



Chapter 12

Moving West 1799 ~ 1828

Land Between the Lakes

In 1790 most Americans were living in the countryside; farming, raising families, and looking for new land to clear. With the completion of the American Revolution came new possibilities for movement westward to greener pastures. Government policy and profit-minded land developers combined with adventurous families and new immigrants to begin what would be, over the course of the next century, the migratory conquest of North America. To understand how this movement involved one branch of the Van Tuyl family, we need to step back to 1779 to one of those interesting sidelights of the War of Independence, to a campaign that was fought not against the British, but against the northern Loyalists and their allies-of-the-moment: the Iroquois League.

In 1778, Tory-Indian raiding parties operating out of Niagara, led by a well-educated Mohawk chief named Joseph Brant, were terrorizing the frontier and destroying settlements. General Washington, fearing loss of claims to the west and wanting to punish his Indian enemies, dispatched General John Sullivan to upstate New York, saying he wanted the Iroquois “[not] merely *overrun*, but *destroyed*.”¹ Sullivan’s army of some 4000 Continentals was well-equipped and well-led when they met Brant at Newton [now Elmira, NY] on 26 August, putting him and his warriors to flight. The “punishment” then began in earnest as the Continentals moved northward:²

“...systematically [laying] waste the country of the Seneca, the Cayuga and the Onondaga, cutting down orchards, burning the standing grain, [and] destroying the Indian ‘castles’.”

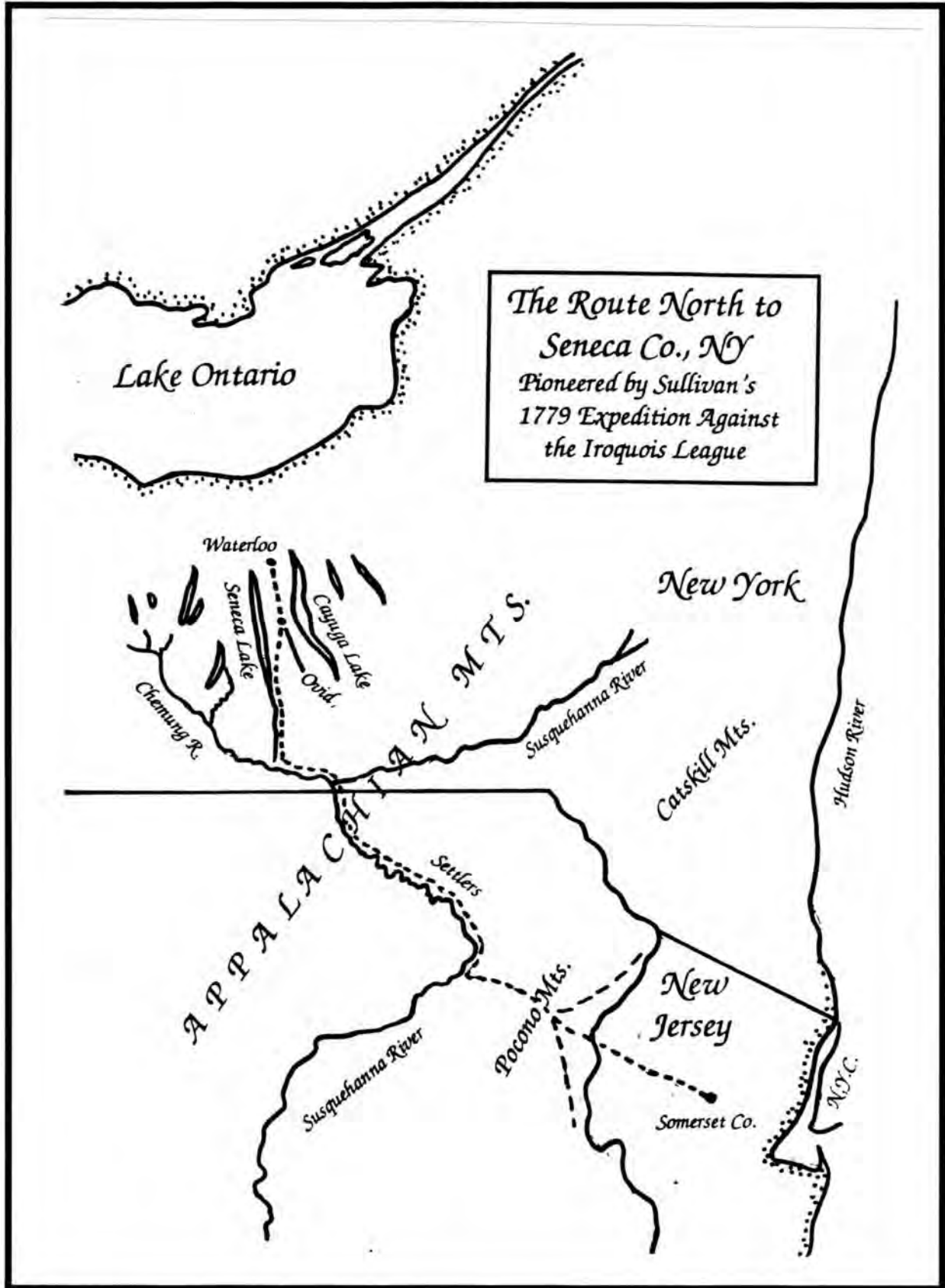
In September, Sullivan’s troops marched along the shores of Seneca Lake, one of the *Finger Lakes* of western New York, destroying crops as they went. Reportedly, the land impressed a number of these soldiers with its prospects for good farming, and they spread the word “back home.”³ Although the Sullivan expedition was of little short-term value to the war effort, in the long run it worked to the advantage of the white settlers, breaking the back of the Iroquois League and with it, their ability to resist encroachment by white settlers.

Starting with the French and Indian War, the American colonies had employed a system of *land bounties* to encourage enlistment in the army, and the system was continued through the

¹ Millet, A. and Maslowski, P., “For the Common Defense,” 1984, pg. 75.

² Commager, H. and Morris, R., “The Spirit of ‘Seventy-Six,” 1958, vol. II, pp. 1011-12.

³ _____, “History of Seneca Co. New York,” Philadelphia, 1876, pg. 97.



Chapter 12

Revolution and into the War of 1812.⁴ After the Revolution, Continental Soldiers drew lots to determine which of them would receive free grants of land in return for their military service. The grants were in the newly-created *Onondaga Military Tract*, a 1.75 million-acre reserve in western New York which included, at its western boundary, the very land between Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake that Sullivan's soldiers had so admired during the war. This land was of strategic importance to American expansion, since Indian occupation there had long thwarted overland access to the Great Lakes. So the government, in a prototype of land division and settlement for the rest of the 19th century, divided the entire Military Tract into Townships of 100 Lots each, with the lots being 600 acres apiece, packed as far as possible in a square grid arrangement.⁵ The local Indian tribes - the *Seneca*, *Cayuga*, and *Onondaga* - were paid a sum of money to forfeit rights to their traditional regions.⁶ Each tribe was given a *reservation* equal in area to about one township. The townships were given names from Roman history and mythology - Romulus, Ovid, Hector, and Ulysses for example - names adopted by later towns and villages that are still in use today.⁷ The County of Onondaga was organized in 1794 to encompass all of the Military Tract, because the rush to settle was then in full swing.⁸

The actual settlers were often not the lucky veterans who had won the land lottery, but rather were people who had obtained land rights by purchasing them from the veterans or their heirs.⁹ Settlement started in 1789 for what was to become Seneca County, and by 1806 this area between the lakes was apparently fully occupied.¹⁰ As was often the case throughout the period of westward expansion, an individual or two from some area would lead the way into a new territory, and his neighbors would follow. Often, there was a compelling reason for the migration, such as hard times in the original homeland. But for the most part, it was probably nothing more than the simple mathematics of population growth that drove the settlers west.

⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol. 2, pg. 425.

⁵ Rose, R., "Military Tract of Central New York," *Master's Thesis*, Syracuse University, 1935. This grid arrangement, later adopted for the subdivision of the United States under the Homestead Act, checkerboarded the landscape with roads set slightly less than one mile apart. In later settlements, the roads were exactly one mile apart, defining 640-acre *sections*, of which a single farm family typically inhabited one-fourth, or 160 acres.

⁶ Hough, F., "Proceeding of the commissioners of Indian Affairs Appointed by Law for the Extinguishment of Indian Titles in the State of New York," pp. 183-186, 199-200.

⁷ In New York State, the unit of civil administration is the *town*, which encompasses a larger area than the *villages* within it. Although the Military Tract *townships* were the forerunners of the *towns*, the two are not equivalent and are sometimes confused.

⁸ *Bulletin of the Onondaga Historical Association*, April, 1959, [Syracuse, NY], and *Onondaga Historical Association* map of the Military Tract.

⁹ Foley, Mrs. C., "Service Data of Revolutionary Soldiers who Drew Lots in the Military Tract," in *Tree Talks*, vol. 7 no. 2, June 1967, pg. 71.

¹⁰ _____, "History of Seneca Co. New York," Philadelphia, 1876. Seneca County was subdivided from Onondaga County in 1799.

The Van Tuyls Come to Seneca County

In the 1790s, Somerset County, New Jersey residents were in need of expansion opportunities. Never the best of farmland, their homesteads had nonetheless been able to support the raising to adulthood of large families - like the 11 children and numerous grandchildren of Abraham Van Tuyl of the Second Watchung Mountain. An even more numerous clan from the area were the Sebrings, neighbors who had served in the Revolution with the Van Tuyls and who had intermarried with them. Starting in 1793, the Sebrings began moving to Seneca County. First was Abraham Sebring [1793], followed by his cousin Folkerd Sebring, who settled on Lot 19, Township of Ovid, Onondaga County [later Seneca County], in 1795.^{11, 12} Folkerd must have liked the new area and probably sent word back home describing its advantages to his family. Apparently, his tales impressed his sisters Jane and Phoebe, who in 1799 brought their families to settle next door to Folkerd on Lot 29.¹³ Jane, a mother of 7 children in 1799, was married to 39 year old John Van Tuyl - the same John Van Tuyl who had fought in the Revolution with her brother, Folkerd Sebring.¹⁴ Her sister Phoebe had married her first cousin Cornelius Sebring, whose mother had been Mareya Van Tuyl.¹⁵ Tight-knit and interrelated, they must have drawn from one another the courage they needed to face life in the new territory.

On 5 March, 1799, John Van Tuyl bought 200 acres of fine farmland in lot 29, Ovid Township. John's place was the western third of one of those square 600-acre lots, and it was located midway between Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake, where the land rises some 500 to 700 feet above the two Finger Lakes' waters. A unique feature of this particular lot was that it contained within its boundaries an old Indian fort. The fort had been erected many years earlier, the settlers reckoned, because the old timbers used in its construction were from trees the same size as the surrounding forest, so they must have come from some previous cycle of forestation. A human skeleton was found buried near the fort, along with earthenware pipes and other artifacts. No less a person than Governor DeWitt Clinton, who visited the mound in 1811, noted a striking resemblance to similar ancient Indian mounds found in the Ohio Valley. John Van Tuyl's neighbor, Cornelius BoDine, built his home on the mound, pretty much obliterating the site from an archaeological viewpoint.¹⁶

¹¹ Bowman, M., "Descendants of Isaac Van Tuyl and Mary McCarter," 1970, pp. 70, 75. There are errors in the Sebring genealogy as published in this 1970 work. Author Bowman later corrected these in unpublished research communicated in 1982 to Jean Guertler, who made the information available to us.

¹² _____, "History of Seneca Co. New York," Philadelphia, 1876, pg. 98. Lot 19 was settled by Folkerd Sebring, Peter Harpending, and George Harris. In 1793, Abraham Sebring was among the first to settle here, establishing himself on Lot 35, on Seneca Lake's shore.

¹³ Cayuga County Deeds, Book A, pp. 89-90.

¹⁴ US Pension application W22483 states that John Van Tuyl's wife was Jane Sebring. She was born in 1761.

¹⁵ Bowman's unpublished research, 1982.

¹⁶ _____, "History of Seneca Co. New York," Philadelphia, 1876, pg. 99.

The local Indians were unable to provide any information about the fort, since it was older than their oral history.¹⁷

The Van Tuyls were by this time thoroughly experienced farmers, having worked the American soil for three generations prior to John Van Tuyl's time. But farmers wanted new land of good quality on which to build their futures, and Seneca County was just that. As a 19th-century reference described it:¹⁸

The soil is generally of a very excellent quality. The sandy and gravelly loam of the drift deposits are well adapted to either grain raising or grazing.

The opportunity to get such fine land would not last forever, so John Van Tuyl had made his move in 1799, paying \$1049 for his 200-acre farm. But where did he get the money for such a venture? And how would he be able to work the 200 acres? Usually, a farmer would depend on the labor of his older sons, and lacking that, would have to depend on hired labor, or in earlier days, slave labor. But John Van Tuyl had only one son even remotely old enough to help on a farm: ten year-old John Jr. He must have been counting on help from his brothers and their families. In fact, the family may even have financed John's venture into new territory by loaning him money against his inheritance, with the understanding that some of them would come along later to help develop the farm.

However the finances may have been managed, the Van Tuyls were, at the turn of the century, joining many other Somerset County, NJ families on the move northwest to more expansive, if less-developed, farms.¹⁹ When John's father, Isaac Van Tuyl of Somerset County, NJ died in 1803, a second wave of Van Tuyl immigration to Seneca County, NY was set in motion. After old Isaac died, his thirty year old son, Isaac Van Tuyl, copied his family's records from the "Old Dutch Bible" in preparation for his own trek west.²⁰ After burying his father next to his mother in the small plot shared with the Coddington family, Isaac sold the bulk of his inheritance that very spring - 60 acres adjoining Coddington's - in preparation for the move.²¹ Apparently, he and his family stayed on the land through the 1803 growing season, sold their remaining holdings to younger brother Abraham the next spring, then headed north in the winter of 1804 to join older brother John in Seneca County.²²

¹⁷ "French's Gazeteer of New York, " 1858, pg. 617.

¹⁸ "French's Gazeteer of New York, " 1858, pg. 614.

¹⁹ Analysis of Somerset County deeds show that developed farmland was selling at this time for about \$7 per acre. John paid \$5 per acre in Seneca County. Other families that cashed out and moved to Seneca County included not only the Sebrings, but also the Autens, Harpendings, and Goltrys.

²⁰ This bible has passed down matrilineally. A copy of it has been provided to author Rory Van Tuyl by its present owner.

²¹ Somerset County, NJ Deeds. Book D-4, pg. 394. Coddington's Scots or Scots-Irish name was apparently pronounced with a bit of a burr...the clerk recorded it as "Corrington".

²² Somerset County, NJ Deeds. Book L, pg. 471. Accounts describe February migrations by oxen-drawn sled in this region, so that settlers could be on their land for Spring planting.

The route north in those days was - and still is - a scenic treat. The families with their animals and such possessions as they could carry with them, set off across the Pocono Mountains toward Wyoming, Pennsylvania, then skirted the Appalachian Range by following the same route Sullivan's soldiers had taken 25 years earlier: up the meandering Susquehanna River, up Chemung Creek, then down Catherine Creek to the base of Seneca Lake, whose eastern shore they followed north to the Military Tract. With very little time to spare, they plunged right into the spring planting of their new home. In Isaac Van Tuyl's case, "home" must surely have been his brother John's 200 acres on lot 29, Ovid, New York. Apparently, all went well, for the very next year, their next-younger brother, Abraham Van Tuyl, sold out to the Coddingtons and headed north to join the westward-moving clan.²³ And either accompanying his older brother, or coming along later, was Thomas, the last of the sons of Isaac Van Tuyl and Mary McCarter.²⁴ So, by the turn of the 19th century the only Van Tuyls remaining in Somerset County were the family of uncle Otto Van Tuyl and his wife Elizabeth.²⁵ As they had done throughout the 18th century, the Somerset County Van Tuyls would continue during the 19th and 20th centuries to join the vast throngs of Americans moving west in search of farm land to call their own.

Life Between the Lakes

Seneca County settlers cleared the trees on their properties, and with them, they built log cabins. These cabins were constructed with square-hewn timbers set on foundations of stone. They were perhaps 20 by 30 feet in area, with an upstairs sleeping loft above the main quarters. Cooking was done in the cabin itself, on a hearth. Several of these original cabins still stand today, as reminders of the less-than-elegant lifestyle of these farm pioneers.²⁶ Although the early settlers did not face hostility from Indians, they were in previously-unfarmed territory for the most part, where wild animals abounded. Bears took to stealing their pigs and fighting with their dogs - and in one case at least, a farmer is said to have got in a wrestling match with a wounded bear and emerged the winner! A perhaps more credible tale was that of Cornelius BoDine, Jr., the Van Tuyls' neighbor. He was accompanying two young ladies home from a visit to Folkerd Sebring's home when a panther started stalking the trio. By whacking the wild cat on the nose, Mr. BoDine repulsed him several times, and the young people were able to make it home safely.²⁷

²³ Somerset County, NJ Deeds. Book D-4, pg. 396.

²⁴ Bowman, pg. 50. He is well-documented as having lived in Seneca County until sometime after 1830.

²⁵ Van Tuyl, Charles D., "Van Tuyl Genealogy," 1985. [Family History Library, Salt Lake City]. Otto was the youngest son of the original Somerset settler, Abraham Van Tuyl. Otto fought in the Revolution along with his brother and nephews. His daughters married into the Coddington and Goltry families, and his son Jonathan went west to Illinois after 1828 but before 1835.

²⁶ A beautifully reconstructed 1807 specimen stands on *Peter Whitmer's Farm*, an attraction operated by the LDS Church (open to the public), south of Waterloo, NY.

²⁷ _____, "History of Seneca Co. New York," Philadelphia, 1876, pg. 98. Tales of frontier settlers must, of course, be viewed with skepticism, but the panther tale describes typical wildcat hunting behavior.



This replica of the *circa* 1807 log cabin built by early Onondaga Military Tract settler Peter Whitmer stands south of present day Waterloo, New York, near the location of John and Isaac Van Tuyl's Seneca County farms. Undoubtedly, the Van Tuyl's cabins were similarly constructed (the square logs used in this replica were salvaged from original cabins in the area).²⁸

Bit-by-bit the land was tamed, and before long it was producing:²⁹

...wheat of the first quality and in profuse abundance, together with corn...oats, beans, and vegetables of almost every kind, and fruit in great variety.

The farmers fenced their fields, orchards, and pastures, but to protect their interest in stray cattle, they employed the same system of *earmarks* as had their 17th century forebears on Staten Island. Orchards - probably mostly apple or crabapple - were popular improvements, with at least one pioneer growing his trees from cuttings taken from an orchard abandoned by the fleeing Indians years before - trees which had escaped the notice of Sullivan's destroyers.³⁰ The Van Tuyls branched out into orcharding in 1811, when Isaac Van Tuyl and his wife Maria Goltry bought 3 acres of trees just south of brother John's farm which they worked for 3 seasons. In the fall of 1813, they sold the land to brother Abraham Van Tuyl and his wife Rachel [Jobs], who in turn

²⁸ The cabin was reconstructed by the LDS Church, which now offers tours at *Peter Whitmer's Farm*, south of Waterloo, NY.

²⁹ Morrison, W., "Town and Village of Ovid, Seneca Co., N.Y., An Early History," *circa* 1880, pg. 7.

³⁰ _____, "History of Seneca Co. New York," Philadelphia, 1876, pp. 152-153, 149-150. The Indians had cultivated apple- and peach-orchards near the shores of Seneca Lake. "...the fruit was serviceable, as was the cider pressed from it."

sold it back to Isaac and Maria's son, Abraham I. Van Tuyl and his wife Hester the very next spring. The young couple worked it for a year before selling it out of the family. It seems that orchard-tending must have been a temporary endeavor for family members awaiting larger opportunities.³¹

As agriculture prospered, villages and other services grew up to support it. Back in 1792, a Mr. John Seeley, who had bought Military Tract Lot 3 in Ovid Township, established *Verona* Village - which became *Ovid* Village after 1816.³² There were general stores and dry-goods merchants, a hatmaker, harness-maker, and silversmith, at least one tavern, and - established as early as 1811 - a distillery.³³ Ovid functioned as the *shire village* during the early days, with a court-house having been built by 1807 to serve the litigious populace. By the 1820s, the village had somehow come to support four lawyers and one legal assistant (called a *pettifogger*):³⁴

Such an array of popular legal talent would indicate lively times in litigation, and such was the case, for angry, long contested law suits were not uncommon, and several "chronic litigants" will long be remembered.

Life and Death

Seneca County must have been a healthful environment. Being free from swamps like those on Staten Island, it would not have suffered from yellow fever or malaria. Lack of urban crowding such as that being experienced by New York City must have kept communicable diseases like typhus in check. But people frequently got sick and died during the 19th century, and there was little or nothing that doctors could do about it. Women, it is apparent from the records, had a worse time of it than men. War may have disproportionately affected the men, but until the Civil War, the effect was minor.³⁵ For women, the major hazard was childbirth and its many complications.

³¹ Seneca County Deeds. Isaac and Maria bought 3 acres on Lot 47 on 13 Mar, 1811 [Book E, pg. 147]. They sold it to Abraham and Rachel on 6 Sep., 1813 [Book F, pg. 543]. They in turn sold to nephew Abraham I. Van Tuyl on 8 March, 1814 [Book I, pg. 226], and he and his wife Hester sold it on 6 Feb., 1816 [Book I, pg. 314]. These recorded documents are the primary sources connecting brothers Oliver and Abraham I. Van Tuyl to the family, and the only known mention of Hester C. Van Tuyl, first wife of Abraham I. Van Tuyl, whom we suppose to be the daughter of neighbor John Bartholemew of Lot 56. Surprisingly, the orchard was still an orchard - although disused - in 1992!

³² This must have been the same John Seeley who sold John Van Tuyl the 200 acres back in 1799 [Cayuga Deeds A 89-90].

³³ Morrison, pp. 7-8.

³⁴ Morrison, pg. 8. The village apparently had its heyday in the 1840s, and by the 1880s had declined.

³⁵ Thomas Van Tuyl and Abraham I. Van Tuyl both served briefly in the War of 1812. Thomas took ill - probably from camp fever [typhus] - and was sent home after only one month. He recovered. Neither man apparently saw combat. [U.S. Bounty Land Claim 59,646 and Pension Application 18.563]

Justice, Seneca County Style...

1811

At a term of the Circuit Court held in June of 1811 at the county courthouse in Ovid Village, Judge [later governor] Joseph C. Yates presiding, one John Andrews was convicted of bludgeoning to death a certain John Nichols, distillery employee. The reason? Nichols had refused to give Andrews a pint of whiskey in return for some work performed. Judge Yates and his associates declared the maximum penalty, and so it was that on September 6, 1811, people gathered from far and wide to see the age-old spectacle - a public hanging.

[A] surging crowd...had assembled from the town and surrounding countryside through the earlier circulation of handbills that had declared the unusual event as a sort of holiday... Some of the spectators had taken to the rooftops, others were perched in nearby trees, and parents held their children high on their shoulders for a better view.

Apparently, the capital punishment spectacle had a deterrent effect, of a sort, on the locals. When Reuben Tingley of Ovid Village killed his wife with an axe in 1814, probably mindful of the 1811 spectacle, he thoughtfully cut his own throat, thereby saving the public the expense of a second hanging.

1825

More direct was the revenge extracted down in Lodi Village in 1825 - half a century after The Revolution - by John Emmons, a patriot veteran, against a Mr. Van Wagener, former Tory, whose alleged war crime was recounted in 1876:

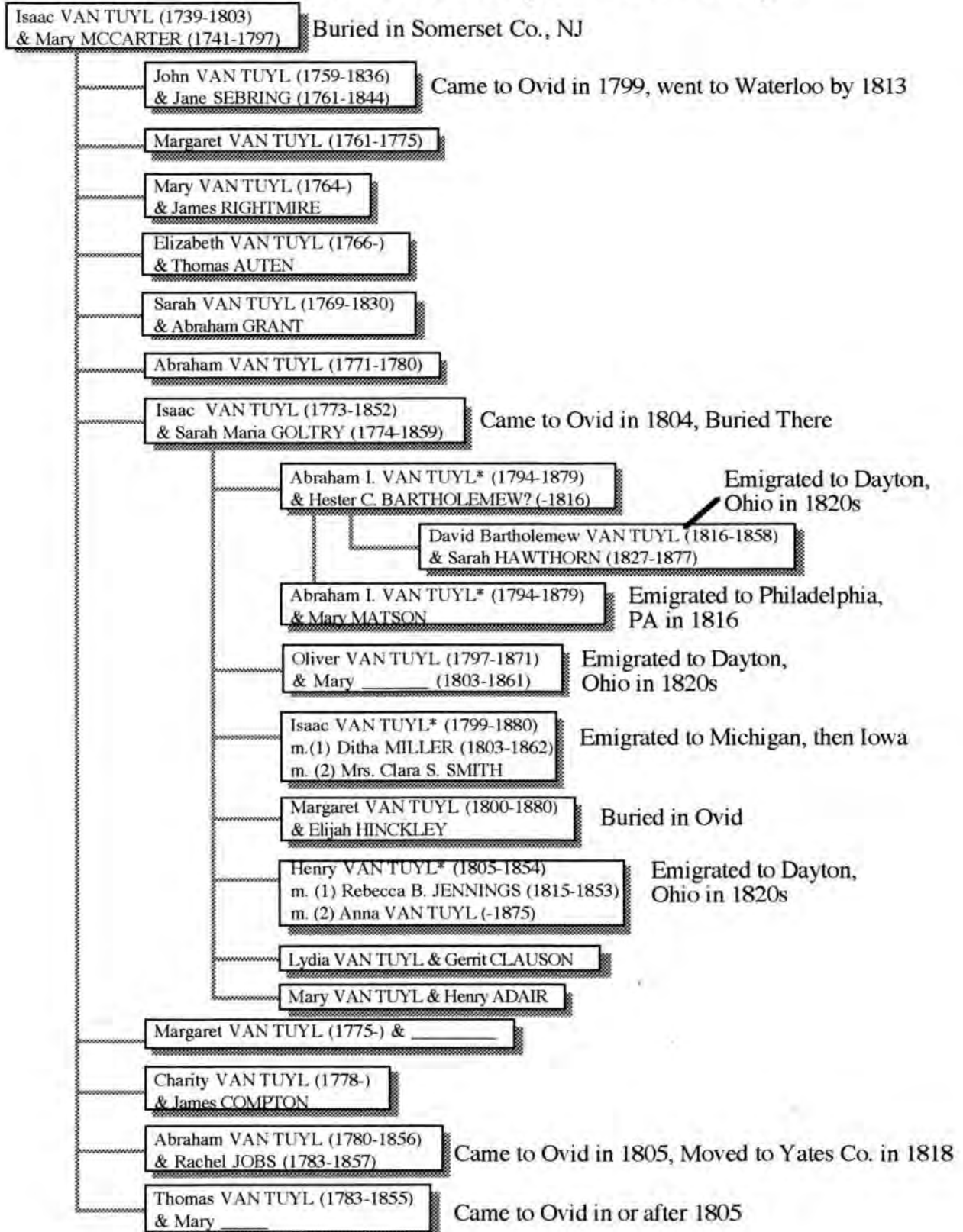
Van Wagener and his Indian allies were out on a skirmishing expedition, and, coming to a dwelling, massacred its inmates, and while yet searching for one more victim, the Indians came to a cradle, where a little child lay in its innocence; as they gazed upon the cherub, with their scalping-knives still dripping with the blood of the slain, the fierce spirit of the red man was quelled, and he determined not to further wreak his vengeance by taking the life of the babe, when Van Wagener appeared on the scene, and, brushing the Indians away, plunged his bayonet through the body.

Undoubtedly, the evil reputation of old man Van Wagener had grown with each re-telling of this yarn through the years, and so, at a public election held at Kelley's Corners in about 1825 with both Emmons and Van Wagener present [and possibly still political foes]:

...the patriotic old soldier...threw an end of a rope over a beam in the room where they were standing, and quick as thought fastened the other around Van Wagener's neck; in less time than it takes to write it, the old tory was dangling in the air. After keeping him suspended for some time, Emmons gradually lowered him, feeling that he had in a small degree punished the wretch for his inhumanity.

The creative writer who chronicled this frontier yarn in 1876 did not, so far as we know, have opportunity to hear a rebuttal from the "wretch" Van Wagener, then long-since gone to Tory Hell, it would seem.

The Seneca County Van Tuyls



Perhaps the death of a young mother due to complications of childbirth can explain the lifelong association between Henry Van Tuyl - born to Maria Goltry Van Tuyl in Seneca County about 1805 - and his nephew David Bartholemew Van Tuyl.³⁶ As men, they would practice medicine together in the west. Their association would be unusually close for uncle and nephew - it was rather more like that of brothers. But how did this come about, given the strange circumstance that David's father lived in Philadelphia, PA, whereas Henry was from Seneca County?

Here is what we think happened...

Abraham I. Van Tuyl, Henry's oldest brother, returned in 1814 from a brief service in the War of 1812. He soon married the girl-next-door: Hester Bartholemew. After Hester gave birth in 1816 to David Bartholemew Van Tuyl, she soon sickened and died, probably of child-bed fever. Ten-year-old Henry watched her die, and it may have been because of this traumatic experience that he developed ambitions to become a doctor - who knows? Abraham I., the grieved husband, reacted in an emotional way: he ran off to Philadelphia, leaving the baby for his own mother to raise, and for Henry to look after in an older-brother sort of way. Perhaps Henry and David spent time in Philadelphia with the by-then-remarried Abraham I. Van Tuyl and his new family. In any event, the two followed Henry's older brother Oliver out west to Dayton, Ohio in the 1820s, where they built their lives and careers together.³⁷

The Diaspora

For the Van Tuyls, Seneca County was a rendezvous point, a jumping-off place for westward migration. It was also a place from which they could, if they chose to, move away from farming. This agrarian branch of the family was, for the first time in several generations, living near real towns in whose affairs they could participate - towns where they might be able to make a life free from the daily toil of the farm. The world was changing, and opportunity knocked. Waterloo Village was starting to amount to something: John and Mary left their farm to settle there by 1813, John becoming a village property owner, tavern-keeper, and school trustee. John and Mary

³⁶ Records of Woodland Cemetery, Dayton, Ohio. #1712: Henry Van Tuyl born Seneca County, NY died 30 Sept, 1854, age 49 [Lot 120, Sec. 52].

³⁷ That Hester was the wife of Abraham I. Van Tuyl in February of 1816 we know from Seneca County Deeds, Book I, pg. 314-5. We infer that she was Hester Bartholemew because: a) the baby born to them was named David *Bartholemew* Van Tuyl, b) John Bartholemew lived near the Van Tuyls of Lot 47, between the Millers and Coryelles [settlers of Lot 56 per county history], as recorded in the 1810 census of Ovid Town, pg. 255. In pension application no. 18563, Abraham I. swore that he had married Mary Matson in Philadelphia on 20 March, 1817, and that he had enlisted in the war of 1812 from Seneca County, NY. The US Census of 1850, Dayton, OH, pg. 202 lists David B. Van Tuyl as age 34, implying he was born about 1816. That his young mother would have died that year from complications of childbirth seems logical. See also: Conklin, W.J., "The Pioneer Doctor and Other Addresses," Dayton, OH Library, pp. 10-11, which documents Henry and David's joint medical practice.

became leading citizens who helped to found the Waterloo Presbyterian Church in 1817.³⁸ Their son Isaac was apparently the purchaser - with borrowed money - of some commercial property in Ovid Village in 1814.³⁹

For those who wanted to continue farming, there was still land available. John's younger brother Isaac and his wife Maria Goltry borrowed money in 1813 to buy the 50 acres right next to the family's 3 acre orchard on lot 47 in Ovid,⁴⁰ and they remained in the area until their deaths in the 1850s.⁴¹ New farmland became available west of Seneca Lake in what was called the *Holland Tract*: John's younger brother Abraham and his wife Rachel Jobs moved there in 1818, acquiring a 100-acre vineyard in Jerusalem Town in 1819. They, and their descendants, became prominent citizens of Yates County and Penn Yan Village.⁴²

But members of the next generation who wanted a large expanse of farmland at affordable prices were obliged to look to the western frontier. Seneca County newspapers like the *Waterloo Gazette* in the period 1817-1824 contain many notices of foreclosure sales, indicating that then, as now, farming with borrowed money was a risky proposition. Not coincidentally, these same newspapers are full of promotional advertisements for land "Out West" to attract the young man wishing to avoid ruinous mortgages and willing to shoulder the burden of developing a farm, a town, and a new life from scratch.

So it was that the sons of Isaac Van Tuyl and Maria Goltry headed west. Oliver Van Tuyl, their second son, set out in the 1820s to the Miami Valley of Ohio, setting the stage for the subsequent migration of Van Tuyls to the new town of Dayton, Ohio.⁴³ His younger brother Isaac and wife Ditha Miller moved to the vicinity of Ypsilanti, Michigan, and later to Denmark, Iowa.⁴⁴ And as we learned earlier, the youngest of their sons, Henry, chose to follow his brother Oliver's steps to Dayton, where he was later joined by David Bartholemew Van Tuyl and other relatives. In following chapters our narrative will follow the Van Tuyls who headed west to Dayton to seek their fortune in that mid-19th century land of opportunity.

³⁸ Bowman, pp. 2-3.

³⁹ Seneca Co. Mortgages, Book B, pg. 148. Merchant Henry Wood loaned the young Isaac \$2000, which was to be repaid in 5 yearly installments of \$400 plus interest. See also, Deeds, Book H, pg. 16.

⁴⁰ Seneca Co. Mortgages, Book B, pg. 336, 13 May, 1813. The debt was discharged in 1816.

⁴¹ They are buried in the Ovid Union Cemetery next to their daughter, Margaret Hinkley.

⁴² Bowman, pg. 20, ff.

⁴³ _____, "History of Montgomery County, Ohio," W.H. Beers & Co., 1882, pg. 736.

⁴⁴ Cramer and Van Tuyl, pg. 2

Epilogue

In the year 1828, after some Van Tuyls had left Seneca County, but while many were still living there, a remarkable event occurred: the founding of a major religious sect. That year, David Whitmer, son of Seneca County farmer Peter Whitmer, was visiting Palmyra, NY. While there, he met a man named Oliver Cowdrey, and boarded with a family named Smith. The main topic of conversation was the Smith's son Joseph, then out of the area, but well-known for his ability to decode messages with special stones. David Whitmer invited Oliver Cowdrey and Joseph Smith to visit him in Fayette Town, south of Waterloo and north of Ovid and Romulus, where Whitmer's family lived in one of the settler's log cabins similar to the Van Tuyls'. Smith, as it turned out, was illiterate, but Cowdrey and Whitmer were not. So in the evenings, upstairs in the Whitmer's farmhouse, Peter Whitmer and Oliver Cowdrey would sit on one side of a table taking dictation from Joseph Smith, who sat opposite them, obscured by a cloth curtain, so the two could not see what he was doing. Through the curtain came detailed prose in the style of the King James Bible of the time - prose which Smith said he was decoding, using special stones, from ancient tablets given to him by an angel of The Lord. Whitmer and Cowdrey's text was published as *The Book of Mormon*. Not only did it launch a major religious sect, but it also triggered one of the most famous of the 19th century westward migrations - that of Smith's followers to the Utah Territory in the 1840s.⁴⁵ So Seneca County was, in more ways than one, an incubator of western expansion.

⁴⁵ Information provided by the LDS Church at *Peter Whitmer's Farm*, Fayette Town, NY. The authors are not affiliated with the LDS Church.