

## Reminiscences of Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Fredonia

By Levi Risley, Devillo White, Darwin R. Barker, and Hansen Risley  
between 1873 and 1886.

As transcribed by Douglas H. Shepard and Marsia Painter in 2012.

The most useful source for Fredonia history is *The Fredonia Censor* (1821-1964) not only because it recorded local events but also because it included reminiscences of what had occurred in the earliest years of the settlement, before the *Censor* existed. The most prolific of its correspondents was Levi **Risley**. Born in June 1804, he came to Fredonia (then called Canadaway) with his family in April 1807, removed with them to Ohio in 1811, and returned in May 1814. In his later years he farmed in Cedar Rapids IA then moved to Chicago. It was while he was in the Midwest that he wrote about what he remembered from his childhood, those articles appearing in the *Censor* from 1871 to 1886.

In *The Fredonia Censor* of 8 February 1871 appeared this announcement dated 25 January 1871: *You are respectfully invited to a supper to be given on Wednesday evening, Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>, to Hon. Henry C. Frisbee, the founder of the Fredonia Censor, on the completion of its fiftieth volume. Supper will be served in Barmore & Ball's hall, at 7:30 o'clock.*

*Yours truly*

**W. McKinstry**

It was that invitation to which Levi **Risley** responded in a letter of 13 March 1871. It appeared in the 22 March issue of the *Censor*:

*There are now but few persons remaining in Fredonia whose memories retain as vividly the early days of that lovely village as does my own. In the spring of 1807 my father moved from Cazenovia, Madison Co., to Fredonia, or then Canadaway. Our first house was a log hut standing on the Berry road. On that lot, some years afterward, Mr. Sweezy, a Presbyterian clergyman, built a frame house which later was known as the **Berry House**. I commenced my education by attending school with my older sisters one half day at the old log school house, standing then on the common near where Temple street divides it, and about between the fountains, which school was presided over by Miss Nabby **Brigham**, now my beloved and bereaved sister. [Mrs. Gen. **Risley** –Ed.] Herself, Mrs. Dr. **White**, Joy **Handy** and my brother William are all that I now think of, of that date, who now remain.*

*Mr. **Frisbee** was the first person I ever saw set a type. He was then in Mr. **Hull**'s office in the old **Woleben & Fellows** building. A printed slip was pasted on the door that said, "Walk in without knocking!" I walked in, and was much interested in my visit. I bought two sheets of paper of Mr. **Hull**, and promised myself that I would go again. The next time, H. C. **Frisbee** was pulling at the lever on the old Ramage press and **Ozias**, who was, I think, the cheaper apprentice – that afterward took the wind from his sail – was master of ceremony with the big black balls. The same year that the *Censor* was started I commenced an apprenticeship with that good, faithful Christian and citizen, Wm. A. **Hart**, who was a firm supporter and friend of the *Censor*, and from that time to the present I have been a weekly reader of it. When we had political nuts to crack I always felt safe to wait until the *Censor* came out as some others did for the Albany Argus. I wish I could have been at that social gathering and mingling of the old and new.*

*Please remember me in warm terms to Mr. **Frisbee**, and accept for you and yours my kindest regards. L. **Risley***

*Cedar Rapids, Iowa, March 13, 1871.*

Two years later, on 12 March 1873, the *Censor* announced, "A call is being circulated for a meeting of the old settlers of Chautauqua county, to take place at the Academy hall in this village

on Tuesday, April 15, at 1 o'clock p.m." In fact the large and elaborate celebration was held on 11 June 1873 and reported extensively in the *Censor* of 18 June, which led Levi **Risley** once again to reminisce in a private letter from which the *Censor* of 30 July 1873 excerpted the historical details:

*Our desire to attend the Reunion of Old Settlers was very great, but when we saw so many old familiar names in the list of those present, we ached all over to see their faces. How many, many of this old class have fallen asleep since we came to Iowa! How few of my old school mates remain still! Ursula **Woodcock**, Sophia and Eliza **Williams** attended the first school where I learned my A, B, C, in the old house standing on the south side of the common, and a few rods west of the old Ben **Douglass** leather store and shoe shop. Miss Charlotte **Gilmore** was the teacher, and the operation of stimulating the brain with a switch applied to the lower extremities was performed by her on me for the first time in company with Bill **Lovejoy**. Surely my love for my teacher was not a very intense flame, but in after years I became acquainted with her a second time, and I found her a very fine woman.*

*Since that grand gathering I have lived my boy life all over. I have been to all of the general trainings, bought and eaten old Mrs. **Russel**'s good gingerbread, stood and stopped my ears when that large cannon was fired off with such an awful noise, picked up more chestnuts than I ever picked in all my life before, and sometimes find myself limping with a stone bruise or sore stubbed toe. I was at the raising of that wonderful temple, the old [Cascade] Hamlet. Men and boys were all treated to milk punch and then went into the water which made us all as drunk as Indians. I have served over the two or three years of my apprenticeship in this same old Hamlet and much more faithfully than the first time. I made the shop my castle night and day. It was a fine thing to have a bedroom away from all observers and have one or two boys sleep with you to help raise Cain. Alured and Douglass **Houghton** were more often my bedfellows. I have many of Alured's letters now and it is with great interest that I haul over the contents of my old trunk that I made fifty years ago next summer and it has in it an accumulation of traps from that time to the present.*

The next of **Risley**'s letters, oddly enough, was inspired by some news items about the war between Russia and Turkey, which had begun on 24 April 1877 and was not concluded until the spring of 1878:

*In the Fredonia Censor I think of 1834 or 5 will be found a toast given by the old editor (peace to his ashes) at a celebration of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July at a table arranged under a bower near the hotel of M. W. & T. G. **Abell** near the present site of the **Taylor** House as follows:*

*'The Sultan of Turkey and the Autocrat of Russia – Let them fight until, like Kilkenny cats, till nothing is left but their tails to wag.'*

*This present war between Russia and Turkey is the third or fourth set-to these powers have had within the remembrance of the writer.*

*As the situation now looks, Turkey will have to retire minus her head and fore shoulders, and if Russia does not take a little care how she pokes her nose about the horns of John(?) Bull she may get it badly pummeled. (so they think.)*

*Those bower dinners in those days of roast pig were got up by the lordly hotel keepers, and not easily excelled, and the first one they gave I think was on St. John's day, 1816, and the writer, then a little bare footed boy, was pressed into service to go down to Mr. Wm. **Barker**'s, who then lived in a small plank house standing on a few acres of the flats and a little north of where Center St. now passes down. The object was to borrow knives and forks for the multitude to eat with.*

*It was then woods and uncleared from the **Taylor** House stables to **Barker's** little farm. For my recompense I received twenty five cents in silver and it was the first money I ever received for service out of our family.*

*This piece of land afterwards came into the possession of the Messrs. **Abelland** was the same ground on which the famous crop of 100 bushels of corn to the acre and the crop was harvested by the citizens with a committee to measure it.*

*About 1820 the first Agricultural Society had an exhibition of stock on the common. I don't recollect the kind of blood, but I know that stock in those days that could not winter on browse was not considered much stock.*

The next contributor of this kind was Devillo A. **White**, a son of Dr. Squire **White**. His focus was on the businesses in "Fredonia 40 Years ago" as the *Censor* headed it. In fact, he refers to businesses from as early as 1810, but more importantly seems to have inspired Levi **Risley** to write according to a new pattern. **White** began not chronologically but geographically, at the Main Street bridge:

*John Z. **Saxton & Co.**, (the firm being **Saxton, Mulford and Buckingham**) had a general assortment of goods in the old brick store south side of Main street, near the bridge. The firm also engaged quite extensively, for the times, in buying and driving off cattle to the eastern markets, which business was managed mainly by Mr. **Buckingham**.*

*Heman **McClure** built the **Lester** house adjoining this store, about 1825 and also a stone dam across the creek where **Tefft's** dam now stands. Next east of **Saxton's** was the gun shop of Mr. Wm. A. **Hart**. Next was what was known as the "smut house," a title obtained through a purchase by Thos. G. **Abel** with a smut machine as a consideration. It was a two story building with three apartments, occupied by Mrs. **Ely**, Miss **Melethy Webster**, Jacob **Houghton's** law office, and the east end as a store by B. and R. **Robbins**, who also had a distillery on the south side of the creek near where Mr. **White's** planing mill now stands. This was about 1828-29. Next east was the Walter **Smith** store, occupied afterward by O. **McClure**, with Wm. **DaLee** and Alvah **Walker** as clerks. Then came the store of Mr. **Grant**, which about the above years was occupied by **Sage & Snow**. Ambrose **Barnaby's** hat shop next. On the first day of January 1828, Mr. **Barnaby** fell dead in the street between Mr. **Abel's** hotel and barn, whither he was going for a horse and cutter to join in a sleighing party. In succession came **Mullin's** harness shop, next Nancy **Barnes's** millinery, and **Holbrook's** store where he sold salt and Barlow knives. Miss **Barnes's** stock of millinery was closed out one morning by lightning striking the building and consuming all the goods. Orrin **McClure's** house, and the *Censor* office and **Frisbee's** bookstore were next, and then the "Union Hotel," kept about that time by Asa **Pierce**. Goods were sold in the room occupied by Mr. **Frisbee** as early as 1826, next to Dr. **Crosby's** on the corner on the same lot.*

*On the corner of Main and Water streets, west, stood the house of Dr. Eliakim **Crosby**, uncle of Dr. Orris **Crosby**, opposite was Daniel G. **Garnsey's** when he was elected to Congress about 1820. Next came Joshua **Turner's** harness and saddle shop, then the Masonic Hall building, three stories high, owned and occupied by Messrs. **Buckson** and W. **Stevens** as a furniture store, built about 1818. Mr. **Bosworth's** improvements were next, and then Gen. **Barker's** tannery, the first in the county, established about 1810—Then the tavern on the corner of Main and Eagle streets, built by Mr. **Gaylord** in 1818. Isaac **Harmon** had a drug store on the opposite corner, building erected in 1817. The balance of the business on East Main consisted of a blacksmith shop built by Elijah **Webster** in 1815, James **Holly's** grocery and bake shop, who also sometimes*

entertained “strangers and travelers.”—There was not so much business done on the north side of the street.

Philo H. **Stevens** Sr., had a hat factory where L. B. **Grant** house stands. East of there was Alpheus **Winchester**'s bakery and tavern, beyond was Adin **Wait**'s blacksmith shop. Coming this way we found Pearson **Crosby**'s furniture store, upstairs the office of the Chautauqua Gazette. Wm. Couch had a tailor shop in the old P. H. **Stevens** residence, Thomas **Gillis** ditto where Mrs. **Parker**'s millinery store is, Philander **Sawin** and **Mixer** apprentices. Hon. James **Mullett** and John **Crane**, Esq., had their law office first lot this way.

Below the parks was T. G. & M. W. **Abell**'s hotel, **Todd & Douglass**' store, Sylvester **Wilson**'s tin shop, the old **Woleben** block containing a store of Asa **Pierce**, Miss Esther **Geer**'s millinery shop, and James **Story**'s dwelling. Below Mechanic street was Capt. C. **Burritt**'s drug store, Oliver **Spafford**'s bindery, Sidney **Rood** apprentice, Noah **Whitcomb**'s shoe shop, Field **DaLee**'s store in the building now occupied by Julius **Liebman**'s blacksmith shop. Over the creek was **Colegrove**'s large distillery and Wm. **Wallace**'s brewery at the foot of the hill. Opposite was Wm. **Norcott**'s tavern and blacksmith shop.

It can be no coincidence that only a few weeks later, in the 28 January 1880 issue of the *Censor*, appeared Levi **Risley**'s ambitious version. Called “Fredonia in 1821,” although one of his earliest dates is 1807, the year the **Risleys** arrived, he followed **White**'s geographical arrangement, but started not at the bridge but at the western limits of the village bounds and ran out to the eastern bounds:

Commencing on the west, within the limits of the present corporation lines, the first house on the south side of Main street was a log house standing on the present site of Mr. **Tuttle**'s, and was built in 1807 and occupied by Horace **Risley** who entered the land the year previous at the Batavia Land Office. The next house east was also a log house, built by Elijah **Risley** Sr., a few years later on a part of the same lot. The next, a log house near to the former one, was built by Walter **Brigham**. Going east, in 1822, a school house was built on the south side of the old common, partly under the auspices of Judge **Houghton** and christened by him “Trinity School,” and it was here that the eloquent Rev. David **Brown**, the first Episcopal Minister of Fredonia, held forth, and it was here that Mr. **Brown** charmed **La Fayette** in his reception address. The next house in range east was a log house and occupied about that time by Abijah **Lovejoy**, and next came about this time the house of Benj. **Douglass**, and next on the corner was his shoe shop and leather store. A little south on Seymour street stood the house of Mrs. widow **Seymour**. A small house stood at the east end of the common, and the next, built a short time after, fronting on Main street was the house built and occupied by Mr. **Higgins** whose wife was once the noted hostess of the celebrated **Mack** Tavern at the mouth of Cattaraugus Creek. Next came a strong frame building raised with posts and beams intended as a store for the young merchant D. W. **Douglass**.

It must be remembered that, until about this time, the west side of the creek was holding its head up and contending with the east side for the mastery as “the village.” This building was only noted as the place where Lorenzo **Dow**, in 1816-17, preached his first sermon in Fredonia, as rough seats had been placed in it for the accommodation of other audiences, that occasionally met there.

The next east, was the large and commodious house, built by Judge **Houghton** and occupied by him at his death. The next a house planned, build and occupied by Judge **Mullett**. Judge **Mullett** himself being a carpenter and builder until near this time, he abandoned the trade for the law. It was built with wings and verandas and about the first house built in Fredonia that could claim

style, convenience and finish. Here his estimable lady Mrs. Sally **Fitch Mullett** reigned supreme, and was much envied by other housekeeping ladies for her fine house. Next came the house of **Benj. Randall** Esq., and is now either the **McKinstry** house or the house occupied by Mrs. **Palmer**. From the stand point of the writer, next came a house that in his early years was the greatest phenomena of any house ever built in Fredonia. It was a small 7x9 building put up in about 1808 by **Elijah Risley, Jr.** for a store and grocery. The first boughten groceries the writer ever tasted was from this stock. It was presided over by Miss Fanny **Risley**, (Mrs. **James Brigham**) then 14 years old, and I think she must have been the first female clerk in the county. It would have been as well if the fashion of lady clerks had continued but she was the first and the last for many years. This small house was occupied from 1818 to 1824 by **Adam Merrill**, a shoe maker.

The next below and at the foot of the hill stood a dilapidated ashery and on the opposite corner across Hamlet street stood the then noted "Cascade Hamlet." This building was erected by **Joseph Skinner**. It was about 150 feet front on Main street reaching to the dam where a bulk head was placed to draw water to propel machinery in the building. It was intended by the builder to concentrate the mechanical operations of the village (as he said) that farmers and others need not travel distances from one mechanic to another for work to be done. In the south end of the building was **Gen. Nelson Randall's** shoe shop and leather store, next was **Sylvester Wilson's** tin and copper shop, next **Buck's** wagon [sic] shop, a shop for manufacturing threshing machines, and next a carpenter shop, then next to the dam was **W. Norcott's** blacksmith shop, with a tilt hammer operated from the water power. On the second floor and over the blacksmith shop was the far-famed sharp shooting rifle shop of **Wm. A. Hart**, under whose directions the writer spent some of his happiest hours for nearly three years. In the back part was **Martin Damon's** tomb-stone factory, a chair factory and a wooden bowl turning establishment, also **Mr. Wentworth's** extensive barrel and cooper shop. In those days potash barrels and whiskey barrels were in great demand as mostly the commerce of the county was carried on through salts of lye and whiskey. The first was mostly sent by water carriage to Montreal and the latter to save transportation was mostly used as a necessity and worried down in the town and county, to help the farmers and save the corn. But few of the rooms of this quite extensive building were ever occupied, and it has long since rotted down and passed away. Across the creek was the saw mill, built by **Hezekiah Barker**, first in the summer of 1807. The next east was the tin and copper shop of **Mr. Thompson** in which **Isaac** and **Jonathan** assisted, in 1817 and 1818, and afterwards the shop of **W. A. and S. Hart**. The next a house which was at one time occupied as a store by **A. Dickson** for a short time. Next a three story house built and occupied by **Knowles Hall** as a cabinet shop and residence, close to the small house. Then came the row of small buildings, or rooms, a part of which was occupied by **Buckstone** (as **Deville** says, I thought it was **Buxton**) as a chair and paint shop; a **Mr. Shepard** at one time occupied one department for a wagon shop. I think the **DaLees** first sold goods in the east end of this building, and, after **R. and B. Robbins**. In one of the upper rooms of this building, and in the winter of 1820 and 1821, the **Rev. Corbin Kidder** taught a grammar and writing school. In this school the writer finished his school-days and graduated. In three weeks, with **Murray's** abridged grammar, we learned to cramp some of our crooked sentences into lines, and with the young ladies in the class we repeated the old conjugation, "I love, you love, we both love."

The next east was the store built by **Hale & Risley**, in the war time of 1812, and was occupied by them some few years. It was occupied in 1821 by **W. Smith & Co.** Next was a conglomeration of buildings, in which **Joshua Turner's** harness shop, **Wm. Sage's** hat factory, afterwards **P. H. &**

G. **Stevens** or A. & A. **Barnaby**, hatter, etc. The next was a small building put up by T. **Warren**, for **Warren & Farrington**, grocery, etc., about 1816; and some time after was used for store by **McCluer & Holbrook**, and fixed up for the Censor office and burned down years after. Next and a little back from the street stood the Thos. **Warrenhouse**, afterwards dwelling of O. **McCluer**. Next the **Todd & Crosby** drug store, afterwards occupied by **Todd & Douglass**, merchants. Then two buildings, one of them on the corner of Main and Water streets, were joined together to make the Union Hotel. The next on opposite corner and back from both streets stood the Eliakem **Crosby** house, and next the three story "Masonic Hall," built by Mr. **Stephens** and some others, and the lower rooms used for paint shop etc. and the upper rooms used for the "Forest Lodge of Free Masons." In about 1826 this Masonic institution was closed and the meetings of the lodge discontinued in consequence of the abduction of one **Morgan**, by supposed Masons, from the jail in Batavia, N. Y., and remained closed until almost 1845. Maj. H. **Bosworth**, the Mason intrusted with the key and the keeping of the Masonic part, told the writer, as late as 1840, that no person had visited the room but himself since it closed. Next to this stood H. **Bosworth's** jewelry store, and next his house. Next on the corner of Main and Eagle streets, stood the old **Hawley Tavern**, which, I think, was built by him (but D. A. W. says by **Stoughton Gaylord**), at all events **Hawley** moved into the house before it was finished, and it was finished under **Hawley's** administration, by James **Lamberton**, who was the greatest mountebank and boy tickler of Fredonia in his day, and before he helped to destroy the large quantity of whiskey that was lying around loose, was a good worker, a good and industrious mechanic ruined. **Hawley** was a Canadian, and kept the house two or three years. M. D. and S. **Harman** kept the tavern, I think, next, and also kept a drug store on the opposite corner of Eagle street which building was built by **Stoughton Gaylord**. Next came the blacksmith shop of E. **Webster**. From this to the hill the ground was low and wet, and all timber from the hill standing on that side to the corporation line.

Commencing again at the west end of the village on the north side of Main street was a house built in 1817, by widow **Kapple**, opposite to the **Hilton & Barlow** improvements. The next one was a log house built by Elijah **Risley** Sen. on the lot he entered in 1806 – house built in 1808. The house had been added to by different occupants until bought by a Mr. **Hermance**, who died there. Afterwards while occupied by his widow it was burned down in about 1832. Around the embers of that old house, which had been my own child-home for two years, and as day began to light up the eastern sky, a knot of citizens might have been seen discussing the subject of the fire, thus: one says: "I really feel sorry for the widow." Another says: "So do I, I do not know what she will or can do." Another chimes in: "I do not think she will be able to build another house." Another says: "No, I am sorry for her, and pity her." About this time, the Hon. John **Crane** put his countenance into the ring, and exclaims: "Sorry, Sorry, Ha! How much are you sorry. I am sorry so much," displaying a \$10 bill. At this hint others began to put their sorrow and pity into money, and in a few minutes enough was raised to help the widow build again. And she did build. The west side mansion of A. **Buckingham's** was built upon or near this location. The next was a building once occupied by old Mr. **Webster**, father of the blacksmith **Webster**. About this time the house of David **Durlin** was built. The next put up and occupied by Phillip **Fellows**, and next to that **Fellows's** hat shop. Then an old building in which His Dutch honor Jake **Cole** domiciled some years. Next a house and also a blacksmith shop on the corner of Main and Chesnut[sic] (or Cordova St.). On the opposite corner was the old Richard **Williams's** tavern, put there and occupied by him as early as 1806. Aunt **Soffa** was the notable land lady who was able to see that the mail went from Buffalo to Erie rain or shine, once a week. Henry **Abell** was the next land lord, and then Sam'l **Johnson** took command of the corner and built a large addition

to it, with the luxury of a ball room the largest in town. Now Thos. **Warren** took the lease and kept tavern and a boarding house. The tact of **Warren** and his house-wife, land-lady drew many boarders up the hill. **W. Smith, C. Todd, J. Crane, Benj. Patton, Otto Lyman, C. Smith** and many others footed it up the hill to their meals. It was in the ball room of this house that the noted Fredonia monthly assemblies were held, in the winter of **1821-22**. The contract between the subscribers and Mr. **Warren** was drawn up by **John Crane, Esq.** and bound Mr. **Warren** to furnish supper, room and music for seventy-five cents per head. (I think, Mr. **W. Risley** has in his possession the original contract.) I do not think more than two of the signers are still living (**W. Risley** and Mr. **P. Earle**, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.) The next house was occupied by a Mr. **Merritt**, a tailor, and later by the Rev. **David Brown**. The next house was built by **Elijah Risley**, in **1810**, and first stood by the road side in front of the **Hilton & Barlow** house, and moved to the present location in about **1816**, and was afterwards removed by **C. Tucker** and occupied in late years by him. The next was the **Chaney** or Dr. **Washburn** house, also built by **E. Risley, Jr.**, in **1816**, and occupied by him for four years. The next was the **Crosby** house, on the site of the present **John Jones** house. The next house was occupied by Mr. **Otis**, a threshing machine maker. A little below this Thos. **Kappler** commenced a tannery of four vats, in **1809**, the first in the county but was finally run out by the enterprising young man, Gen'l **Barker**, who came in **1810**, and established a tan yard back of the **Hawley** House.

Then, at the foot of the hill, came the noted Wallace Lager Beer Brewery, the first in the county in **1819**. Next an old ashery near the creek and where James **Mark** nearly lost his life by misstepping in the night and slipping into a potash kettle of hot lye in **1812** or **1813**. Across the creek stood the old grist mill, built in **1808** or **1809** and the mill house in which **Jerry Allen** lived as miller. Next a house built by **Sam'l Bellows, Esq.**, then came the shoe shop of **Chas. Burritt** afterwards used as his drug store; next came the old **Woleben** block, built by **Fellows** and **Woleben**. The West end was owned by **Rich. Woleben**, the basement occupied by his family and the upper rooms for the store of **I. & R. Plumb**, and the east end by **P. Fellows** as hat store, etc., and the upper room by, I think, **James Hull** and the Chautauqua Gazette – a few school books was kept in this office. The next building was the hotel of **M. W. & T. G. Abell** on the **Johnson** House corner. The log tavern, of **Hezekiah Barker** was removed for this building in about **1815**. Then across the common came the brick house of **Gen. Barker**, built in about **1819**. This I think was the first brick house built in the county, and the writer, then a boy, helped to manufacture the bricks of which it was constructed. Next a house built by **Stoughton Gaylord** and now I think the **Stevens** house. **Wm. Couch** had a tailor shop somewhere here. Then came **Pearson Crosby's** cabinet shop and ware room.

A small building, the office of **Dr. White**, came next, and then came "Branksome Hall" or residence of **Dr. Squire White**; a little east was the house occupied by **Arnold Rupert**. This place was the joy of all boys on training days for its good gingerbread made by **Mrs. Rupert**. Then came swampy ground to the burying ground hill. East and over the hill was the **Rev. Joy Handy** place, and the last in the corporation was the **Oliver Barnes** place afterward the **Moore** farm if that is in corporate grounds.

Eagle street was one of the roads to **Bull's** mill, and the only house in the corporation was **Judge Zattu Cushing's**. On the west side of the creek and on the road to **Bull's** mill stood **Walter Cushing's** house, afterwards owned by **Dr. White**.

On the **Berry** road stood the old **Berry** house which was built about **1816** by the **Rev. Sam'l Sweezy**, the first Presbyterian minister settled in Fredonia, and on the site of the old log shanty which our father and family first moved into on his arrival in the spring of **1807** and in which he

*lived one and a half years. On Chestnut or Cordova street stood the home of Eleazer **Gilbert** and also his cooper shop, afterwards occupied by the sisters **Paul**, and next on the same side stood the old district school house which was burned down and the "Trinity School" took its place; next the house of Hezekiah **Turner** after owned by P. L. **Shepard**. Next down the creek stood the old saw and gristmill of the **Risleys**; next came the first frame house the writer ever lived in, and built by the elder **Risley**, his father, in 1818. Between this house and the mill stood the brick distillery of **Warren & Risley**, built in 1823. Lot **Colegrove**'s distillery stood down the creek then seventy or eighty rods below the lager beer concern of Mr. **Wallace**. Hezekiah **Turner** had a distillery and mill standing across Garden street, opposite Gen. **Risley**'s old residence, and a plank house stood about thirty rods north of that on the old **Risley** garden. A small house built and occupied by Wm. **Barker**, stood on a strip of land afterwards owned by Gen. **Barker**. Facing the southwest corner of the common stood the Jos. **Plumb** house, built and occupied by him, and after by J.(?) **Crane**, Esq.; on the south corner of the common and the Dunkirk road stood the Baptist church and opposite the Academy built soon after. At the foot of the hill on the right hand side, stood W. **Smith**'s ashery, used in 1819. The next was the farm house of Thos. **Morton** after the **McPherson** place. On the road to the mouth of the creek was the Elder Elisha **Tucker** place, afterwards **May & Seymour** house. And last, down through the woods, was the Eastwood farm now the David **Matteson** old residence. On towards Dunkirk was Sam'l **Barker**, now about settling, and below him Dan'l **Pier** and Mr. **Pell** at Crooked Brook. This was a new road and mostly through standing timber.*

*Old Mr. H. **Barker** had a house standing a little north of where the Episcopal church stands. James **Norton** had a wool carding machine and cloth dressing establishment where the **Colburn** Mill is, and a house north west a few rods from it.*

*At this point, into the lists stepped Darwin R. **Barker**. While commenting on both **White**'s and **Risley**'s letters, he allowed himself to describe some of his own early antics at great length, as well as correcting his two predecessors:*

*Thus far your communications from old residents are very interesting to me. I can see every location as it was at the time and as a soldier says, "it is fighting the battle over again." They each contain some errors of commission and many of omission. Levi's is more full and more correct than Devillo's. Those two and all others will agree upon the Masonic Hall which was in the third story of Woodward **Stevens**' building, standing on or near **Barmore**'s, of the American Block. But that is not the first Masonic Hall. The first meetings of the Lodge were in the building occupied by Wat. **Wood**'s evaporator the past season. I don't suppose there is an "old resident" that will say that I didn't know every corner of that building, in early days, and what was in it. Now if I assert that I was a personal friend (as a boy) of Henry **Bosworth**, Levi may believe that I have visited that Masonic Hall with Henry at two different times, for the purpose of feeding the Goat. Every body knows that an initiation is called "riding the Goat," and he ought to have been fed during the **Morgan** embargo. I became very familiar with that myth and having a call in after years to go into that Hall while the O. F.'s occupied it, I thought I recognized an old acquaintance; a slight chuckle brought him to me, when I mounted without orders and cavorted around the room while the astonished brethren were trying to sing "Rock of ages." Backing up before the V. G.'s desk I waited for the last verse, when that closed the spur lifted up the old fellow's hind legs and the V. G. and desk rolled over, passing N. G. on a gallop, brought up with military salute before the P. G. and asked for orders. I was dismounted and led to a front seat covered with green baize, while the brothers repeated the ten commandments for my information. I doubt if one in ten can now or ever could repeat them correctly without a copy. At*



this point the D. D. P. G. declared that early education qualified me for a shining light. That Goat is the same one which the Censor said was led after midnight from the I. O. of O. F. Hall in **Woleben** Block to the new hall in Center Block. To use Artemus **Ward**'s words: "He is an amusing little cuss."

Levi or the type is mistaken; it was Arnold **Russell**, not "**Rupert**" where the gingerbread was bought on training days. The shop stood where K. W. **Forbes** built his new house, and was afterward used by Dr. **Walworth** as an office. The daughter Fanny lives in F. but gingerbread from her oven would not taste as good to an old resident as her mother's did to the boys on training day. It was **1821** when the brick house was built by Leverett **Barker**. Hamlet St. was the first main street to Bull's mill on the west side of the creek. The opening of Water St., the laying out the park, the location of the Academy (Fireman Hall) sent the business to the east side, and when the **Risleys** located on that side the backbone of west hill was broken.

Let me supply some omissions. A double house standing where H. C. **Clark**'s house does on Temple St.; one once occupied by James **Mark**, who ran the ashery corner of Temple St. and Central Avenue; the other by Brenice **Taylor**, who had a cooper shop which is now used by O. W. **Johnson** as a barn, while O. W. **Johnson** lives in the old stone school house.

The occupation of the Brewery as a dwelling by Isaac **Godfrey**, that old resident must not be forgotten, and will not by the boys who borrowed his sled without leave for coasting on West hill. But when the old man appeared with his long whip that sled

"Like Gove'nor **Kent**,  
Went Hell bent"

without pilot or freight. "All's well that ends well" and the little old man with red eyes, and the little muley oxen with big horns tied on made every thing right the next morn to be ready for the boys at the first opportunity. What fun beside the tumbles we did have on that West Hill. City daddies were almost unknown in those days, and John **Paschke** stayed at home or joined the crowd. At times, but not often, with N. D. **Snow** for a leader, a big sleigh coach was put upon the track, "pile in boys!" was the order and away she went; an engineer would say, with her "throttle wide open." Modern burglar's tools were nowhere by the side of that ten foot pole when pointed toward **Burritt**'s drug store door. The Presbyterian church built and used for worship, the present academy or Town Hall.

What a host of incidents are remembered as some "old resident" pens down the locations. D. R. B.

That appeared on 4 February 1880 and then, two weeks later, came **Risley**'s somewhat defensive reply called "Fredonia in **1821** and Before:"

Eds. Censor: I did not suppose that my previous communication on this subject was complete or without error, and since the gleaners are after me, I shall have to avail myself of the right of the closing plea.

Now about that road to **Bull**'s mill. It may be a kind of village history for them that are to come after and should be as near correct as it can be placed at this time. The first road to **Bull**'s mill on the west side was laid as early as **1814**. It left the present road near the **Sage** farm, which farm was then occupied by Benj. **Barret**, and took a straight course to the Main road, on the west side of the creek and joining it just south of the house of the late Judge **Houghton**, and at the angle of the road where it turned west. This road was cut out through the timber, and logs cut and halved, to build a bridge across the little brook, just above where the late Dr. Douglas **Houghton** had his percussion powder factory and where the Dr. got badly hoisted, and his face filled and marked with powder from an unexpected explosion. This was a stepping stone for the

Dr., and some steps upon the road to notoriety as a chemist. These were the first days of percussion powder and a square cut off to old flint gun locks.

This road was laid to facilitate the growth of the west side and to bring trade to the contemplated store of D. W. D. Near this place is a full of several feet where a distillery was erected and run by Richard **Williams**, then the inn keeper at the corner, and the first one at that point, stopping there as early as **1806**.

Having removed to Ohio in **1811** and making a sojourn of three years, I cannot say the day this road was located, but when we returned the store frame was up and the timber lay on the bank for the bridge. – About a half mile on this brook above this crossing Capt. Nathan **Hempsted** had a distillery. Capt. **Hempsted** was an energetic and roustabout kind of citizen, but George how did you and those other boys manage to elect him a Capt. of the West Side Militia over that gentleman, Mr. **Shepard** (wagon maker!) Did he roll out that barrel (not of money)? Perhaps some of the boys will rise to explain. A speech from the granger on the old Indian lot will be in order, or one from neighbor Elisha just over the way. But I suppose they managed pretty much as they do now at such elections, but the idea of stealing a whole company or stuffing the ballot box never was then thought of.

Hamlet street was projected by Maj. Jos. **Skinner** for the convenience of the citizens of **Bull's Mills**, to get to the mechanics of the great center, the Hamlet, but the hill at that time was so abrupt that goats could hardly climb it.

Until about **1823** the Baptist society met in the school house on the east side of the creek, and the school house stood near the west end of the north square, and the Presbyterians met in the school house on the west side, which house stood on the common until it burned down in about **1817** and then was rebuilt on the corner of Berry and Cordova or Chestnut streets. The pillars of this church were the **Loomises** and **Marshes** from way down the creek, and the **Barnes**, from a mile east of the village, and Deacon **Hinckley** from above **Bull's Mills**, and Isaac **Lovejoy** from the south gulf, and Doct. Sam'l **Snow** from the west; and their families, with my father and mother and two boys, met there for worship every Sunday, rain or shine.

No, Darwin, I did not mean to say "a small house" for the smut house, as I knew that the smut house was the largest house covered with shingles at the time of its erection in the village. And Arnold **Russell**, why, sir, Arnold **Russell** was the first man I ever met that had advanced to that stage in music that he could blow a fife, and own one too. I can still hear the fading strains of music from his fife the old time military tune of "The Girl I Left Behind Me." James **Brigham** supplied the snare drum, and I do not know as I have heard such music since. **Russell** and **Brigham** were in the battle at the mouth of the creek when the British vessel "Queen Charlotte," sent soldiers on shore to see why Mr. Ebenezer **Johnson** should have so large a barn and they returned minus three men who deserted them and ran for the woods. This was the time that D. W. **Douglass** used to say "that he fell in the cause of his country," While two (**Douglass** and Horace **Spencer**) were riding one horse and running him over the rough road of stumps and roots, the poor horse fell, and dumped them both into a mud hole.

The distilleries were quite a feature of the early town – let me count them up. I believe the first was Daniel **Warren's**, at the foot of the hill on the west side and after converted into an ashery. Thomas **Warren** erected one in the then quite a gulf just west of Mr. **Tuttle's** house, and quite a high bridge was then thought necessary to span this gulf, and from the bridge they passed into the second story of the distillery with meal &c. Richard **Williams** and Nathan **Hempsted** before mentioned; James **Lowell** at Little Canadaway; Mr. **Tucker** at **Bull's mills**; Hezekiah **Turner** had one on the flat near where Garden street now is; Thos. **Warren** had another, a brick

distillery near **Risley's** mill; **Douglass & Robbins**, on or near the location of **White & Wells** factory; **W. Smithone** at Dunkirk and **Colegrove's**, on the west side of the creek, making the complement of eleven.

What could the farmers have done with their grain if it had not been for this out-let. There were farmers that had I presume twenty bushels of corn lying and waiting for the distiller to get through with his neighbor's crop. When this delay came, with the delay of the cloth drapers to get our linsey Woolsey fulled and dressed for our winter clothes, I tell you it was cold times. But generally the distilling part was attended too and but few children suffered for the want of whiskey.

(The experience of a ten year old boy on the whiskey subject, may be given at some future day.)

R.

What triggered the next item is difficult to say. It may have been something to do with the politics of the time. At the end of his May 1880 letter Levi **Risley** makes an obscure reference to "Young America." That was a movement in the Democratic party that flourished in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Whatever it was, it reminded **Risley** of the old militia unit in Fredonia when he was young. However, the account itself is less nostalgia and more slapstick, all focused on a long gone weapon:

*That old Brass Cannon and the Old Artillery Company*

*Editor Censor: - That old famous company and military safety guard of the western frontier of the State of New York, was organized at Fredonia about the year 1817 or 1818, and forty good and stalwart men enlisted for its service. The Governor of the State had made the promise of a cannon when the company should be enlisted under the State organization. The Hon. Joseph **Plumb** (merchant in the Woleben block) was elected and appointed Captain, and **Ralph Plumb**, Lieutenant, with **Knowles Hall**, Ensign. – These gentlemen, in their blue uniforms, trimmed with gold, and their nodding white plumes tipped with red, made a stately appearance.*

*The Governor was notified that the forty, the required number, had been found, but perhaps some what on the plan that freehold voters were made, by taking a deed of a piece of their neighbor's land, and then deeding back after election. (It was said of Maj. S. **Sinclair**, of Gerry, that to get men that would be eligible to fill the town offices of Gerry at the first election, he deeded a good share of his farm to his neighbors, who to vote and hold office, had to swear they were freeholders, or worth in property \$250.)*

*The Governor, true to his promise, started the cannon and equipments, with a requisite number of cartridges and balls from Albany, and all summer long the anxious question was hourly asked on the street of Fredonia: "Have they heard from the cannon?"*

*It must be remembered that at that day nothing was brought from Albany to Buffalo except on wheels, and this gun was toated[sic] from station to station as they could find teams to haul it. When it finally reached Buffalo, our Fredonians volunteered with teams to haul it through Cattaraugus woods home. Foremost in this enterprise were the energetic townsmen M. W. & T. G. **Abell**, of old Hotel memory, with their fine span of black horses. On its arrival on the common, the company was paraded for an introduction to the ordnance. From this time on, the usual drill and exercise of the company was about once a week, and they made such proficiency in handling the gun that it was quite wonderful. – Capt. **Plumb** always kept well in the rear when he was giving orders to "change drag-ropes," and "retreat." This was a military maneuver at every discharge. To change drag ropes, the whole company in two platoons on right and left, with every artilleryman hold of the drag-rope, had to change front by swinging around.*

*Generally, in this operation, they would get a knot tied in the center of the drag-rope, with as*

many as four of the center soldiers tied in with this knot. Some of the men would right about face and try to jump over the rope, but such would be sure to come to grief, with their noses skinned on the gravel. There were three positions that it was not easy to find men to fill, as great courage was necessary, but finally the three valiant volunteers were found. – Jake **Cole** and John **Robinson**[sic] (a satellite of **Cole**'s) agreed to stand one each side of the muzzle of the cannon to load it, and Jonas **Hubbard** volunteered to be match-man and fire it off. After a few weeks, all things in the exercise went smoothly, and they dispensed with one of the Surgeons.

After the company was pronounced proficient in practice, notice was given that the company was to practice with shotted cartridges. This announcement brought out a crowd, and the street of Fredonia was lined with old and young, men, women and children. But now a great discovery was made. It was discovered by some of the sappers and miners that the sights of the gun were not right; as the breech of the gun was thicker than the muzzle, it was thought that the bore of the gun could not be level with the sights, and now two mechanics (carpenters and joiners) were consulted and their opinions asked. One of them (stuttering) said, "No-no-o-oo, that can't be right," and the other answered, (holding his fingers at each end of the gun) "The d-e-d-v-! it would sho-sho-ot over the m-moon." They fixed it so all said it was right. They procured a circle cut from a board to lay on the muzzle and make it level with the breech. By this time all things were ready and pugnacious demonstrations were to be made on ashery hill, near where the house of Mr. **Glisan** now stands. The mark was placed on the side of the hill so they could save the balls. The cannon stood on the common, a short distance in front of where the Union Block now stands, the distance from that place being clear of buildings and trees.

Now **Robinson** puts in the cartridge and Jake rams it home, and Capt. **Plumb** says "fire," and Jonas gives it the electric with a coal in a pair of tongs. Then while all eyes were resting on the hill, expecting to see it annihilated, a little sputter of dust was raised from the ground about ten rods from the muzzle of the gun, and then wonder and an awful stillness pervaded the gunners. The first speech was from Jake. He said, "**Robinson**, like a Dutch fool, had put a cartridge in the cannon wrong end first, and no gun could shoot such Dutch sourcroust as dat." and he "would give his Dutch honor if he couldn't load it better alone dan dat."

The idea was that the ball followed the level of the bore of the gun until the force of the powder was exhausted and then fell perpendicular to the earth.

Strange to say, when the board was removed from the muzzle of the cannon (and against the belief of all) they could aim true enough to strike the hill.

At one time a shot went over the hill, bounding along through the fields and brush into the plantation and orchard of Deacon **Morton**, (now Rufus **Haywood**'s) who was out looking a little after the fruit interest. The Deacon soon came rushing to town to notify the authorities that such carelessness must be stopped, or by the power invested in him as Justice of the Peace, he would issue some kind of a thing as a (I think he called it) dammanus, to stop it himself. (Now, Devillo, you and Ham. need not speak out, but you can just point your finger to where that sweet apple tree stood.)

A straight, tall chestnut tree stood just at the bottom of ashery hill, which was often used as a mark for the cannon, but it stood scatheless until Harvey **Wakeman**, a little imbibing gunsmith journeyman, aimed the gun for them. He had then imbibed so freely that he had to hold up by the wheels of the gun carriage to do the sighting, but he struck the tree twice in four shots. (Now, this is a patent right, and I warn all imbibers against using this as an argument in their cause.)

*The first time this gun was warned to appear and drill as the law directs, in its country's cause, it was taken down through the stumps, trees and brush, to Forestville. Col. **Bartow**, who lived near there and wanted to give the place a boom, issued his orders to have the regiment rendezvous at that point. He made a kind of red tape affair of it, and the whole regiment was made and in good fighting order. But few scattering shantees were then standing among the stumps in Forestville, and the old hotel was just raised, and sided up for the occasion. – The window glass was barely tacked in, and the windows were all raised for the convenience of the ladies, to see the wonderful military display on the common in front. In the afternoon when the artillerists were about to fire their parting salute, some rogue of a wag sent them word that if they didn't want the windows all broken that they must put them down. The windows were shut down and the cannon boomed, and as the rogue expected, nearly every light of glass rattled to the ground. I don't know whether Col. **Bartow** paid for that glass or not, but I am quite sure that a unanimous vote could have been taken from the soldiers that he should do so.*

*That old brass six-pounder cannon, like many Congressmen, made many a noisy speech in its country's cause, and made its obeisance to some of the world's best men, including **Lafayette**, **Seward**, **De Witt Clinton** and many of less note. Now, with the brass of that old clock which carried us all on tick through the hard times, it must be melted up to make toy whistles for rising young America.*

The origin of the next piece, in the *Censor* of 9 April 1884, is easier to discern. **Risley** had suggested that he might, some day, write a piece about his experiences with whisky as a ten-year old. By 1884 the local temperance movement had turned Pomfret “dry” and there was continuing debate, and political disagreement, about the harm that was doing to local commerce, especially to the hotels without licenses, versus the harm that alcohol caused. In this piece, **Risley** has decided to explain how the whisky trade began here, justifying it on economic grounds while deploring its effects on society:

*Editors Censor: The citizens now living in the sober district which composed the town of Pomfret in its earlier times, may be at a loss to understand how the farmers managed to dispose of their surplus crops of grain, with which the rich virgin soil was filling their granaries to overflowing. It was impossible to transport it in wagons through the Cattaraugus swamp when it took three days of hard labor for a team to haul an empty wagon to Buffalo.*

*Chadwick's Bay had no landing place or wharf before **1816** or **1817**, when a company was formed and the farm bought of **Chadwick** and a small wharf built sufficient for the landing of small craft such as the *Humbird* of ten tons which was one of the first sails that appeared along the American shore after the war of **1812**. Messrs. **Beggs** & **Snyder** kept tally at that port of entry and also established a small store.*

*To reach Fredonia (then the metropolis of the county of Chautauqua) from this point (then named Dunkirk) they passed around by the mouth of Canadaway creek, as no road had then been cut through the forest to the new lake port. From the old Thos. **Morton** farm to near the shore of the lake it was a thick forest except a small dot of a clearing made by an energetic man by the name of **Pier**. The road being cut through the woods and the almost impenetrable swamp, still no teams could pass until a corduroy road was made a large share of the distance. The Erie Canal was not finished until **1826** and no outlet was opened so that the surplus grain could be disposed of except wheat at fifty cts. per bushel and store pay at the rate of thirty cts. per yard for cotton sheeting. What could the farmers do? I will tell you how the problem was solved.*

*Distilleries were built for making their overplus grain into whisky. Some persons took whisky in exchange (as no money could be had) and took it home to drink at their fireside. Others took it*

*out in drinks at the distillery. Whisky was a panacea for every ill. It was used when they worked; it was used when they played. It was used to warm them in cold weather; it was used to cool them in hot weather. It was offered to a neighbor when he called. It was drunk as an appetiser[sic] before breakfast. It was drunk to make a bed for their dinner. It was drunk at supper, and finally with all meals.*

*It was drunk by most of the ministers of the gospel. It was drunk by the judges on the bench. It was drawn with a cord to the windows of jury rooms and drank there. It was drunk by everybody, both high and low, and yet they thought they were not “dram, draming, all the while!”*

*Why were not all drunkards? Many were. But one or two simple rules favored that class, viz.: a man was not considered drunk if he could sit up on the ground or if he could get home with the help of a more favored friend. Persons who could not keep a cow and jug both, thought the jug of whisky beat in a large family of small children.*

*I think the first black plague spot of a distillery was established in about 1813 at the foot of the west side hill on the now foundry and machine shop lot. I think it was erected and run by Daniel **Warren**. In later years the building was used by **Hale & Risley** and **J. & R. Plumb** as an ashery. **Richard Williams**, who established the first tavern on the west hill (known now as the **Pemberton** place), built and run a distillery at the little brook just back of the **Houghton** place just north of where the road now running from the Laona road to **Seymour** street crosses the gulf. In 1814 **Thomas Warren** erected one on the Main road in the hollow just west of the old **Horace Risley** place now occupied by Mr. **Tuttle**. About 1815 **James Lowell** built and run one at Little Canadaway (Milford). About the same year **John Tucker** run one at Bull's Mills (Laona). In 1817 or 1818 **Hezekiah Turner** built one with a mill for grain grinding a little south of Garden street opposite to where the residence of the late Gen. **Risley** stands. About this time **Lot Colegrove** built one in the hollow south of **Lover's Retreat** (present **Saxton** place). About 1822 **Capt. Matthew Hempsted** built one on the same stream and a little north of where the **Williams** distillery once stood. In 1823 **Thos. Warren** built a brick distillery near the old **Risley** mill. About 1824 **Todd, Douglass & Robbins** built one and used fattening cattle on a tread mill for mill power to grind the grain, in the village across the creek, opposite the **Barna(?) Robbins** residence. In about 1825 **W. Smith & Co.** built one at Dunkirk.*

*The whisky trade became so extensive that the amount of grain raised in Chautauqua was but a drop in the bucket and Ohio contributed from her granaries thousands and thousands of bushels to fill the maw of these manufactories of blue rum.*

*In some of these years whisky was sold on contract for 16 cts. per gallon. But the idle hours that it made was what made it so dear and ruinous financially.*

Levi Risley was not alone in his interest in early Fredonia. His nephew, Hanson A. Risley, retired to Colorado Springs, also received the *Censor* and responded to what he read. In the 12 September 1883 issue he had a brief note about a visit from George E. **Burchard** of Madison WI, who was born and raised in Stockton. **Burchard's** father was “a staunch abolitionist of the **Gerritt Smith** school in [the] trying days of the anti-slavery agitation.” Then came the *Censor* of 10 December 1884 with a poem in praise of “**Wm. Brown** the Printer.” That was **William D. C. Brown**, long time compositor at the *Censor* print shop. Hanson, like his uncle before him, was reminded of the old days and, like his uncle before him, was again compelled to write about them:

*To the Censor:— The poetic effusion so creditable to its Author published in your issue of the 10<sup>th</sup> inst. Addressed “to **Wm. Brown** the Printer” has afforded me no little satisfaction, awakening memories of boyhood “when we were friends together,” and well do I remember him*

in school, and later on providing for the public amusement fine pyrotechnic displays, the first witnessed in Fredonia on so grand a scale, and afterward a patient laborer in your office, and so down through many vicissitudes and trials to the present time, always constant and faithful in his labors like **Longfellow's** Blacksmith,

“Toiling—rejoicing—sorrowing,

“Onward through life he goes,

“Each morning some task begin,

“Each evening sees it close;

“Something attempted, something done

“Has earned a night's repose.”

It must have been in 1822 or '23 that his father Rev. David **Brown** settled in Fredonia, Rector of Trinity Church Parish then worshipping in a school house on the West Hill. He was a fine scholar, a polished gentleman, an elegant preacher. It was more than sixty years ago, but I recall distinctly his impressive reading of the beautiful church service and eloquent sermons. One I could now almost recite from memory, a discourse full of pathos upon the text, “Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new sepurcher [sic] wherein was never man yet laid.” His wife was a woman of commanding presence elegant manner and full of grace. And William **Brown** and his sister Mary, were bright children as would naturally come from such a parentage. I recall many scenes and incidents in their cheerful home opposite the **Houghton** Mansion, a dwelling still standing, moved there from another locality, in which my own family had lived and my sister and myself were born. A pleasant memory of the Rev. Father comes to my mind—his graceful address to **LaFayette** in Fredonia in 1824, mentioned by the Marquis' Secretary in a published account of their journey through the United States, in which he described what he termed “The night scene in Fredonia” as “the handsomest tribute any where paid to the nation's guest.”

How soon we come to live in the past or wholly to disappear from the shifting scenes of life! I can count on my fingers those who remember as much as I remember of early incident and character in Fredonia, and of that excellent clergyman whose only living representative in that region now, I believe, is the subject of the poem—your remarkable compositor. And few there are who will remember me or care to read my occasional reminiscences, sent you in the hope perhaps a vain one, of keeping myself alive for a time in a few hearts from which I would not be entirely banished. H.A.R.

But the most extensive such piece was yet to come. Hanson **Risley** was asked to give a talk apparently sponsored by the local newspaper, the *Colorado Springs Republic*. It was printed in summarized form and reprinted in the *Censor* of 10 March 1886.

*The Fredonia Censor* 10 March 1886

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST.

*Recollections of Local Interest—Lorenzo Dow and Lafayette—Marcy and Clay—From the Fertile Lands of the Great American Desert of his geography, A Fredonia Frontier Boy looks back to scenes and heroes of early days.*

*A copy of the Colorado Springs Republic gives a synopsis of a lecture recently delivered in their course of local lectures, by Hon. Hanson A. Risley, a native and a long respective [sic] citizen of this village, and pleasantly remembered here. His subject was “Men of Note Whom I Have Met.” During the administration of Lincoln, Johnson and Grant, Mr. Risley's home in Washington was the center of the Cabinet and Diplomatic circles, and the other home of Seward and the distinguished men of those stormy days. The genial host and his accomplished daughters*

attracted to the doors of his home at some time, the most distinguished of our citizens in political, military and literary life as well as famous artists and musicians. His reminiscences are, therefore, most interesting, but so taken up was he with early recollections that he did not in his lecture reach this period. The audience was so much interested that it demanded he should continue the subject in another lecture, which he promised to do. Mr. **Risley**'s early life being passed here, his first recollections are those of men he met here, and, therefore, of local interest. We regret that the Republic only published a synopsis. We should like to give it in full. Mr.

**Risley**said:

The first notable man he remembered of [sic] meeting was Lorenzo **Dow**, an eccentric preacher, much before the people in his early day, who traveled more and held forth to more people than any other man of his time. In 1822, as announced two years previous, he spoke in his native village, his coming being the town talk for weeks previous because of his singular character. While the large crowd assembled, patiently waited his coming, a pale, attenuated long haired evangelist suddenly made his appearance at a window, and without singing, prayer, or introduction of any kind, preached a most impressive and eloquent discourse, then he suddenly disappeared on his way to fill other appointments.

The first really great man he met, and whose name would thrill the hearts of all, was **Lafayette**. In consideration of his effective aid and brilliant services rendered in the Revolutionary struggle, he was invited to visit this country in 1823 as the guest of the nation. His landing in 1824 was an occasion of the greatest rejoicing, and all possible respect and affection were shown him on his triumphal tour through the states. He was received in my native village of Fredonia, New York, with all the honor it was possible for the citizens to pay. The committee appointed to meet him, being delayed in returning, he did not reach the place until late in the night, yet the village was illuminated and the people stood in close ranks to receive him. The General, after making an eloquent reply to the address of welcome, took each one of the citizens by the hand. The morning was dawning when, attended by the throng, he was driven to the lake shore where he embarked for Buffalo. The novelty and beauty of that scene was afterward described by his secretary as "the night scene in Fredonia." From **Lafayette** he passed to the Siamese twins, who, having been born poor, it was determined to exhibit them as a natural curiosity, and who everywhere excited the utmost astonishment. In 1822, while a student in the academy of Fredonia, the village was visited by William L. **Marcy**, the first governor who had ever entered it.

It was instructive to note the changes wrought by half a century in the consideration paid to public men. If Governor **Eaton** were to visit Colorado Springs, the papers would make a bare announcement of his arrival, he would be permitted to go to a hotel almost unattended and to pay his own bill.

It was different at an early day. Carriages were sent to meet Governor **Marcy** and the whole country turned out in his honor. He had not reached his high position without a struggle, as bitter warfare raged between the Whigs and the Democrats, and **Marcy** was an object of attack, being accused of prostituting his official position to personal gain, and of making many slips unworthy of a public man, but he survived all ridicule and was triumphantly elected. Afterward called to preside over the war department under President Polk, he directed the military campaign in Mexico with signal ability, and was a conspicuous figure in politics for forty years. In all the high positions he was called to fill he proved himself worthy of confidence and respect, and the accusations against him to be false and unjust. I have a vivid memory also of the anti-masonry agitation at the time Morgan was abducted for disclosing the secrets of masonry and supposed to have been murdered.



*At the time of the financial depression of 1837, Mr. **Risley** was sent from the lumberman's bank of Warren Pa, to Philadelphia, to obtain a loan of \$850,000 of the United States bank, as it was of great importance to the lumbering interests that this country bank should obtain assistance. Was introduced to Nicholas **Biddle**, the great financier, who wielded a large political power in opposition to the **Jackson** administration and who, serious and thoughtful over the expected financial crisis, gave the needed assistance. The banks of the country shortly after suspended payment and general distress followed.*

*At the time of this visit to Philadelphia, Mr. **Risley** met President **Van Buren** and Thomas **Ewing**, who had been governor of Ohio and afterwards in the senate; a remarkable man who by his own exertions had risen from the lowest station. In 1834, while making a stage journey through New York, he had the privilege of meeting **Henry Clay**, an ideal hero whom he had learned to venerate. Thousands of citizens from the surrounding country had assembled to welcome him. Mr. **Clay** replied to the address of welcome, calmly, earnestly, touching upon the issues of the day. Party lines and names were for the hour forgotten in patriotic devotion to the country. It had never been **Clay**'s privilege to tread collegiate halls, and in an address delivered to the students and teachers of the academy, he spoke impressively on the career open to those who made the most of their advantages.*

*Ambrose **Spencer**, a tall spare man, long chief justice of New York, also at this time testified to the masterly ability and unfaltering courage with which Mr. **Clay** had maintained his opinions, through the half century that he had followed him as a master. **Clay**, who was visibly affected, dropped head on his breast for a moment, then in reply said, he had long been in public life and received many testimonials of approbation and esteem, but never before had such high praise been accorded him, and from the American **Mansfield** at whose feet he had learned those things that had made him successful; he could now return to his work with a new zeal and awakened conscience as to the majesty of the work to be done by those who would enjoy the applause and respect of their countrymen.*

*Once more he saw **Clay** after ten years of anxious work had passed over him, and heard his last speech in the Senate. He had prepared a compromise measure which he believed, would allay agitation, preserve the union and restore peace and harmony to the country. The senate chamber was filled with the most distinguished people of the country to listen to an argument in support of his bill that has never been surpassed for eloquence, diction, force and pathos. "Pass the bill," he said, "and restore peace and tranquility to the country and I will go home to my own Ashland, in the green west, and there amid my flocks and herds, by my own fireside seek that repose and happiness which I have not always found in public life." In 1842 I first visited Washington and heard **John Quincy Adams** "the old man eloquent," who inherited marvelous talents with a distinguished name, then serving his seventeenth year in the house after having filled the most exalted offices. South Carolina was threatening to nullify, **Calhoun** had raised the standard in the senate, with **Jackson** threatening to hang those guilty of treason. **Adams** was leader of the abolition element and the target of violent abuse while fighting for the sacred right of citizens to petition the government for the abolition of slavery. The southern members had learned to avoid attacking him or provoking his wrath. But a fresh Kentucky member had the assurance to denounce him as a traitor to the country and an enemy to the constitution. Adams was at once on his feet, and in clear, shrill, yet kindly tones wondered why the young member should upon the threshold of his public life pour contumely upon his aged head and in scathing language exposed the venom of the attack until the young man, writhing under his words, asked leave to explain, and endeavored to extract the venom from his speech and made apologies for ill*

considered remarks. Mr. **Adams** said if the gentleman did not mean what he said, or did not say what he meant, no further discussion was necessary, but for himself he meant what he said and it was sovereign mercy compared with what he was going to say. An anecdote was related of the delight of Dr. **Holmes** in meeting a foreign gentleman who was shorter than himself. The theme so grew upon the speaker that he was forced to omit his recollections of **Webster**, **Chase**, **Lincoln** and **Seward**, but had been promised another evening in the course should any care to hear him, when he would come down this side of the flood with his reminiscences.

True to form, Uncle **Risley** responded to Nephew **Risley** in the *Censor* of 24 March 1886:

*Reminiscences from Levi **Risley***

In reading H. A. **Risley**'s early recollections of prominent men he had met he mentions Rev. Lorenzo **Dow**. **Dow**'s first advent into Fredonia has always been a prominent stepping stone back to my boyhood and days of unclouded happiness, but I can now see that those streaks of sunshine came through a dark cloud that to me was invisible then, through adversities and poverty of my father.

In the season of **1816** my father was summoned to work his highway tax on the road on the west bank of the little brook running by the **Tuttle** farm, which was then occupied by Horace **Risley**. He compromised the matter by giving two days of my brother Wm. and myself for one of his own. With me a boy of eleven, it was a day long to be remembered as it was the first duty I had been called upon to do for the state. Our overseer was Dr. Samuel **Snow**. He marshaled his class consisting of Jonas **Hubbard**, Geo. C. **Rood**, Noah D. **Snow**, Lemuel **Beardsley**, John **Bills** and Wm. and Levi **Risley** in the highway opposite to his then residence (the Henry **Cranep**lace) and the work was to plow and scrape and turnpike a few rods of low ground and fill up a "slough of despond" that had been a terror to all wagons that were "bound for Ohio," since the first loaded heavy wagons had passed through conveying the sails and rigging for the ships that Commodore **Perry** was building at Erie.

The road had been paved with hemlock brush, to keep the wagons from sinking out of sight. In order that the scraper could be used, this brush had to be removed. This was the job for us boys, and stripping up our pants and shirt sleeves we walked into the mud quite up to our knees and went at it. While thus engaged, a man with a broad brim hat and a skeleton of a horse, came riding by from the West. We were too much engaged to pay much attention to him until G. C. **Rood** looked up and exclaimed, "That is old crazy **Dow**." Geo. had known him in the East, from which his father had just emigrated. The Rev. Gentleman made a halt at the tavern then known as the **Williams** tavern, then kept, I think, by Henry **Abell**, and gave out notice that he would hold a meeting in the neighborhood at five o'clock p. m. The old, unfinished store that was built by the old merchant, D. W. **Douglass**, and standing on the corner of the **Houghton** lot, was tendered for his service. The event of such an arrival would spread rapidly and the house was filled to overflow. He took his stand just by the entrance, and while preaching, if a new arrival came in, he would break off the thread of his discourse and address a few sentences to the new comer. Amongst the arrivals was Deacon Isaac **Lovejoy** in his working dress and sleeves rolled up, with eyes, ears and mouth open to learn what could cause such emotion. **Dow** turned to Mr. **Lovejoy** and said: "He would say a word to him, as he supposed he was a farmer and would ask him when he sold his wheat or corn, if he struck the measure off with his hand, and which side up he used his hand, and motioning at the same time with his long, bony, half bent hand."

At the close of his discourse he left an appointment to preach again in the place in ten years. He closed by saying, "We omit singing, and do your own praying" As the door passage was

*crowded he turned and jumped out of the window as H. A. R. said. Before the congregation was all out of the house he had settled his tavern bill, got his horse and was starting off.*

***Dow**'s second appearance in Fredonia was ten or twelve years later.*

*Deacon Stephen **May** had graduated from the Hotel in Sinclairville (where the writer had lived as one of his family for a year or more) and he had got promoted as keeper of the old noted **Abell** House, standing where the **Johnson** House was built in your village. Deacon **May** was a good landlord, always had plenty of good victuals and oats and was attentive to every want of his guests. He took and gave jokes pleasantly, but as he disliked to be in debt, he was quite sure to see that all jokes were repaid.*

*News became current that the Rev. Mr. **Dow** was coming from the West and would soon be in Fredonia.*

*As Deacon **May** was always looking to make some guest happy he stood in the door of the hotel as **Dow** rode upon a horse that looked as if it might be the one he rode on his previous visit. Mr. **May** stepped out to receive him and in his usual joking way said, "I suppose this is Crazy **Dow**." Mr. **Dow** had made motions to alight from his horse, but he took the salutation as an insult and at once reversed his action and regained his position and rode on without farther stopping. When he had proceeded a few rods he met a citizen and he asked the citizen if he would be good enough to take a message from him back to the landlord. The message was to tell the landlord that "his master's feet were not mates."*

*That was the last of Levi **Risley**'s letters. He died in June 1889 leaving behind this treasure trove of details about Fredonia's early history that would otherwise have been lost forever.*