

# HISTORY

OF THE

## ORIGINAL TOWN OF CONCORD,

BEING THE PRESENT TOWNS OF

CONCORD, COLLINS, N. COLLINS AND  
SARDINIA.

ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK.

BY ERASMUS BRIGGS.

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Augustus G. Cochran  
Private, Co. A  
(see page 315)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES,

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him to death. We tried to pry his paws apart with hand spikes to liberate the dog, but could not do it, and finally had to knock the bear in the head and killed him; we then took him up to the house and kept him several days for people to look at.

My father's family were;

Vernam C. Cooper.

Betsey Cooper married Luke Simonds; lives in Concord.

Julia Ann married Jonathan Swain; died in Colden.

Margaret died in this town twenty years ago.

Samuel died in Illinois twenty-seven years ago.

Phoebe died in Ohio eighteen years ago.

Elarky Lodusky lives in Concord.

Ezra Lush's mother was sister to my father, and Ezra's wife was sister to my wife.

**Vernam C. Cooper's Family.**

He married Keziah Sampson, July 28, 1828. Their children were:

Colvin Cooper.

Caroline married Job Woodward; lives in Concord.

Cary married Helen Gray; he died in Kansas, 1879.

Ann married Frank Perkins; he died nineteen years ago.

Clementine died when a child.

Carlos died when a child.

Leroy died at Staunton hospital, District of Columbia, Dec. 8, 1864, aged nineteen years, nine months and nineteen days.

William Wallace married Flora Stage; lives in Concord.

John Wesley married Mariette Colburn; lives in Concord.

**The Cochran Family.**

Samuel Cochran, who was one of the very first settlers in the present Town of Concord, was born Jan. 21, 1785, in the Town of Gifford, Vermont, and was married Nov. 6, 1805, to Catharine Gallup, who was born Feb. 22, 1787, in the Town of Colrain, Mass. He was descended from the Scotch Covenanters, who, flying from the persecutions under King James, settled in the North of Ireland; while she was a descendant of a Huguenot

family which had escaped from the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Soon after marriage, the youthful pair moved to Tioga county, N. Y., near the present Town of Painted Post, where they remained until the Fall of 1808, when, having found their location to be destitute of water in the dry season, they decided to go where living water was abundant.

At this time, the Holland Land company were distributing their circulars and maps, and inviting settlers to visit their lands. One of these fell into Cochran's hands, on which the present location of Springville was named "Cold Springs," on account of their abundance, coldness and purity. His late experience decided him to visit the place for himself. In the month of September or October, 1808, in company with Joseph Yaw, an uncle of his wife, he started on foot, equipped with blanket, knapsack and staff, to visit Cold Springs, now Springville. He came through the southern tier of counties to Angelica, and from there by what was known as the McClure settlement, in the Town of Franklinville, Cattaraugus county, Joseph McClure having cut to that place a sled road from Angelica, which was barely a track indicated by blazed trees, from which the logs had been cut and rolled away. McClure had been educated for the medical profession, but disliking it he had left Belchertown, Mass., and moved to Angelica, N. Y., in the Summer of 1804, when his skill and accuracy as a surveyor had attracted the attention of the principal surveyor and agent of the Holland Land company, Joseph Ellicott, by whom McClure was employed, and sent into the wilderness to survey the subdivisions of the Purchase, and appreciating the loveliness and fertility of the broad valley of the Ischua, he decided to make it his home and moved there in 1806. From this point, Cochran and Yaw had only blazed trees to guide them down the south branch of the Cattaraugus creek to the forks where they crossed to the north bank of the stream which they followed down as far as the place known as the George Shultus place. From this place, they came up the ravine to what is now called Cattaraugus street, to the site of the present Village of Springville. They found only the two families of Christopher Stone and John Albro. Stone on Buffalo street just south of Eaton street, and Albro farther north.

Cochran & Yaw took up lot 2; Cochran the south part. With the help of Albro & Stone they cut logs and rolled up the body of a house high enough to stand under the lowest side of the roof. This structure was located at the point of the hill about forty rods south-west of the Edward Goddard place, where a few years later Yaw built a house and spent his days. At first Cochran's house had no floor or window and not a nail in it. Pins driven into augur holes in the logs furnished shelving, seats and table. They had what might be regarded as a novelty at the present day, a bedstead with only one leg to it, in which were two augur holes, receiving the two rails from the sides of the house which furnished the other legs and side, ready for bark cording, which, in those days, was considered a rather extravagant and great luxury. As soon as the shanty was ready Cochran returned for his wife, by way of Buffalo and Batavia, following only blazed trees as far as Boston, from which place a sled-road had been cut out to Buffalo. The first road or travelled path from Springville to Buffalo was up Franklin street to the Russell orchard, then by the Wilson place, Townsend Hill, Pike, Adams and Trevett's, to Boston. Cochran was soon ready to return to his future home, where his life was spent and where he and his wife rest in the beautiful cemetery on the farm they so long occupied.

All their effects were easily packed on a small sled drawn by a yoke of steers, and the father, mother and child started for this wilderness home, by the way of Batavia and Williamsville. From the latter place he was nine days in reaching Springville, and this was only accomplished with the greatest exertion, often being compelled to cut and roll the logs from trees that had fallen across the track. Crossing the Buffalo creek on the ice was a serious affair. After the ice had first formed the water in the creek had fallen about a foot, the ice breaking along the bank had formed again below, leaving a strip of the first formation projecting from the bank. In crossing the runner of the sled ran so firmly under the ledge that the steers were unable to back it out. After vainly trying to extricate the sled, it being quite dark, he took the child in his arms and with his wife, walked nearly a mile, to the Indian Council House, where the Indians were holding one of their wild dances, feath.

ers and paint giving them a hideous appearance. Here he left his wife and child, while he with two or three Indians, returned to extricate the sled, which delayed his return about two hours, which, to the young wife, seemed an age, alone with the howling, painted savages. She had seldom seen Indians, but her mind was filled with stories of their savage ferocity and memory was faithful in bringing them all up fresh before her as they danced, howling around their camp-fire. One of the squaws took the baby in her arms and danced around the fire with it singing their war songs, which seemed to please the child far more than the mother, who expected every moment to see it tossed in the fire. Another took her fur-trimmed overcoat, put it on and followed in the dance and finally disappeared out-doors with it. Her feelings can better be imagined than described. Her child seemed safe but the thought that her fur-trimmed coat, the bridal-gift of her mother, was gone forever and she could not hide her tears. "White squaw, baby, cry," said one who could speak a little English.

At last her husband returned with the Indians who had accompanied him. All was right again, but that scene could never be forgotten by the mother. They stayed at the Council House all night. The Indians fed their steers and gave them breakfast for which they would take no remuneration. The only similar instance in their long journey. They obtained shelter nights and food until they reached Boston corners. Thence it took them two days to reach Springville, camping one night beside a fallen tree, between the Lewis Trevitt place and the Pike school-house, about five and one-half miles from their new house, which they reached on the following day.

When they left Boston they started very early with strong hopes to reach Springville that night, but a strong wind had prostrated several trees across their track, which had given them a day of the hardest labor to get through, but all in vain. The bright hopes of the morning were all blasted and though it was cold and blustering they were compelled to spend the night beside a fallen tree near the roots which were turned up. Hemlock brush was piled on the ground and a covering of it on poles overhead, a fire built before it which kept Cochran busy through the night, to supply with fuel and tend while the

mother had a six-months' child to keep comfortable and quiet. The steers had to make their supper and breakfast on browse. They were all ready for another early start and reached the shanty of John Russell, on lot one, near the angle (just west of the corporation line) on Franklin street, built since Cochran went for his wife. It was a pleasant surprise for Cochran and wife to come upon this shanty in the wilderness, with its genial occupants and they were made welcome there the first night in Concord, and the wives formed a union that night, baptised with many tears (but they were tears of joy) that lasted all through their future lives. And their "pine-knot" torches often guided them through the woods, half a mile, from shanty to shanty, for a long winter evening's visit. The next morning Russell and Cochran went down together to Cochran's house to clear out the snow which they found abundant in it, as the roof covered only about three-fourths of the top, no doors in it and no chinking had been done. But the snow was soon ejected and fire built at one end where there was not any roof and both wives were soon there getting their two suppers together. With what thrilling interest the survivors of these two families recounted these scenes over fifty years after.

Though greatly surprised by the addition of Russell and wife to the town since Cochran went for his family, he was disappointed in finding that Albro had lost his wife and left for his old home in the east. During the winter of 1808 and 1809, Stone, Cochran and Russell were the only settlers within ten miles. Cochran and Russell were the two first permanent settlers of the town of Concord. Stone and Albro removing to other parts of the country. The first money earned by Cochran was by making ashes, boiling the lye into salts, in a two-pail iron kettle, and carrying the salts in a trough he had dug out, on his back to the ashery in Hamburg, twenty-two miles distant. With this money he was enabled to pay his bill made in Boston when moving into Concord. It is difficult to picture to ourselves the hardships of pioneer life. The winter blasts penetrated the hastily-built shanties. There were no fire-places and no chimneys save a big hole in the roof, through which all the heat as well as the smoke escaped. The cattle lived on browse and for a while these hardy settlers had to supply much of their provis-

ions from the game of the surrounding wilderness. They had no neighbors within ten miles. The curling smoke from these three humble but happy homes was all there was to cheer the forest gloom. Never were neighbors more highly prized than by those hopeful pioneers who were closely united by their common experiences and the necessities of their forest life.

Much of their out-door labor was done in common. Together they logged and cleared their land and soon each had three or four acres burned and in condition to plant corn and potatoes. They struggled hard under adverse circumstances to supply their actual wants. But sympathy and generous friendship made their lot happy and often in later years they were heard to call those early days of struggle and privation the happiest of their lives. Cochran and Russell with their wives, went on foot to Cary's, in Boston, ten miles, on a visit, each of the men carrying a baby in their arms. They did not start for the afternoon visit at five P. M. Nor did they return the same evening, but took two days for the trip and felt well paid. This visit was soon returned by Asa Cary and wife.

A few years later, when Peter Pratt had settled in Collins, now known as Zoar, Russell, Cochran, and their wives, and Albro, who had returned with a young wife, went with an ox sled eight miles to spend an evening at his house. It took a good part of the day to get there and all night to get back. Still no doubt they worked lively and gossiped very little about their neighbors. About this time Cochran heard that a man named Waterman had settled upon the Cattaraugus Creek, where the village of Gowanda is now situated. As there were Watermans in his native town he determined to visit him in hopes to hear from his eastern home again. To accomplish this he first went eight miles to get Peter Pratt's old mare on which his wife could ride and carry the baby, for he had come to the conclusion after carrying the baby to Boston and back that baby had got big enough to ride a horse, while he was needed to go ahead and pick out the way, there not being any road. They travelled over twenty-five miles, over the terrible breakers and ravines of Zoar, along the Cattaraugus creek, then an unbroken wilderness, to reach Waterman's. On their return the mare's colt broke its leg, which caused another day's delay. The visit

which was returned by Waterman and wife on horse-back, occupied five days. Such incidents, trivial in themselves, throw a clearer light upon the lives and feelings of our ancestors and give us a better comprehension of the hardships they endured, than can be obtained from the most eloquent descriptions. These pioneers had no communication with the outside world and the friends they left, except as intelligence was brought to them from time to time by some new settler. There were but few additions to the settlement until 1810, when quite a number of families joined them. The next year, and year following, additions were so numerous through the town that when troops were called for in the war of 1812, quite a company went from the limits of the present Town of Concord. Cochran was appointed Ensign by Colonel Stevens and had charge of the company from this town, and were placed at the battery on foot at Black Rock the night Buffalo was burned, and came near being taken prisoners in the morning. When Buffalo was burning a company of Red Coats were sent down the river to silence the battery, which had been doing bad work with their small boats, which had been continually crossing the river during the night. And this company of Red Coats were near the battery when Colonel Chapin was seen coming at full speed from another direction and in time warned them to make their escape, when they all fled, some running but a few rods jumped down the bank by the river side and were safe from their shots, whilst others ran for the woods some forty or fifty rods on a double quick, the balls whizzing by them, Cochran was among this number and as he dodged behind a big hemlock tree a ball struck the tree throwing the bark so sharply in his face that he thought certainly the bullet hit him. Cochran, in after years, often spoke of this as the most terrible event of all his life, for, on the last fire, the cannon ran over his foot crushing off the nails from his toes and he came near fainting and falling at every step the pain was so terrible. Only one of the company got hit by the enemy's bullets and that but a flesh wound in his arm. When the British had spiked the guns they returned to the city for plunder. At the close of the war, Cochran received a commission from the Government as aide-de-camp to Brigadier-general and afterwards to Major-general. Much



of the time during his life he held some town office, was one of the first stockholders in the Springville Academy and a trustee all his life. Most of the time its treasurer and during its darkest days and most trying periods, one of its most firm and liberal supporters. At its opening he was so anxious to see it start full that he put in five scholars, though part of them were so young as to more properly belong to the district school. He was ever ready to aid in every benevolent and public enterprise in the place. His second log house was built on the corner of Central avenue and Franklin street, occupying the ground on which the beautiful and stately mansion of D. W. Bensley now stands. In 1823, he built the house on Main street, in which he spent the remainder of his days. When this house was finished the traveling public pressed him so hard for accommodation that in 1824, he put up a sign and kept public house for twenty years. Though he voluntarily abandoned the liquor traffic and kept a temperance house for three or four years. This house is again being fitted for a hotel by F. K. Davis. Cochran died in 1845 not quite sixty-two years of age, leaving a wife, five sons and four daughters, all of whom but the eldest, were born in Springville.

His eldest son, Orson, was born Jan. 26, 1815, and lived in Concord till 1840, when he moved to Otto, near Waverly. He was elected Justice of the Peace in 1850, which office he has held ever since, now over thirty-five years. Was town superintendent of Common School there till the office was abandoned. He still lives at Otto, near Waverly.

Joseph G., the second son, was born Feb. 5, 1817. He prepared for College at Springville Academy and graduated at Amherst College and Union Theological Seminary, N. Y., and was sent by A. B. C. F. M., in 1847, to Persia, Asia, where he died after twenty-five years of very successful labor in the mission field. In 1847, he was married to Miss Deborah Plumb, a daughter of Joseph Plumb, formerly of Gowanda. She continued a missionary on the same field where her husband died. Her son, Dr. J. P. Cochran, is laboring with her on the same field.

Byron, the third son, was born Jan. 30, 1821. Has held several offices in the militia, was on Brigadier and Major-Gen-

eral's staff. Was elected Justice of the Peace five times, was deacon, elder and Sunday school superintendent of the Presbyterian church, Springville, for over thirty years, till health failed and he resigned. He still resides in Springville.

Augustus G., the fourth son, was born July 1, 1825. He served three years in the war of the Rebellion, was with Sherman in his grand march through Georgia, returned from the hospital in poor health and is now living on a farm in the Town of Great Valley, Cattaraugus county.

David H., the fifth son, was born July 5th, 1828; prepared for college at Springville Academy. Graduated from Hamilton College about the year 1849. Was principal of Fredonia Academy about three years, from which place he went to the State Normal school at Albany as Professor of Chemistry, &c. Was soon chosen president of Albany State Normal school, where he remained till about 1861 or 1862, when he was elected president of Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute, where he still remains as Ph. D., LL. D.

#### **Colonel Elbert Willett Cook.**

Elbert Willett Cook—familiarly known as Colonel Cook—was a son of Paul and Jerusha Cook and grandson of Constant and Isabel Cook, and in direct line with their ancestors who came to this country about 1630. The ancestors of his mother, Miss Jerusha Hatch, came over in the Mayflower, and landed at Plymouth Rock. She was of the same family as Israel T. Hatch of Buffalo and Judge Pringle of Batavia.

Elbert Willett was born April 23, 1804, in Springfield, Otsego county, N. Y.

Miss Thankful Plumb Murray, born in Orwell, Rutland county, Vt., was a daughter of Jonathan and Roslinda Murray. Elbert Willett Cook and Thankful Plumb Murray were married in Springville, Erie county, N. Y., Nov. 29, 1832. Their children were:

Hiram Henry, born Oct. 17, 1835, and died unmarried July 18, 1858.

Harriet Maria, born Nov. 19, 1837, and died unmarried Sept. 18, 1857.