Taken from the Bedford Journal, sold by The Lyme Historical Society, 3 Mile Bay, NY
lymeheritagecenter.org

The sickly season of 1827 seemed to change the climate and the country became as healthy as any country in America. A case of bilious fever or ague and fever was seldom known after the terrible season of 1827.

Mr. LeRay's colony of Frenchmen arrived early in the spring of 1830. He went around and bought the settlers out and paid them at the rate of from eight to twenty dollars per acre according to the improvements that they had made on their land. He gave them their choice to have the cash or wild lands at 4 dollars per acre. Many went into the unbroken wilderness where roads were laid out and farms surveyed of a size to suit customers so that the whole country became settled up in a very short time and the most wretched of all countries became one of the best agricultural sections of the State of New York.

That the French settlers might feel more at home Mr. LeRay built a chapel near the centre of the colony 2a and a tavern across the road from it and enclosed a cemetery and settled a Roman Catholic priest, built him a parsonage and gave him a farm of 100 acres. He established a new settlement at the source of Mud or Kents Creek. He cut a road through the forest from the turnpike to the River St. Lawrence that passed by the chapel and surveyed the land intersected by it into farm of 100 acres in each and built a log house 18 by 24 feet square and cleared an acre of land on each new farm. These farms he sold to the poorer class of Frenchmen on credit who went on and paid for their farms and this section soon became as valuable as any part of the country.

This is only a history of the settlement of the towns of Lyme and Cape Vincent. Mr. LeRay established other colonies in other sections of his vast tract and surveyed roads, built chapels, settled priests to administer to the spiritual wants of his people. These efforts to settle this vast wilderness region continued from about 1810 till 184 when the whole country became occupied.

My father applied to teach the school on the island for the winter of 1822 and 1823 but the trustees hired a young man by the name of Williams. Father was so offended that he would not allow me to go to school to Mr. Williams but said that I should stay at home and study with him. I had no slate and it was so far to a store where he could buy one for me that he took an old tin pail and took the bottom out and I cut the side open and flattened it out and I made figures on it with a pen and ink and every time I filled it I had to wash the ink off with a wet cloth.

I was put to studying the multiplication table and practicing subtraction and was told in case the subtrahend was larger than the minuend figure directly above it that I must borrow ten and add it to the minuend figure and take the difference between the subtrahend figure and this sum and write it in the remainder directly under the subtracted figure ad then add one to the

28 The area was called French Settlement

to see the flames roll through those heaps of wet rotten wood and mount high in the air.

The result was that it consumed the most of these heaps of rubbish so that in a weeks time we had the land nicely cleared for a crop so that we went on and got the wheat sown in good season and in good order.

This year a great revolution commenced in the North Settlement which eventually resulted in entire change of the inhabitants. Mr. LeRay, the original land owner of this region (as I have before stated) went over to old France and engaged a colony of French Catholics to come over and settle in this place. Previous to their coming over Mr. LeRay made provisions for their reception. Most of the farmers owed him for the right of soil. After he returned to France he went around among the inhabitants and bought their improvements to make homes for the French when they should arrived which was to be the next Spring. He likewise caused a new road to be laid out and cleared of brush and timber from Mud Creek Mills to Millen's Bay and surveyed the land into 50 acre lots and a small log house built and one acre cleared to each lot to make a beginning for the poorer class of immigrants who were unable to pay for better improvements.

He likewise built a large stone chapel and tavern close by it and called the settlement Rosiers after a noted French lady. Mr. LeRay likewise laid out another road south of the turnpike from Indian Hill to Lake Ontario at Fox Creek. This tract of land was laid out in tracts to suit settlers. This land was mostly bought up by the inhabitants of the North Settlement in exchange for improvements. They were not obliged to take land for their homes. They could have the cash if they preferred it. But most of them took part pay in land and part in money to make a beginning with.

This new settlement was called Fox Creek after two small streams that runs through it. One is called Big Fox and the other Little Fox Creek. The road is laid out on a dry stony ridge that runs lengthwise of the settlement which is elevated full 60 feet higher than the flat land that lies each side of it which makes a natural turnpike dry and passable at all times. This ridge is India') Hill. So called as I have been. told from the image of an Indian being carved on a large cedar tree that stood on the brink of the hill when the country was first explored. This street is about three miles long.

Among those that moved to this new settlement was Mr. Harvey Mills, a brother to Mr. James and Jedediah Mills. He made a trade with Mr. Le Ray and employed me after I had been working for Mr. Jedediah to help him build a shanty to live, in on his new farm. When the shanty was completed he moved his household furniture and wished me to stay in it the first night. I did so consequently, so Iwas the first person that ever spent a night in a dwelling house in that neighborhood.

three cousins, Harriet, Esther and Jane Stevens and myself how to paint flowers, trees, birds and other objects with oil paint on cloth or walls by the use of theorems at one dollar apiece. So we employed him. I soon learned the art of making and cutting theorems. Cousin Harriet did most of the marking, I the cutting, Jane the mixing paint and Esther did most of the painting. The way that we transfigured the pure white cotton cloth to be fields of glowing nondescript figures that never before was seen was a perfect wonder to ourselves.

Well, my arm improved very fast and in about 2 weeks ceased to give me much, if any, pain and Iconcluded to go to the North Settlement and find a place to board and attend that school as it was taught by a young man by the name of Cleanthus Granger who had the reputation of being a good scholar and successful teacher. He was some noted on account of having two uncles who were statesmen and members of Congress, viz Ralph Granger of Ohio and Amos P. Granger of Syracuse, NY. The latter gentleman I became acquainted with some years after in the city of Syracuse.

• I hired my board at Mr. Jedediah Mills at one dollar per week which gave me a good opportunity to learn as Mr. Mills was an experienced teacher he assisted me considerable evenings besides·he had quite a library of ancient history, poems, etc. I found Mr. Granger an agreeable gentleman. I was quite well satisfied with my situation. I studied grammar and arithmetic principally, besides we had reading and spelling lessons everyday.

There was one peculiarity in this school that probably could not be found in any other school in the state. Mr. LeRay's emigrants had arrived and were partially settled in their new homes although the Americans had not yet moved onto their New Wilderness homes. The French and Germans moved in late in the fall and the Americans had to build houses for themselves before they couJd give up their old homes so these foreigners moved in with the inhabitants who gave up a part of their house room to them.

These foreigners children were sent to this school and a more motley crowd could not be found this side of the "Big S'"."amp" (as Colonel Crockett would say). They were dressed exclusively in blue and striped twilled cotton cloth and no shred of wool cloth about them. They wore a shirt and loose slouching pants and a loose blouse and a kind of turban made of fustian[38] on their head. Their shoes were made of basswood , thick and clumsy with a piece of sheep skin tacked in front to keep the wood from chaffing the ancle.

There was between 30 and 40 of these European savages, that did not know a word of English, came to this school (with English spelling books in their hands) to be civilized. When these children went out or came in their wooden shoes made a clatter like a flock of sheep running over a pile of loose shingles. When they were out in the snow it would get into their

38a stout cloth made of cotton and flax

shoes and when they came in they would go to the fire and pull off their shoes and scoop up embers from under the fire stick and shake them around till they melted the snow out and then put them on again and take their seats.

These children were all seated on the low front seats next to the fire place and the teacher stood in front of them. The American scholars sat on the seats in the rear which were elevated so that those that were on the back seats could see over the heads of those infront. Each of these had seats with a desk before it.

These foreign children perplexed the teacher very much. They had to sit on those low hard benches for 6 hours each day with those books in their hand holding them before their faces pretending to study when they did not know a word or scarce a letter in them. They would *soon* get very uneasy and begin to hitch around, push each other, maybe pinch each other's ears or stick pins into each other.

This uneasy spirit would soon become contagious and spread around the whole circle, when the teacher had to restore order. To accomplish this he held a long blue beach gad[39] about 6 feet in length constantly and when the disturbing element became unendurable he made a general business of chastising the whole circle at the same time. He would commence by scolding in some French words that he had picked up the meaning of which I did not understand nd then commence switching them across the shins. He would swing his gad around so as to peck 4 or 5 of them across the shins at the same time he would keep up the operation till he had passed around the whole circle. When they would all sit bolt upright and pretend to be studying.

When they were called up to recite, it took much of the teacher's time to learn them to pronounce the letters and words correctly, consequently there was but little time left him to . teach the English scholars. To remedy this difficulty Mr. Granger told me if I would take charge of some English classes he would give me the privilege of calling his attention to any subject that I wished explained at any ti_me.

So Itook charge of about half of the American portion of the school I made rapid progrss in my grammar portion of the school. I had to study grammar several times before with a Murray Grammar for a text book but every time became discouraged because I could not discover the object of the lingo. But now a new work had been introduced, called Kirkham's English Grammar where the science is taught by a course of lectures. I looked at this work and fully comprehended the subject that it treated. I procured a copy and went to studying in earnest and succeeded first rate. , Mr. Granger said to me that I knew more of the true principle of grammar after three weeks study than he did after studying Murray's Grammar two years.

Matters went along nicely with me till all at once my bright prospects were blasted in a

39 a goad for driving cattle, small rod or switch

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

To return to the events transpiring in the North Settlement or French Settlement as it was called after this time. The Americans moved to Fox Creek and went to work, spring having opened. They built block and log houses on their new wildness farms and commenced clearing the land of trees and brush in good earnest.

The names of the families that settled in this place at this time were as follows: viz: Jeramiah Clark a son-in-law of Deacon Kendall, Mr. Clark was an austere, bull headed Block Islander from N.J. State; one legged Shoemaker whose name was Zeigle; a horse jockey and hard drinker named Hiram Herrick; Ashnak Lawton, a Baptist Minister who preached every sabbath; Oan'l Herrick, brother to Hiram also a hard drinker; Uncle John Stevens , Benjamin Holmes, Aaron Whitcomb, Eascan Kendall, James Woodruff, George Fairman, a Methodist exhorter, Robert Fox , Jacob Van Nostrand, Justus McElwayne, Frederic Rogers, Harvey Mills, John Northrup, Daniel Guile and Fordice Rogers and a brother from Massachusetts by name Abner Rogers who was a first rate blacksmith, my old friend Eddy Powers who I worked for the 2d summer that I staid in North Settlement. All of these came to this place with sanguine hopes of carving pleasant homes out of this solitary wilderness.

The French soon established themselves in their new homes. They brought the manners and customs of their native country with them. They are a remarkably social people and were very anxious that the Yankees should learn their language so as to save them the trouble of learning English. They would always greet you on meeting with a majestic bow and Bonjour Mosier or Bonswar Mosier or Mansal and were always telling what this and that thing was in French. But they did not succeed to learn the Yankees to speak the French language but had to submit and speak English as well as they could

They dressed quite gay on Sunday to attend religious service on the forenoon and made a sort of holiday of the afternoon which was spent in playing nine pins, cards, dancing and drinking and carousing at the tavern across the street from the chapel. Many times on a pleasant Sunday afternoon a troop of 40 or 50 of the young people, girls and boys, would form a procession and lock arms so tht 8 or 10 would be a breast and promenade the street singing some marching tune. These parties made quite a cheerful display.

The old ladies, heads of families, made Mondays washing and baking day. They would all get together on Monday morning and get their dirty clothes together in baskets and their dough all mixed for baking and take their baskets in hand and their bread troughs on their heads and march down to Mud Creek where they had several large out door ovens where they would bake their bread. Their loaves were all made with a hole in the centre, in the form of a ring and they were in a good shape to carry. They would slip these loaves on their arms and hold them to

carry easily. But in a few years they gave up all these peculiarities and submitted to the ways of the American people.

They had an exercise in their church ceremony tht sounded and seemed singular They called it chantes or chanting. It was said to be Psalms of David. They would an arise and commence something like this: Baw, Baw, Bab, Bab, Boo, Boo, Boo, Bay, Bo, Bah. When all were engaged it sounded more like a serenade of bull frogs in a big swim than any thing that I can think of. This ceremony was one that Martin Luther objected to. He termed "Infernal Bellowing". This church became much demoralized in a few years. Those children that were educated in the English schools repudiated Catholicism and adopted the manners, customs, and religious notions in common with other American citizens.

For my own part I concluded to follow the fortunes of the new settlement at Fox Creek. There was a wilderness to be subdued and plenty of hard work to be done to fit it to support the new inhabitants. I chose to go there because I could get steady employment. So I engaged to chop and clear and fence ten acres of land for Mr. Justus McElwayne. He had built a house on his new farm of 125 acres. He wished to clear 40 acres that summer to sow wheat on the next fall. This Mr. McElwayne had been an old bachelor who married a widow Perry who had 4 sons, young men: viz: David, Holbrook, Henry, and Ezra and a daughter, the wife of Jas Woodruff.

David took a job to clear 20 acres. He had a hired man. Holbrook and Ezra were to clear the remaining ten acres. We were all bound to have our jobs done by the first day of the next September. I was to have 8 dollars per acre and the ashes. Mr. March was to board me and furnish a team to do the logging. He was to pay me 2s dollars in cash on the first of June and the remainder when the job was finished. I made this bargain on the first day of March.

My arm was done up and in a sling at the time. I must admit that I had some doubts about ever fulfilling this engagement for there was a false joint forming in my broken arm. It would bend and shuck about when I attempted to move it. But I made up my mind that I must work and , that exercise would make it knit together solid if anything would . So I agreed to commence on the job on the first of April if my arm was out of the supports and began to use it a little.

But it was very weak and on the first day of April I went to Mr. McElwayne's and commenced working on my job. I commenced by cutting the underbrush and handling the lightest stuff. But every time I struck a blow with the axe it would send a twinge through my broken arm. I had to strike carefully so as to avoid jarring my broken arm. I felt discouraged for a few days and feared I wouid have to give it up, but on finding that I was not getting any worse I persevered and in a short time found that my arm gained strength very fast and in a month's time seemed to be healed so that it did not trouble me anymore.

I took more pains than usual to pile the brush snug and pick up every loose stick that I