

This Week in Saratoga County History – First Board of Supervisors Meeting June 2, 1791

Submitted by Lauren Roberts June 4, 2020

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On June 2nd, 1791 the very first meeting of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors took place at Mead's Tavern in Stillwater. Earlier that year, the New York State Legislature passed a law creating Saratoga County by carving out an area from Albany County. At that time, the new county was divided among four towns. Each town elected a single supervisor to represent them on the county board. Beriah Palmer came from Ballstown (now Ballston), Benjamin Rosekrans from Halfmoon, John B. Schuyler represented Saratoga and Elias Palmer from the host town of Stillwater. All were prominent men of their communities.

The very first meeting of the Board of Supervisors was supposed to be held on the last Tuesday of May. Being that only three of the four supervisors were present, they decided to adjourn the meeting until the next morning. The next day the board met at 10am, but upon noting that Beriah Palmer of Ballstown was still absent, they adjourned again. Finally on June 2, two days late, Palmer arrived in Stillwater to attend the meeting. It was decided that Palmer, despite his lack of punctuality, would be moderator of the board. The next order of business was appointing a clerk, Cornelius Vandenberg, and a treasurer, Guert Van Schoonhoven, both from Halfmoon, to the board. After these appointments were made, the rest of the business consisted of paying accounts and levying taxes. The record shows the county was paying for services such as taking the census, working at elections, laying out roads, making tax lists, killing wolves (by offering a bounty for wolves, the county hoped to get the wolf population under control), overseeing the poor, attending trials, surveyors work and constables. After the accounts were settled, the

board agreed that they would adjourn and plan to meet again on the first Tuesday in September back at Mead's Tavern in Stillwater.

Over the course of 229 years, many things have changed in county government. The Saratoga County Board of Supervisors meets once a month rather than only twice a year. The Board consists of 22 supervisors, a far cry from the 4 present at the first meeting. They meet in a modern legislative chamber built expressly for the purpose of governing the county, a vastly different atmosphere from Mead's Tavern. Meetings take place in the county seat of Ballston Spa, not Stillwater. While at times it may seem that modern board meetings are a bit lengthy, they certainly do not compare to the three-day long meeting experienced in 1791.