

Time Line History of Hornell, New York

2009

July 8, 1788 Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham held a treaty with the six nations of Native Americans at Buffalo Creek. Agreement was met for the purchase of one million acres of land.^{2,13}

1789 Mr. Phelps opened an office in Canandaigua for the sale of his lands. Twelve partners collectively purchased township No. 3, 5th range, and township No. 3, 6th range.

Uriah Stephens Sr.
Arthur Erwin
Joel Thomas
Solomon Bennett
John Stephens
Christian Kress

John Jamison
Uriah Stephens Jr.
James Hadley
William Wynkoop
Thomas Bennett
Elisha Brown

It was discovered that the Canisteo flat lands were not included in the purchase so a representative returned to exchange township No. 3 of the 6th range (Hartsville) for the township No.4, 6th range, which is now Hornellsville.

September 25, 1790 lots were drawn for the ownership of the twelve subdivisions of township No. 4, at the home of **Benjamin Crosby**.

Solomon Bennett drew lot no.12. He built a log home in the area which would be named for him; Bennettsville, which would later be known as Canisteo. Bennett's Creek, which also bears his name, provided the power for his saw and gristmills, built in 1793. The mills were in business for over a year before being destroyed by fire. ⁹ Solomon Bennett married **Sarah Stephens**, daughter of **Uriah Stephens Sr.** ¹

Benjamin Crosby purchased from **Solomon Bennett** for the sum of 300 pounds, great lot No. 8 of township No. 4, in the 6th range that contained 1,600 acres in what is now the City of Hornell.

In 1790 Benjamin Crosby and his family, were the first recorded settlers in the Hornell area. He built his home on the site that is now St. James Mercy Hospital on Canisteo Street. One of Benjamin's sons **Richard Crosby**, who came with his father to this area, served in the Revolutionary War as a captain in General Washington's bodyguard.

The Crosby's were soon joined in this area by **Oliver Harding** and **Uriah Stephens.** ¹

July 9th, 1793 George Hornell came and purchased lot No.7 (1,600 acres) from John Stephens for 111 pounds and a silk dress. ⁵

George Hornell married **Martha Stephens**, daughter of **Uriah Stephens Sr.** (sister of **John Stephens**). The couple had nine children; five daughters and four sons, with only one of their sons, **George Jr.**, surviving into adulthood. William drowned while attending Williams College, while John, Vincent, and Patience died before the age of twenty-five. **Emily Hornell** married **Dr. J.D. Walker**, one of the first physicians in this area. After his death she became the wife of **Col. Ira Davenport**.¹¹ **Martha Hornell** became the wife of **Major Thomas J. Reynolds**, **Betsy Hornell** married **Dr. Augustus Newell**, and **Anne Hornell** married **General Philander Hartshorn**.¹⁰ and after his death married **Mr. Moore**.¹

George Hornell built a gristmill, replacing one built by **Solomon Bennett** which had burned in 1794. He also lived in and kept the first inn in the town. His store was located nearby and he is credited as Hornell's first postmaster. He served as Associate Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Steuben County in 1796. In 1808 George Hornell became a Member of Assembly for the State of New York. Judge Hornell died in 1813.¹

George Hornell brought slaves with him to this area.⁵ It has been recorded that on November 17, 1811, a child, Milo, was born to George Hornell's slave, Milley. Hornell sold Milo to Hadley, of Canisteo, for \$70. After Hornell's death, Milley attempted to run away, but was captured in Palmyra and was returned. Milley made another attempt several years later and succeeded in escaping to freedom. She was the first fugitive slave documented from Hornellsville.¹

George Hornell Jr. became a licensed attorney and minister. George Hornell Jr. married **Sarah Thacher** (daughter of **Nathaniel Thacher**). They had five children; all three sons, George T., William D., and Hastings, died childless, while daughters Lydia married John C. Clark, and had three children, and Mary Crosby married Dr. Albert Hart, had five children. Rev. and Mrs. Hornell eventually left the area to pursue missionary work among the Native American's in Michigan. Hornell sold his father's extensive land holding in Hornellsville to his brothers-in-law by marriage **Mowry** and **Otis Thacher**.⁴

John Jamison, one of the twelve original partners, was a captain in the Revolutionary War at the battle of Fort Washington, which is now New York City. Captain Jamison held the fort until the ammunition was exhausted; he then was taken prisoner and held in the infamous prison ship in New York harbor, where he unfortunately contracted a disease that plagued him through the remainder of his life. The famous 'white woman' **Mary Jamison**, is said to be related to John Jamison.^{1,10}

In 1796 the first school in the town of Hornellsville and held in what is now the village of Arkport and was taught by Miss **Abigail Hurlbut**.¹ The first birth was that of William Stephens, in December 1792; the first marriage that of Reuben Crosby and Jenny McQueen, in 1799, and the first death was that of a child of Judge Hornell.¹⁴

1797 James McBurney built his home in Belle Haven, making this the oldest building in the Hornell area still standing today.⁵ Mr. McBurney purchased a 1,600 acre lot from Solomon Bennett. He latter journeyed back to his homeland of Ireland and persuaded friends to return to America with him.¹¹

1799 Religious services were held at the house of Judge Hornell led by Rev. Robert Logan, an itinerant Presbyterian clergyman.

1805 The first school within the village of Hornellsville was taught by Miss **Sarah Thacher**.¹

1809 The Turnpike Road was laid from Ithaca to Olean.¹

1813 The first school house was built, with **Dudley Miller** as the teacher. **Uriah Stephens, Jr.** and **George Hornell Jr.** (son of Judge Hornell) were also teachers. It continued to be a common school until 1873, when a graded school and free academy was established.¹

1814 The first lumber business was established by **Dugald Cameron**, who built a saw mill north of town.⁴ Mr. Cameron was one of the earliest surveyors in this area.¹²

In **1815 Colonel Ira Davenport** came with a wagon load of goods and became Hornellsville's first merchant. He remained in Hornell area for thirty-two years. After the death of his first wife (Emily, daughter of Judge George Hornell), Col. Ira Davenport married Lydia, (in 1824) daughter of Dugald Cameron.¹² They moved to Bath in 1847, where he established the Davenport Home for Orphan Girls, and in died in 1868 at the age of seventy-three.^{1,12}

1816 Andy Smith established Hornell's first tannery.⁴

April 1, 1820 Hornellsville was established. Seven years after **Judge George Hornell's** death the settlement was named Hornellsville promoted by his son-in-law **Col. Ira Davenport** in honor of Judge George Hornell's achievements and contributions to this community.¹

1821 The first town meeting was held to elect officers. **Col. Ira Davenport** was elected first town supervisor.⁴

1826 Hornell had a population of 125 people, with 25 houses, a tavern, a store, a grist and a saw mill.^{5, 4}

In **1828** the first brick building was erected by **Col. Ira Davenport**. It was a combination house and store. Davenport eventually sold the house to his nephew, **Martin Adsit**, who occupied the house for sixty years. The Adsit House, located on the north side of Main Street, is the oldest known building remaining within the City of Hornell.⁴

Martin Adsit was a widely respected member of the community and was considered one of the most important business people in Hornellsville during the nineteenth century. In 1826 at the age of 14, Martin arrived in Hornellsville to work as a clerk in the store of his uncle Ira Davenport. In 1833 at the age of twenty-one, Martin Adsit bought the business and store from his uncle. Under Adsit's direction, the business grew, and in 1848 he expanded to offer the community its first banking institution that was located inside his store. ⁴

1830's Land was being surveyed and considered for construction of the **Erie Railroad**.

1832 A village park was established, and was later named **Union Park** in 1884. The land was purchased from **Major Thomas Bennett** for the purpose of a public square. ¹

1841 Construction of the railroad lines began in this area.

1843 The population was 300 people. Only Broadway, Main, Seneca, and Canisteo Streets had been developed with houses and stores. ⁶

1850 In only seven years time the population had more than doubled in size from 300 to 700 people. The village contained 100 houses, two churches, two schools, a hotel and one store. ⁶

1850 The first Erie locomotive came into Hornellsville, an Orange No. 4, having won a twenty mile race against a stage coach. ⁵

May 14, 1851 the Erie Railroad comes to Hornellsville! The first passenger train to travel the entire length of the Erie, from Piermont-on-Hudson to Dunkirk, arrived in Hornellsville, with ***President of the United States Millard Fillmore and the Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, on board.*** ⁴

The population of Hornellsville before the Erie Railroad came was about 700, by 1852 the population had increase to 1,841.

November 26, 1851 Hornellsville Weekly Tribune was first published by **Edwin Hough**. The newspaper has been published continually since, but with a slight title change to what is currently today **The Evening Tribune**. ¹¹

June 28, 1852 Hornellsville was incorporated into a village, then reorganized on **April 9, 1867. John H. Lillie** was elected the first president of the incorporated village. Lillie was an enterprising citizen; he erected a number of much needed buildings and then purchased the land that is now Jane, John and Oak Streets and sold them for building lots. He then proceeded to buy what is now largely Grand Street and its vicinity and sold it in the same way for profit.

1852 On September 27, a meeting was held and it was voted to build walks on Main, Canisteo, Genesee, Cass, Taylor and Albion Streets. The **Police Commission** was established.

September 25, 1852 The city **Fire Department** was first organized.²

1856 The **Hornellville Agricultural Society** was established and began sponsoring the **Hornellville Annual Fairs**, which continued to grow and became a highlight in the area, located where what is now the Hornell High School and sports fields. The Fair offered horse and dog races, acrobats and aerial performers, as well as produce and livestock competitions. The Hornellville Fair of 1888 offered a \$3,000 purse for the winner of the horse race. On September 5, 1908 the double deck grandstand and horse barn burned. In 1909 a new grand stand was built which could seat 1,800 people. **Ruth Law** landed at the Hornellville Fair grounds during her record breaking flight in 1916. The Hornellville Fair was discontinued in 1921.⁴

1856 Samuel Hallett opened the **Bank of Hornellville** with incorporated concern with \$100,000 capital and authorized to issue currency.²

1863 The First National Bank of Hornellville was established by **Martin Adsit** and **Col. Ira Davenport**. The bank had capital of \$50,000 authorized to issue \$200,000 of stock.¹

1865 The population of Hornellville was 5,338. The single rate of postage on mail letters is three cents through the U.S. Post Office.¹⁴

1868 The Hornell Library was organized. **Martin Adsit**, the first president of the Library Association was one of the first donors when he gave 16 volumes. It was a pioneer of its kind in Western New York. The library sold certificates for annual and lifetime subscriptions.

To raise funds a series of lectures were held and well-known personalities came to Hornellville including; **Mark Twain** (author), **Henry Ward Beecher** (preacher and brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe), **Horace Greeley** (founder of the New York Tribune), **P.T. Barnum** (Barnum & Bailey Circus), **Bret Hart** (author and poet), and **Susan B. Anthony** (woman's suffrage).

In 1870 the library had 5,000 books. By 1890 the amount of books had increased to 10,000. The free circulation system was adopted in 1889. Ultimately the board applied for a donation of \$25,000, from **Andrew Carnegie** and the **Hornell Library was opened in 1911 on Genesee Street.**⁴

1873 Hornell Free Academy was built and then rebuilt in 1886 facing Union Park.⁴

1873 Miss **Carrie Ostrander** was appointed librarian of the Hornell Public Library with a salary of six dollars a month.⁵

1873 The **Shattuck Opera House** opens on Broadway in Hornellsville.⁴ The Opera House, built by Dr. Sewell Shattuck (Doctor of Dentistry¹¹), was the first concrete structure to be built in this section of the country. The building was 100 feet long, 60 feet deep, and 43 feet high with four stories that included an attic; it contained seating capacity for 1,357. At the grand opening seating prices ranged from \$1 to \$5.¹¹ Later, seating was priced at 20 and 30 cents for choice seats and 10 cents for balcony seating.

The Shattuck Opera House drew in a wide array of talents to the community, including: **Lillian Russell** (actress/singer of stage and film), **Chancellor "Chauncey" Olcott** (singer/songwriter; wrote "My Wild Irish Rose"), **John McCormack** (world famous Irish tenor), **John Sullivan** (Heavyweight Bare-Knuckle Boxing Champion), the **Russian Symphony Orchestra**, and **John Phillip Sousa's Band, Magicians Houdini, Blackstone, Keller, and Herman the Great**, to name a few.

The Shattuck Opera House closed its doors in **1930**, due to the popularity of motion pictures.

The property was sold in **1940** for \$41,283. The Shattuck Opera House was razed and a one story building was erected on the site.¹¹

1875 100 streets had been laid out within the village.⁴

1877 The **Erie Railroad** employed 800 people. Erie shop employees worked twelve-hour days for wages as low as ten cents an hour. Erie workers took action and voted to strike.

1877 The **City Hall** was built on Broad Street.²

1880 The census counted 8,195 persons within the village of Hornellsville.⁴

1880 A new brick **Erie Railroad Depot** was built in Hornellsville, which still stands today, after the original depot burned.⁴

1881 Steuben Telephone Company started and eight years later, in 1889, they had sixty subscribers. ⁴

1882 Water service was established in the village by the privately owned **Hornellsville Water Works**.⁴

July 3, 1882 The land for the park had lain vacant for many years. It had been used as a dumping ground for yard waste and had become a public disgrace. On July 3rd, a Saturday night, local "wags" placed mock tomb stones on the piles of dirt and written on the boards were the "death" of the President and Members of the Board of Trustees and street superintendent. Sunday morning came and the citizens of Hornellsville were presented with local officials names on the "tomb stones" in the "cemetery" in the middle of town. This impulsive joke impelled the town officials to clean up the park.

In 1884 Union Park was laid out with flowers, graveled walks and a fountain was placed in the center. The park was named in honor of Civil War Veterans and the Soldiers and Sailors Monument was dedicated. The monument was a cast iron and zinc fountain purchased from J.W. Fiske, of New York, for \$1500. ⁴

In **1938** the fountain had become neglected and was removed. In its place, a monument was erected to honor Civil and Spanish War Veterans and was dedicated on November 11, 1939.^{7,11}

1885 The **Hornellsville Electric Company** was formed and tests were run on Main and Canisteo Streets, City Hall, and Walter Stephen's Meat Market on Broad Street. One year later in **1886**, the **American Illuminating Company** was developed.

John M. Finch was another prominent citizen in Hornellsville. John Finch was the son of one of the area's first settlers. He worked for the **Erie Railroad** for over thirty years, and became principal land agent and chief tax officer. He had other business interests including the **Citizens National Bank** and the **American Illumination Company**, which provided Hornellsville with electric service in the late 1880's. Finch served on the village board, and he drafted a new municipal charter. John Finch's civic efforts were instrumental in the development of the **Rural Cemetery**, the **Hornell Public Library**, and the **Hornell Sanitarium**.⁴

1887 Edwin Brown brought silk manufacturing from Paterson N.J. and establishes the Rockland Silk Mill in Hornellsville. Hornellsville was thereafter known as the "**The City of Silk**" and ranked number two in the nation for silk manufacturing.

This industry continued for thirty years; from **1890-1920**. The four largest silk companies were **Rockland Silk Mills**, the **Glove Factory**, **Merrill Hosiery** and **Huguet Silk**.⁴ Other equally established manufactures where **De-Witt-Boag Co.**, **Kayser Julius & Co.**, and **Stern & Stern Textile Inc.**

March 2, 1888 The City of Hornellsville was created and incorporated, advancing the hamlet to a municipality. ¹

1888 The first city elections were held, and **Mr. James B. Day** became the first mayor of the City of Hornellsville. Mayor Day was born March 29, 1847 in Union, NY. At the age of twenty-one he went to New York City and became a police officer for seven years. After this he came to Hornellsville and engaged in the wholesale wine and liquor business. He also was a chief engineer of the Hornellsville Fire Department for two years. Mayor Day held his office for two consecutive terms. ^{2, 3,12}

May 1888 The **Hornellsville Electric Street Railroad Company** was established and began operating the first of three street car lines in 1892. Power was furnished by the **American Illumination Company**. ² With the advent of the automobile, the streetcar service was discontinued in 1927.⁴

1890 The **Hornell Sanitarium** was established to treat chronic diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis, alcoholism and mental illness. The facility was positioned 1,400 feet above sea level and 200 feet above the city of Hornellsville, located off North Main Street, and remained in operation until the 1920's. It had its own private electric plant and contained 101 bedrooms, each with running water, a luxury in that time. The sanitarium was kept at a perfect 70 degrees Fahrenheit and had a "pure air" total facility system that circulated new air every ten minutes (exterior rotary fan). It had an elevator, and every form of Bath: Turkish, Russian, and Roman. The facility boasted of having a personal team consisting of sixteen consultants, trained nurses and attendants with doctors on duty at all times. ⁸ The most prominent physician was **Dr. Roswell Park**.⁴

In **1966** 85 acres of land was purchased for \$62,500 by the school district for the proposed site of the **BOCES** (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) building facilities. The Hornell Sanitarium was razed in 1967.

1890 The census recorded 11,000 persons living within the city of Hornellsville.

1890 The **Preston Brick Company** was begun by **Othaniel Preston** and his sons. They manufactured bricks from the shale rock found in this area. The firm employed twenty-five men. ²

1891 Hornellsville had grown to contain; three large hotels, four banks, five silk mills, a planning mill and sash factory, a flour mill, a tannery, two fence and cable factories, a carriage works, a creamery, a machine gear works, several woodworking factories, a fairground with horse racing park, a shoe factory and an opera house. ⁴

1896 The **National Guard of New York Amory** was constructed; it was designed by L.G. Perry. ⁴

1900 Population of the City of Hornellsville was 14,000. ⁶

April 10, 1901 The first automobile arrived in Hornell. The owner of the Winton car, believed to cost \$1200, was **Augustus McHenry**. This day was also the first automobile accident, when Mr. McHenry ran into the curb during his trial run of the car.⁵

1907 **Hornell's Pet Cemetery**, Friendship Grove, on Bald Hill just outside of Hornell, was started by **Mr. Frank Myers** when his favorite dog Trix died. Today the cemetery is reputed to have more than 900 animals laid to rest, including canneries, monkeys, a horse and a lion among the cats and dogs.⁶

1912 The **Hornell YMCA** is built on Center Street.⁴

November 19, 1916 Ruth Law, daring aviatrix, lands at the Hornell fairgrounds at 2:07pm in her Curtiss scout bi-plane after achieving the longest non-stop flight on record from Chicago to Hornell. She set the record with her flight of 661 miles and with the total of five hours and 41 minutes in the air.⁶ While her plane was being refueled and checked, Ruth Law was taken into town to a local restaurant to warm up and have a bite to eat.

1920 Influenced by the railroad and railroad employees Hornell began attracting commerce.

1922 Hornell Intermediate School was built. Erected in the lot formally of the Hornell Free Academy, it was built originally as the Hornell High School.

1930 The population of the City of Hornell was 16,250.⁴

1935 The most severe flooding hits Hornell. Most of the city lay under six feet of water, closing the railroad and leaving 1,000 people homeless. As a result of this disaster, The United States Army Corps of Engineers constructed several major flood-control projects in the Canisteo watershed. Earthen flood-control dams were completed at Arkport in 1939 and in Almond in 1949. Within the city, the Kanakadea Creek and the Canisteo River were controlled by levees and retaining walls. Due to these improvements, Hornell was spared from the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Agnes in 1972.⁴

1940 The population of the City of Hornell had declined to 15,649.⁴

1948 The Erie Railroad switched from steam to diesel locomotives. The diesel engines required much less maintenance, meaning that hundreds of men working in the Hornell repair shops were eventually laid off. These layoffs marked the beginning of the railroad's demise.⁴

1950 Population of Hornell was 15,000.⁴

1960 The Erie Railroad merged with the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad and the company's accounting office in Hornell was closed.⁴

1968 Plans were approved and construction started for the new pedestrian underpass on Buffalo Street under the train tracks. The former underpass allowed vehicle, pedestrian, and trolley access.

December 31, 1969 Erie-Lackawanna Railroad passenger service was discontinued.⁴ The exception of this were train number 5 and 6, which ran until January 4, 1970 for holiday travel.

1972 Hurricane Agnes hits the east coast. The subsequent damage to the rail lines led to the bankruptcy of the Erie Lackawanna Railroad. The Erie line was taken over by the federally subsidized **Conrail**. Conrail reduced rail service, cut employment and closed the repair shops, changing Hornell forever.⁴

1972 Construction began on the new highway named **Maple City Drive**. The highway required the demolition of 245 houses and many commercial buildings, split the city in half, and sacrificed Hornell's Union Park.⁴

1990 The population of Hornell was 9,500.⁴

1998 The **City of Hornell** installed curbing, decorative lighting, and fencing along Main Street and a portion of the arterial to improve the appearance of the central part of the city.⁴

Collette Cornish 2009 City of Hornell Historian

1. Centennial Celebration of the Settlement of Hornellsville
The Early History of Hornellsville
Steuben County, New York
By Irvin W. Near
Hornellsville N.Y.:
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1890
2. Landmarks of Steuben County New York
Edited by Hon. Harlo Hakes
Assisted by L.C. Aldrich and others
Syracuse, N.Y.
D. Mason & Company, Publishers
1896
3. A History of Steuben County, New York and its People Vol. II
By Irvin W. Near,
Chicago, The Lewis Publishing Co.
1911
4. Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources
City of Hornell, Steuben County, New York
Prepared for the Historic Hornell, Inc.
By; Bero Associates Architects
32 Winthrop Street
Rochester, New York 14607
5. History of Hornell
By Margaret Koehler
1993
6. The Evening Tribune
Hornell at 2000 edition
7. Calendar from Shirley Ferris 4th grade.
8. Hornellsville and Points of Interest
New York Commercial Publishing Co.
1896
Steuben Sanitarium Pamphlet
9. Then and Now History of the Valley
By Tim Crowe
10. Reminiscences of the Canisteo Valley
Deacon Mowry Thacher
1865
11. The Evening Tribune
Centennial Edition
November 26, 1951
12. Historical Gazetteer of Steuben County, NY
By Millard F. Roberts
M.F. Roberts Publisher
Syracuse NY 1891
13. History of the Pioneer Settlement of
Phelps and Gorham's Purchase,
and Morris' Reserve;
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Published by William Alling 1851
14. 1868 Steuben County, Directory

