

CHARLTON

excerpted from Booths History of Saratoga by John Chester Booth - 1858

In the month of May, 1774, Thomas Sweetman, from Freehold in the colony of New Jersey, arrived with his family at Schenectady. Having a short time prior to this purchased a tract of land of the proprietors of the "Five Thousand Acre Lot," and built a log cabin thereon, he now blazed out a road from Schenectady and moved his household thither. This was the first settlement of that part of the old Town of Ballstown now known as Charlton. During the summer of this year, a number of citizens of the Jerseys, from Freehold and its neighborhood, purchased land adjoining Sweetman, and commenced clearing it and built them cabins. Among these were David Maxwell, the father of Walter K. Maxwell now of Charlton, John McKnight, Joseph LaRue, and Thomas and Joseph Brown, the latter the father of the late Hon. Anson Brown, of Ballston Spa. Jesse Conde, of Schenectady also settled here at this time. This settlement was in the eastern and southeastern part of the present township. With these early settlers came John Taylor for a long time one of the Judges of the County Courts and father of the distinguished statesman, Hon. John W. Taylor, who represented this part of New York in Congress for twenty consecutive years, during which he was twice Speaker of the House of Representatives, succeeding the Hon. Henry Clay in that honorable and responsible position; And also Gideon Hawley, the father of the Hon. Gideon Hawley, of Albany.

This settlement increased rapidly. It was a favorite with the inhabitants of the Jerseys and the great bulk of its early settlers came from that colony. A son of Mr. Sweetman, the Rev. Joseph A. Sweetman, now in his 86th year writes concerning it, "These primitive inhabitants brought with them but little wealth. In this deficiency they brought with them qualifications which eminently fitted them for meeting here what they must encounter. They were prudent, frugal, industrious, and resolute to endure privation of comforts and conveniences to which they had been accustomed in their former homes. Their trials were many. The land was new, heavily timbered, and requiring much labor to put it in a state of cultivation. War was threatening. It was a frontier settlement without protection and the people lived in constant apprehension of incursions from the north. Bands of savage Indians roamed through the wilderness keeping the settlers in constant alarm."

Notwithstanding these embarrassments the people laid deep the foundation of community, choosing religion for its corner stone. Too poor to support a pastor and too far removed from the centres of religious communication to secure their priveleges, they organized a society for religious purposes, meeting for prayer and other exercises in each others cabins at stated periods. Nor was education neglected. In the little log kitchen of Thomas Brown, a pedagogic genius who had strayed into the settlement from the Emerald Isle, and who bore the name of Gillis, revealed the mysteries of the horn book, and the deeper profundities of reading, writing and arithmetic. This was the first regular attempt to maintain a school in the old Ball's Town, and even it, from the natural proclivity of the worthy master to "taste a drap of the crathur," is said to have had a most irregular existence.

About 1773, Joseph Gonzalez, now spelt Consalus, from what is now Dutchess County, settled on the farm now owned and occupied by his grandson Emanuel Consaulus, about a mile and a half east of Bowsby's Corners in Charlton. His father was a native of Spain, a Jew, and was compelled to flee to Holland on account of his faith. He afterward came to New York settling in the above county. Here he married Margaret Dutcher daughter of David Dutcher, from whom, as the family claim, the county was named. This Emanuel Gonzalez had issue by this marriage six children, among whom was the above named Joseph. The land he "squatted" upon belonged to one Bower who had become a large owner of that part of the country. This section was then called "Woestyne," or "wilderness" and this was the first clearing made in what is now known as West Charlton. On the Mohawk, four miles south of him dwelt Tunis Swart, who was one of the earliest settlers on the river west of Schenectady having located then as early as 1752. He was a man of great courage and daring. During the Revolution he was celebrated for his manifold services and exploits as a Spy and Scout in behalf of the Patriots. In 1790 he moved from the river and located on a farm west of the Scotch Church, in Charlton, where his nephew, Tunis Swart, now resides.

In 1775, William Gilchrist, a Scotch emigrant, the father of the Hon. John Gilchrist, a member of Assembly in 1822, 27, 31 and a judge of the County Courts, from 1838, with other of his countrymen, either direct from Scotland or latterly from the Jerseys, settled, along the road and in the neighborhood where now the Scotch Church stands.

JOHN W. TAYLOR

In 1842, Mr. Taylor removed from Ballston Spa to Cleveland, Ohio, where he remained in the family of his eldest daughter until his decease. This occurred Sept. 18th, 1854, in his 71st year. In compliance with his injunctions his remains were conveyed to Ballston Spa for internment. On their arrival, a large and respectable meeting of the citizens of the place was held at the Court House. Lebbeus Booth Esq. in the chair, and Moses Williams Esq. Secretary. Resolutions were introduced by John C. Booth, and adopted, and remarks were submitted by Geo. C. Scott, William T. Odell and A. Meeker, Esquires.

The following extract from Judge Scott's remarks, as reported at the time in the Ballston Democrat, will suffice for a more extended Biographical Sketch.

"The deceased, in his time, filled a large space in the public eye. Among the many distinguished men of whom this County can boast there has not been one, who has held such high official position, and whose name has been so widely and extensively known, as the individual whom we are about to follow to his grave.

Mr. Taylor, as it is well known, was a native of Charlton in this County. He graduated at Union College, in 1803, with the highest honors of that institution. On leaving College, he entered upon the study of law, and, on his admission to the Bar, commenced its practice in the immediate vicinity. Before he had an opportunity to distinguish himself in his profession to any considerable extent, he was sent from the County to the House of Assembly. This was in 1812 - an exciting

period in both State and National politics. In December of that year, at the age of twenty-eight, he was elected a Representative in the Congress of the United States, from the district, which then, for the first time, and until the close of his term of his services, consisted of the County of Saratoga. Soon after he had entered upon his parliamentary career, he evinced talents admirably adapted to that branch of the public service. Such was the stand he took in the House of Representatives, that he was twice elected presiding officer of that Body - the third position in rank and dignity in the General Government - and, he discharged the duties of that difficult and arduous station with signal ability and to the general satisfaction. For twenty consecutive years, he was continued, by a confiding constituency, a member of the House - a distinction, which, if I mistake not, has, in no other instance, been attained by a northern Representative. At each successive election, (with the exception of 1824) he encountered a systematic and powerful opposition; but he seemed to be enthroned in the hearts of the people of his district, and, as was remarked of him by a contemporary, "he was lauded when he flourished and strengthened when he fainted, as scarce ever was man before." His commanding abilities and national reputation, no doubt, contributed essentially to his known popularity; but the great secret of his success was a happy combination of social qualities, rarely united in the same individual. It was difficult to resist the fascination of his polished manners and the charm of his society and conversation.

It is a source of consolation to know that the strong and prevailing desire of the last years of his life is about to be realized that he will be laid by the side of the partner of his youth - and his bones repose in the vicinity of his birth place - at the home of his manhood - beneath the soil of the County whose name he has honored and "among the people whom he loved so well."

These settlers brought with them the religious forms and tenets of the land of their nativity and held to their observance with a tenacity that neither time nor the spirit of modern innovation has been able to loosen. The neighborhood is still marked by the religious and many of the social peculiarities of the land of the Covenanters, and their descendants still worship according to the forms and traditions of the National Kirk of their ancestors.