

This Week in Saratoga County History

Joshua Anthony – “The Baking Powder King”

Submitted by Lynda Bryan December 14, 2022

Lynda Bryan, a life-long resident of the Town of Halfmoon, serves as Town Clerk since 2010, and is Town Historian and President of the Halfmoon Historical Society



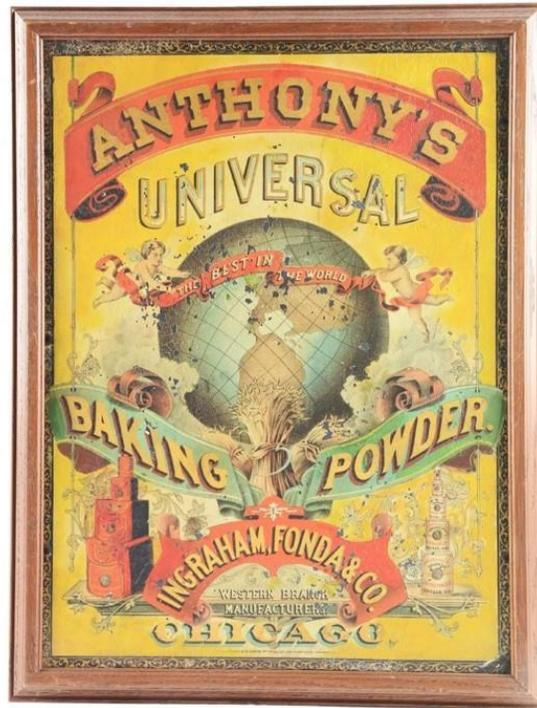
Joshua Anthony's Spice Factory, Halfmoon, NY

With the holiday season in full swing, many of us are making frequent stops to the baking ingredients aisle at our favorite supermarket. You may not be aware that 150 years ago many of these products were manufactured in the Town of Halfmoon.

In the 1800s, most of the commerce in Halfmoon was located close to the Mohawk & Hudson Rivers. Joshua Anthony however, developed his spice factory in a remote part of northern Halfmoon on his grandfather's farm on Farm to Market & Anthony Roads. The three-story tower in the center of the factory (pictured above) once boasted a windmill that provided power for the machinery. Anthony heated the farmhouse and buildings in the winter with steam from the factory. Imagine, that technology that we are still trying to perfect was used a mere 153 years ago by Mr. Anthony!

He began his operations in 1869 under the name “Anthony and Co's Universal Baking Powder” with the manufacture of Baking Powder and Cream of Tartar. He was known to manufacture a very superior and pure baking powder and it is said to be the best Baking Powder ever introduced to the public. One 1893 advertisement boasted:

“It is the Best in the World”



Spice grinding and the production of extracts for flavoring were introduced in 1892. It was said that he made visitors weep when he was grinding the Simon Pure Pepper! He could grind up to 3,000 pounds of pepper in a day! The factory was a two-story building and was equipped with “perfected and rapid machinery”, and most of the employees were women!

In 1882, the success of his business prompted Mr. Anthony to approach the Delaware and Hudson Railroad. He was able to work with them and secure a station of the Schenectady branch to make a stop in Ushers. The following year, Mr. Anthony had a private telegraph line running from Ushers, Clifton Park and Round Lake to his factory keeping him in constant touch with the rest of the business world, and in 1883 he secured the Ushers Post Office.

Around the turn of the century, Mr. Anthony was dealing exclusively with the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. (aka the A&P) With rising costs of shipping, the operators of the A&P chain tried to entice Mr. Anthony to move his operations to NYC, but he refused. His contributions to the community were improvements from which many benefited and changed the footprint of the Halfmoon community forever. The Spice Factory ceased operations in 1920.

Joshua was born February 16, 1839, in Adams, Mass. He and his three younger brothers were orphaned at a young age when he parents tragically died. They were raised by Zephaniah and Joanna Wells Buffington, their maternal grandparents who were devout Quakers. They moved to NY and the boys were raised on what was to become the Anthony farm. At 18, Joshua left the farm and clerked in local mercantile stores gaining business experience, returning to farm in 1867 at age 28 and started the Baking Powder business two years later.

At age 93, he was interviewed by a local newspaper and recalled voting for Abe Lincoln in 1860, which was his very first ballot. He cast his ballot for “Honest Abe” again four years later. He recalled the grief that shook a nation when the great, kindly heart of America’s “Martyr President” was stilled by the assassin’s bullet. Mr. Anthony voted for every Republican President since Lincoln, including Hebert Hoover in 1928, with whom he shared the Quaker faith.

Mr. Anthony passed away at age 94, below is an excerpt from his obituary:

JOSHUA ANTHONY, 94, MASON FOR 66 YEARS, DIES HERE STILLWATER, Oct. 31 (Special)—Following an illness of three days, Stillwater's oldest citizen, Joshua Anthony, died at his home here Saturday evening. Mr. Anthony who was in his 94th year was New York State's oldest Mason, having been affiliated with the order for 66 years. He was a member of OnDa-Wa Lodge in Mechanicville where he has held an office for 35 years.

So, as you drive by Anthony & Farm to Market Roads, glance over and see the factory building and farmhouse that remain relatively unchanged to this day and think back to the time not so long ago when one man changed the history of our area. His name on the road is a daily reminder of his many contributions to the Town of Halfmoon, and the names of the roads in the Old Dater Farms development next door, remind us of all the products he manufactured and sold.

Joshua’s famous first cousin was Susan B. Anthony, also born in Adams, Mass., and a Leader of Women’s Suffrage. She was no stranger to this area. She visited the Anthony Farm at the time Joshua operated the Spice Mills. In fact, a third cousin, Mrs. Arthur Collins, says that Susan when she was 19, used to babysit for her grandfather Joshua shortly after he was born. Susan and her friends Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Matilda Gage, to name a few, changed the course of history for women and dedicated their lives getting women the right to vote.

One Halfmoon man and his family know this story firsthand. It is lifelong Halfmoon resident Harvey Hayner, the great grandson of Joshua Anthony. Harvey & Carol Hayner’s son Craig Anthony Hayner is our County Clerk, and I wonder where he got his middle name! The Hayner Family has farmed in Halfmoon since Joshua ran his spice factory and still do today. This certainly is an amazing family!