants, beautiful walks, fish ponds etc., while beyond these, the native forest was replaced by fine groves of locust, giving to his home much the appearance of some old English baronial manor. The walls of his home were hung with choice paintings, most of which were there as long as the Provost family lived there; and many articles of fur which remained in the ^{Provost} family were of English manufacture, costly and antique. Mr. Provost disposed of a large portion of his land before his death but

retained about 600 acres which he left to his heirs. The Old Homestead contained about 100 acres and was owned by his grandson Theodore L. who resided upon it. The locust groves mentioned grew to be large forests, but the house remains much as it was originally. Many of us have visited the "Provost Mansion" and have noticed the fireplaces, large halls, door hinges and latches. The Bishop's wing where the Bishops always slept when visiting there and the dungeon where the unruly slaves were kept. There was also a gun room which was papered with paper imported from France - and a meal room -

The Sherill house now owned by Mr. Vanderbilt is one of, if not the first brick house to be built in the town. The bricks for it were drawn by ox team from New Baltimore. (North St.)

The Atwater house was built by Mr. Talmadge in 1794 and is a salt box type house, so called from the slanting roof in back. There are other houses of this type in the town. The "Steadman House" owned by the Chattertons, and where my grandfather Spees went to housekeeping is of this type. Probably so built because they were taxed according to the number of stories in the house. The Atwater house has a ceiling made of beams in the entrance hall and a very large latch on the front door. The only one of its kind I remember having seen. There was just a path through the woods when this clearing was made for the house.

The Wakeley House where Mrs. Earl now lives was built in 1794 by her great, grandfather, Francis Hickok and has always been kept in the family. From things found there it is thought that Indians were living there previously. The house is built from hand hewn timbers and hand made nails, as were most of the houses built around that date. The cheese room was in the center of the house and a dark room - probably so placed to keep the cheese from freezing. The ceilings in this house at the present time are of plaster and are the original plaster. The mantle in the dining room is of marbelized wood. Some of the hinges used on the doors are "H" some "H-L" and some butterfly - some are iron and some brass. The jamb hooks on either side of the fireplace for holding tongs, poker, etc. are of brass.

The homestead where James Stevens now lives was built before 1800 by Eliakim Reed, and the small house beyond occupied by David Atwater was built still earlier.

There are several old homes in Newry about which I know very

little. The one where Edna Story used to live has two cellars. In the first one was a large fireplace for rough cooking and preserving and the vegetable or cold cellar was rock and the shelves were carved from solid rock. The old Miller and Wooster homesteads in Newry are mentioned.

Of the homesteads in East Greenville or Brandy Hill, as it was originally called, the Dean homestead formerly owned by Reuben Rundle and the Rundle Homestead owned by Hardy Rundle who were brothers. The Rundle family was one of the wealthiest families homesteading around here. ((These two homesteads)) seem to be the principal ones now standing. The Hardy Rundle home has 4 fireplaces a large hall with open stairway and a parlor 18' x around 30'. Around the fireplace in the kitchen are dutch scenes in blue and white tiling. The cellar is divided into 3 parts the milk cellar, vegetable cellar and wine cellar as Mr. Rundle had a distillery and made Elderberry wine and cider brandy. The Dean house has a beautiful window over the doorway.

There are many other interesting "old Homesteads" in and near Greenville about which I know very little of interest. The Old Botsford House, the Hageman house, Stevens house, and Dr. Bradly McCabe house are among them, also the Calhoun house which also has a cellar hewn out of rock.

These old houses, with their rag rugs and carpets and homespun linens and blankets are all very interesting to us, as well as our ancestors, with their hoop skirts, bustles and rufflets, but I wonder how many of us would care to go back and live as they lived and worked. Then too, I wonder if some of the ancestors who labored for the promotion of the Educational and religious advantages, would be pleased if they could see the uses we have made of the talents entrusted to our care while they journeyed to that "far country."

(This preceeded the main topic) I have taken my paper partly from records and partly from statements that have been handed down from one generation to another which may or may not be correct - so if anyone notices any mistatements I shall be glad to be corrected.

(Written on the back of the paper) Written by Benjamin Spees
Journal 1784-1810 son of the first settler 15 yrs old-
Samuel B. Son of Benjamin - Samuel -father of Mrs. C.