

This Week in Saratoga County History TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK FORMED 192 YEARS AGO

Submitted by John L. Scherer April 9,2020

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If you want to learn more about Clifton Park history read "Bits of Clifton Park History by John Scherer," or consult the Clifton Park Halfmoon Library web site for presentations on Clifton Park history and a multi media program on the Erie Canal in Clifton Park <https://cphlibrary.org/research/local-history-research/>*



*Tavern of James Groom where the Town of Clifton Park was formed
On April 1, 1828, postcard view by Parker Goodfellow, c. 1910*

This year marks the 192nd anniversary of the establishment of Clifton Park. Separated from the Town of Halfmoon on March 3, 1828, Clifton Park was the last Town to be formed in Saratoga County. The first Town Board meeting occurred on April 1, 1828 at the Inn of James Groom at Grooms Corners. Our first town officers were elected, and town justices, highway supervisors and school district commissioners were all selected. The first supervisor of the new Town was Ephraim Stevens who ran a large hotel at the crossroads that then bore his name, Stevens's Corners. It later became known as Clifton Park Village, and the hotel still stands. Nathan Garnsey, Jr., a former Halfmoon supervisor whose home still stands on Route 146 in Rexford would become our second town supervisor in 1829, but Stevens would later serve several more terms. Many more town meetings would occur at the Grooms Tavern, our first Town Hall.

In 1828 southern Saratoga County was booming. The Erie Canal had just opened three years previously and was bringing increased commerce and industry along its route. Hotels and taverns stood along major turnpikes running north and south, and busy roads running east and west. People were pouring into the area from New England and southern New York State looking for land and work.

It was largely because of this population explosion that it was decided to create two towns out of one. The area that became Clifton Park, already had an identity of its own, and had been referred to as

Clifton Park since a land patent by that name had been created in 1708 by Queen Anne of England. This land patent had been granted to several land speculators in hopes that they in turn would find settlers to build homes and farm the land. The local Indians referred to this patent as Shenendehowa, meaning a grassy plain.

Clifton, meaning place on a cliff, probably takes its name from the cliffs along the Mohawk River near Rexford. The area of the patent continued to be referred to as Clifton Park, and it was natural that the new town should assume this name. However, during the first year the town was simply referred to as Clifton, but by 1829 it became Clifton Park, because of some confusion with other places in New York already known as Clifton.

The new Erie Canal was an object of national pride. It was considered the eighth wonder of the world, and truly an engineering miracle. This artificial river wove its way right through the new town of Clifton Park carrying immigrants west to settle the new nation.

It was an exciting time for the nation and for the new town of Clifton Park. I wonder what our founding fathers would think of our suburban town now. Our first Town Supervisor, Ephraim Stevens now rests under the addition to the Clifton Park Methodist Church added in 1972.