

FREE HOLLOW

The First One Hundred Years of Forest Home

Albert W. Force

c. 1954

Albert Force (1897 - 1970) was a third-generation Forest Homer who lived on the Byway for most of his life. He wrote this charming account of the history of the community (also referred to as "The Story of Free Hollow") around 1954, when he was in his late fifties. Copies were bound with wallpaper remnants and sold to neighborhood residents. Mr. Force's narrative was reprinted in the 1990s and distributed free to the neighborhood by Isabel Peard, a long-time resident who enjoyed this portrayal of the community's past. For this (2010) reprinting, current house numbers have been added [in brackets] in order to assist with identifying houses which are otherwise referred to only by name.

This is the story, friends and neighbors, of the little village that grew up to be Forest Home. It is the story of Free Hollow, a peaceful hamlet settled more than a century and a half ago within the rim of our wooded hills, divided by a busy stream which we call Fall Creek, and even after all the passing years, it still preserves much of its original charm and many of its old landmarks. It was a bustling place a hundred years ago, quite self-sufficient as were all the early communities, and a very important milling and trading center for the country round about.

When boys and girls have come to me to get help with school themes on the history of the village - "because you're the oldest resident" - I have not denied the fact. But, as a matter of record, there are three other persons who have lived here a little longer than I have.

Our family came to the village about 1830, settling in what was then one of the new houses (Dr. Guterman's) [20 the Byway]. I grew up on stories of the early days which my grandfather and my other old friends and relatives enjoyed telling. One of our neighbors in his dotage used to call me by the name of my great-uncle Jacob and recalled as though I could remember, the old times and the fun they had as boys. Some of the exact dates have come from "Landmarks of Tompkins County," the 1853 map of Tompkins County, the Atlas of 1866, and from old newspapers. Mr. John Brooks, Glenn Norris, Joe Barr, and Dr. Norman Moore have added to my information. Most of it, I admit, is hearsay - folk-tales which have been storing in my head for years and now finally put down on paper.

Try to imagine how this region looked to the first white man, a Moravian missionary, Father Carheil, who was sent here to work among the Indians in the 17th century. He recorded his impressions of the Cayuga Lake country in a letter dated June 24, 1672, and writes with enthusiasm of the great beauty of the region, and of the immense clouds of game on the waters, the abundant fish in the streams, and of the teeming life in the forests bordering the shores.

Our own little valley must have been a very lovely spot - deep woods of pine and hemlock, thickly carpeted with needles, a rushing stream suddenly cutting through the rocks to form the falls and gorge, an open quiet water, and then the deep descent of the chasm until the valley floor was reached. The streams flowing into the lake were full of fish and, although no trace of an Indian settlement or relics of arrow-points or tools are found, the local tribes must have frequented our village site on hunting and fishing expeditions out of the Indian town of Coreogonel which stood near Buttermilk Falls.

General Sullivan's march in 1779 completely wiped out the village of the Six Nations, ruined their plantations and stores, and drove them out of their own country. They fled before the white men as was planned, to open the way for the first settlers. From 1779 to 1788 there was little change, the only occupants being the miserable remnants of the once powerful Indians who managed to escape Sullivan's men, and who remained to hunt and to half-heartedly grow corn in the ruined clearings at the head of the lake.

Nine years elapsed before an expedition of eleven men left Kingston on the Hudson river in April 1788, led by two Delaware Indian guides. It was their purpose to explore the wilderness to the west of the Susquehanna river, and to select a place for home-sites. After only a month's absence they returned to Kingston, but arrived at no decision to return for further exploration. The following spring three of their number again set out and having come to the head of Cayuga Lake, they staked out a lot of 400 acres east of Tioga Street in Ithaca. Here they planted corn on the former Indian fields and when the crop was harvested, they went back for their families.

In the months of September and October, 1790, Moses DeWitt surveyed the Town of Ulysses and laid out the Military lots to be assigned to veterans of the Revolutionary War. Our village lies within Lot #92 which was granted to Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert around 1791. I have a copy of that map, with the numbered military tracts. Our town was then called Ulysses, and the county Herkimer.

In 1794 there were only 25 persons living in the town, the land valuation was 100 and the taxes for the year were 12.10. Our hollow was untenanted, wild and unspoiled. No wonder that a lone settler, Joseph S. Sydney, coming this way in search of a favorable location for a grist mill, was impressed with the potential

water power in the creek, and with the pleasant prospect of building his solitary cabin in the shelter of the wooded bowl of hills. Where he came from is only a matter of conjecture. His descendant, Mr. Joseph Sydney Barr of Ithaca, thinks that he may have been one of several New Englanders who settled in these parts. Whatever his origin, he must have been a man of energy and great resourcefulness. At first the settlers had ground their own grain in a crude, outdoor mill formed from the trunk of a tree, or they had used rough, hand-hewn stones to grind coarse meal. Each man was his own miller, and sometimes a farmer worked all night long to turn out a particularly large grist in what was called the "Pepper-pot." Unless they could haul their grain over the rough trail to Owego to be ground, and that was a journey which required many days, they were forced to use this coarse flour for bread.

No doubt Sydney imported granite stones and simple machinery for his mill – but he had to cut the timber and build the log dam which was on the site of the present dam, and frame up and finish the mill itself, and his dwelling. We have no record of any man who helped him, and certainly of the total population of less than fifty in the whole town, there could have been little help available.

Whatever the odds, Sydney was equal to them, for in 1795 his mill was in operation. I can only guess its location, and believe it may have been on the site of either the saw-mill on the south-west corner of the first [*downstream*] bridge, or on the opposite bank.

At any rate, the mill was in a good location. Year by year foot-trails became wagon roads, and the early settlers to avoid the down-hill grade from Lansing to the flats and then the laborious climb up East Hill, and over the Owego Turnpike, came across what is now the Pleasant Grove Road, down the Hill and either forded the stream and followed the present Judd Falls Road until it connected with the Slaterville Road – or they crossed the creek somewhere between the bridges and took the road out of the hollow striking over through Pew Town (now East Lawn), skirting Snyder Hill and coming out on the Turnpike. Either way seems logical. The first school house, the Hen Roost, stood on the latter road which must have been well traveled from the beginning. The Judd Falls road connected our village with a small group of mills which, with the Judd Woolen Mill, had been established on Cascadilla Creek. Our Hollow came to be called Sydney's Mills, and this was the first name of the village.

In 1799 the mill burned and Sydney sold out to some one, now unknown, and moved to the site of Dwyer's dam on Cascadilla Creek where he built another grist-mill in 1800. He was assessor of the town in 1799 and school commissioner in 1801, and died in 1815.

It must have been about this date that the village became known as Free Hollow, the name that persisted until the establishment of a post-office in the

eighteen-eighties. It was then changed to what the author of "Landmarks of Tompkins County" calls a more euphonious name. To me the name of Free Hollow, besides being the familiar one always used by my grand-parents and the old folks hereabouts, has an honest, substantial ring to it. Although today half the world is in bondage and the other half in fear, not one of us can realize what the word "freedom" meant to the American people of the eighteenth century.

Our present home sites were not purchased with checks drawn on a bank. They were bought with the blood and sweat of the soldiers of the Revolution to whom land grants were made in compensation for their services to the new country. It is small wonder then that when it came to naming the new little village, these early settlers should express their gratitude for freedom by calling it Free Hollow. The country was cropping up with Freevilles, Freetowns and Freeports – yes, freedom was a word full of meaning for them – to be free was a true blessing.

The name of the village, of course, was a great temptation for the jokers of that day. I had always heard tell that it was sometimes called "Flea Holler," but while getting together material for this history, I found a letter in my great-grandfather's tannery book-case which gave evidence of the fact. Writing from the old home in Hampton, N. J. his brother-in-law, then post-master of the town of Dora, Indiana, says in a letter dated March 28, 1848:

"It seems like old times to be here in Hampton but I have got the fidgets pretty bad to start back and I am anxious to get to Flea Holler. Tell Sally Ann she must have an extry pie baked for me and then I'll tell her some western yarns."

By 1812, when the men of New York State were being called once more to the defense of their country, a Mr. Phenix built a small fulling mill in the Hollow, and that mill was in operation for nearly a hundred years under first one owner and then another. A letter from Mr. Gauntlett in the John Brooks collection refers to his factory at Phenixville, which name may have been used, though no other evidence has ever turned up. By 1812 there was a great stir of activity hereabouts. Dust rose in clouds from the now well-traveled Owego Turnpike as teams came and went with farm produce, and returned from the east with manufactured goods not yet obtainable in the home market, bringing mail and messages from the home-folks. This was a new country. It was a young country. Only the young, brave and strong could face the rigors of its life – and only courageous women would leave the comparative comfort of the old houses in Jersey and New England where life was secure, to face the loneliness of life in Tompkins County where there were few neighbors and where they must bear their children and bring them up single-handed, feed them from often insufficient stores, clothe them from home-spun and woven cloth, and physic them with home-made remedies, stewed and ground from wild herbs. We read about these pioneers

in historical novels, we see them on the screen but often fail to realize that those dramas took place right where we are living.

The first dwelling in the village, according to my old Aunt Mary Lib McKinney from whom I learned almost all I know about the "Holler," stood on the site of the present church [222 *Forest Home Drive*]; and church services were held there in the early days. I do not remember the trace of a house, nor is there one shown on the 1853 map, though the 1866 atlas erroneously places the store on this spot. I do have a recollection of a pump on that site, but not of any cellar excavation. However when she was a young girl in the 1830's, Aunt Lib says the house was occupied by an English family who brought their country customs with them and on Christmas eve they would go through the village singing carols. My great-grandparents would ask them in for refreshments and my aunt when she was a very old lady said she could still hear their voices in her mind's ear singing "As shepherds watched their flocks by night."

In the years from 1812 to 1830 most of the present old houses were being built; and the mills and establishments which depended on water power literally sprang up along the source of so much unharnessed energy. It was natural then, that until the coming of steam machinery, our little place was far and away ahead of Ithaca in the number of industries.

In 1819 J. G. Dyckman and Company established a fulling mill for the finishing of cloth. Sole ownership soon passed to Mr. Dyckman and from him to Edmond Preswick in 1821. In 1823 Samuel Seaman owned the mills and leased them to Job Gaskill. By 1827 the village boasted four dwellings, two barns, a cooper shop, a school-house, two grist mills, a dye house and a brand-new saw mill. There was plenty of work for each - but the saw-mill must have been running day and night. Great pines went down before the axe, were trimmed and sawed into boards and timbers practically on the spot. The clearings thus made were soon occupied by houses and gardens, fields, and farmsteads. The old houses show in their inner structure that there was not time or need to completely finish the timbers. Many of them still have the bark on, and are framed together with pins. Rough hewn boards sheathe the sides, with clapboards on the outside and lath on the inside.

Crude they were perhaps in structural members - but beautifully right in proportion and in the moldings and delicate window frames and mullions. Old Isaac Cradit was on hand to see to that. He arrived from New Jersey about 1830 with a group of wood-workers and carpenters and it was he who was responsible for the Greek Revival architecture in the village. This distinctive style which began in western New England just across the Hudson, swept in a wave across New York State and into Ohio and Illinois. The early carpenters, not trusting to their own ideas and free to admit their ignorance of the principles of architectural design, carried with them in their saddle-bags a copy of "The Carpenter's and

Builder's Guide." This little manual showed them how to adapt the proportions of the Greek temple to the frame dwellings, churches and public buildings of the period – how to fashion pillars and frieze, and how to cut moldings and design paneled doors so that the simplest house might have the dignity and distinction which characterize them. Sixty years ago this village was a perfect and almost unspoiled museum piece of the Greek Revival period.

The Myers House [*140 Forest Home Drive*] is the finest example in the village, being of almost perfect Greek design. It has often been studied and measured by student architects, and its interior ornament is especially good for this section. On the other hand, my house [*2 the Byway*] is Greek Revival in its simplest form. The small sliding lie-on-your-stomach or frieze windows are characteristic of the period. Even the barns and out-houses were well designed, with fine paneled doors, moldings and cornice returns.

First Mr. Cradit built himself a house where Peter Kline used to live – now occupied by Dr. Norman Moore [*172 Pleasant Grove Road, formerly located at 128 Pleasant Grove Road*]. Peter Kline's father also came from Jersey, and in a kiln of his own building, he made the bricks for his fine old house which stands at the junction of the roads at "The Corners" a mile and a half from the Hollow. Cradit's house was a fine one too, built for the master who had established his wood-working factory near the bridge. Then a house was built for each of his workmen, which accounts for the harmony of the little cluster of houses and their fitness to their surroundings. They seem to nestle down so comfortably along the winding mill lane [*the Byway*]. Cradit's shop stood, until recent years, on the south-west corner of the bridge next to Gibson's [*145 Forest Home Drive*]. For a century, first under Isaac Cradit and then under his son Alexander or Eck Cradit – and later the Bool Company, it turned out cabinet work of the finest quality. It is said that once this mill too, was carried off by a spring freshet, and with it Mr. Poppewell, a workman, who lived across the creek.

Mrs. Mapes and I each have a massive curly maple bureau made in the Cradit factory, and there must be many of these chest of drawers, tables and chairs still in existence.

By this time the Preswicks had moved into the community, and Mr. Criddle had built his house [*300 Forest Home Drive*] at the turn of the road near the second [*upstream*] bridge. Here he did cabinet work of a very special kind, being the undertaker and coffin maker to the village and countryside. Walter Stone says his sign should have read "From the Criddle to the Grave." Mother was named for his two daughters, Clara and Louise, one of whom was involved in the only tragedy of its kind in the history of Free Hollow. She and her lover, who was of a proud and prominent family which disapproved of the match, refused to be separated and on a buggy ride decided to end their lives. The other daughter was one of the first

teachers in the district school. As far as I know, the Preswicks in whose old house Mr. Georgia lives [*formerly near the Filter Plant on Caldwell Road*], were prosperous farmers and had no active part in any of the industries. They were enterprising folk, however, I feel sure their money was invested in one or more of the industries.

In 1826 the woolen mill was opened by Stewart and Allen, and was in operation for many years until it was swept away by a spring flood. It was sold to Jacob Starbird and by him to Mack, Andrus and Woodruff. In the end it was owned by Mr. Edwards, a Welshman. Imagine his surprise to look out of the kitchen window one morning after the annual freshet and find that his mill had vanished during the night. Not a piece of mill or machinery was ever salvaged.

I have been told that the first use of steam in any local industry was employed in the drying room of the woolen mill which was a long, low extension below what is now the Heckman house [*12 the Byway*]. The children loved to climb to its roof and run up and down its length. The Heckmans live in what was the warehouse and salesroom of the factory, and the looms and machinery were housed in a building on the creek's edge. Charlie Scofield, a supervisor in the Town of Lansing has told me that as a boy he had a suit of clothes from the old mill in Free Hollow and that there was no wear out to it. Farmers brought their wool to the factory where it was carded, spun and woven, and dyed to their order. At the same time they would bring a load of grain to the mill and gather round the hitching sheds which stood under the hill, and gossip while the grist was ground.

Strange as it may seem, in a time when drinking was not considered one of the deep-dyed sins, and every deacon kept a hard-cider barrel in the cellar and plenty of whiskey where he could put his hand on it, there was never a bar or tavern in town. Neither was there a store until after the Civil War, or a church until 1915. The neighbors hitched up and drove to Sodom or the Flats, as Ithaca was first called, to do their tradin'. Special luxuries came from the shops in Owego, but of these such as spices, tea, coffee etc. - there were scant supplies. Soon, however, pedlars with their alluring wares were making rounds regularly, bringing cloth and buttons, tin pans, patent medicines and toys for the young ones.

On Sunday wagon-seats were put in the carts or sleighs for the women-folks and children, and they drove to the Varna church where there were long sermons and much talk in between times. In this town too, there was a tavern and a hotel with a raucous bar, the tavern going by the name of "The Red Onion."

There were two schools in Free Hollow - first the Hen Roost and the second the building which is now Trevor Teele's garage [*131 Judd Falls Road*]. It may have been built prior to 1850 since it appears on the 1853 map. From that date until the present school and church were built, it served both the Lord and the needs of education six days a week. I have some of the reward of merit cards which were

given for deportment on Friday afternoons after the speakin'. On such an occasion little Clara Slocum recited an original poem about Free Hollow written in her childish hand.

Free Hollow is a little town
With hills of green all scattered 'round.
It is in the town of Ithaca, too
Many roads lead into it, both old and new.

Through it a little stream doth flow
Where little fishes always grow.
It has sufficient water power
To run two mills that give us flour.

Factories, tannery, a cider mill too
Without the latter what would we do?
Cloth is manufactured, and leather for shoes
And besides there's a grocery where we learn all the news.

The people here are so wonderfully wise,
And the school of such enormous size.
They adopted a plan entirely new
By dividing the school into wards one and two.

The people who inhabit this fine little city
Are most wonderfully kind, but I cannot say witty.
For they attend to the affairs of neighbors and friends
Sadly neglecting their own they never can mend.

My advice to you, both great and small,
And infants too, both short and tall -
Mind your own affairs, let others alone,
You'll have plenty to do if you mind your own.

The rather pert advice in these last stanzas referred to a separation in the village over school matters, and the establishment of a private school taught by Mrs. Cole. For years the school-house was used for church services, preached by a supply from Varna - usually a rip-snorting hell-fire and brimstone exhorter. Those wonderful old-time socials, harvest suppers, entertainments, town meetings, elections, and early moving pictures shows were held in the old school-house. People picked their way through the mud by the light of oil lanterns which were left half-turned down in the vestibule to save the trouble of re-lighting. Such food - such warmth of good feeling - such wholesome good times.

The old store was the men's hang-out, and of an evening the little place would be pretty well crowded with men and boys, perched in the old bar-room chairs or on the cracker barrels and counters. In winter oil lamps swung from the rafters and shed a pale light on the red tea and coffee bins, the glass jars of candy-sticks and on the shiny pails and bright blue work gloves hung on the walls among calendars and advertisements of horse remedies. The red-hot stove stood in the center, a spit box within easy range. Here, free from women-folks, they could smoke and swap men's gossip and tell a few earthy stories and settle the affairs of the world. The cobbler would pull his lamp down near his work and drive home the wooden pegs as he drove home a telling argument. Always there was much good talk, friendly ribbing, and warm companionship.

It is hard to stick to actual chronology. First, because there are so few records – but mostly because what I know comes from hearsay. Our family arrived along in the early 1830's. About that date, or slightly before, David McKinney had come by horseback from New Jersey and liking the country and finding so many Jersey folks already here, he purchased the tract of land which is now the university golf course, and the Warren farm extending back to the rifle range. He built the Warren home [*127 Warren Road*], and later the Moyer house [*200 Forest Home Drive*] for one of his daughters, Mrs. Hasbrouck. He then encouraged his brother Mills McKinney to move to Free Hollow and establish the tannery, a business which he carried on in Bergen County, N. J.

He was a towering, handsome fellow with a genial easy-going disposition and too little interest in making money. How he persuaded great-grandmother to leave the comfort and security of her family home and pack up her young ones, a couple of feather-beds, the big blue pin chest full of quilts and blankets, a pair of brass andirons, her bible and six coin silver spoons and start out in a wagon for the unknown hazards of the new country I'll never know.

She was a diminutive person, of iron will and determination and never touched the back of her old ladder-back rocker in which she sewed and rocked her seven babies and peeled endless potatoes and apples. Like the other women, she did everything that was needful for her family. She made cough drops and liniments, she had her own hop-vine for yeast, and she found time to teach her daughters fine sewing and cooking, encouraging them in the study of astronomy, painting and music. Old Mr. Hintermister, the itinerant composer, piano and melodeon dealer and music teacher, came to the house and gave them lessons. When they were little, and started off for school on a zero morning, she baked each child a big pan-cake to carry in his mitten to keep his hands from frost-bite. On Christmas she brought from their wrappings precious little leaden ships and set them to sail on the one and only looking-glass as a center piece – and around this she put greens and other little toys. And when diphtheria took three of her young ones in the space of two weeks, and they were laid in the grave-yard on the hill,

she gathered courage to carry on, kept her head erect, her grief to herself and nursed the other sick children in the neighborhood.

Travelers and itinerant merchants were always welcome in these homes. We have a silhouette of little Jacob which was cut by a traveling artist to pay for his night's lodging.

The tannery prospered as long as there was tanbark to be had. A black-bearded, red-cheeked young man of uncommon good looks by the name of Slocum came up from Union Springs and went to work for Mills McKinney, or Uncle Ben as every one called him. They got on well together. Young Billy got on fine with Angeline, the youngest daughter and they set up housekeeping in Doc Wright's house [*10 the Byway*]. Later they bought the house on the corner where we have since lived [*2 the Byway*].

I could go round the village and tell you something about many of the old characters and the old houses where they lived, but that would take too long. So let's take a quick tour of the village, starting in on the mill lane which used to lead down from the main road [*Forest Home Drive*] back of my house [*2 the Byway*]. First you came to the edge of the gorge and looking across on the great shelf of rock was the powder mill. The most startling and altogether exciting thing that ever happened in the Holler took place there one night in 1849 when everyone was sound asleep. Someone had left an open cylinder of black powder – about 300# of it the Journal of September 26, 1849 says – and it suddenly exploded with a terrific noise which awakened the whole town and shook every house on its foundations. Fragments of the building and of the cylinder were picked up next day a half mile from the site.

This powder mill was owned by an interesting man, Arnold McIntyre, who lived in the Washburn house [*112 Judd Falls Road*] which then stood on the site of the present Bullock house [*136 Judd Falls Road*]. Later, in 1853 he established a shop in the rear of our place where he made telescopes and telescope canes. Then, with J. E. Van Natta and William Baker, an inventor of guns, he began the manufacture of firearms which finally became the present Ithaca Gun Company.

Going north along the creek past some hitching sheds, we come to the Red Mill, a very prosperous establishment, also built by Arnold McIntyre in 1855 - 1856. It changed hands many times and operated until nearly 1900, the last owner being Martin V. Campbell. It was used by Cornell University for storage until 1918 when it was torn down. The mill lane followed the gorge, and the marks of the old wagon scales can still be seen just outside my back hedgerow. Water power was drawn from the stream by an open wooden flume held in place by immense iron bolts fastened into the rocks. The water entered the wheel pit which was cut into the shale-bank and is still plainly visible. The old machinery which

long ago had fallen to the bottom of the pit was salvaged during a scrap drive a few years ago.

Just north of the Red Mill was Mr. Chamberlain's Turning Shop, commonly called the ax-handle factory - a product much in demand in those days. Here were made not only handles for axes, scythes, hammers etc., but also simple furniture of which we have a bed and dresser made for my mother when she was a child. This building does not appear on the 1853 map, so it must have been built a little later. The foundation still stands and indicates that it was a small affair - probably a one-man business. In fact it is likely that most of the mills were operated by only a few men, since the census of 1865 reported 70 men, women and children in Free Hollow, 20 families and 4 vacant houses.

The woolen factory came next along the gorge. No doubt it was the site of the Phenix fulling mill of 1812, later operated by Dyckman. In 1853 it was owned by Lynford Mood and by Cuffman in 1866. Edwards, the Welshman, was the last owner. His widow, known by everyone as Grandma Edwards, will be well remembered by the older neighbors. She was one of the last of the old-fashioned grandmothers, her comfortable shape dressed in a gray and white gingham in the morning, black-sprigged dress in the afternoon with a big white apron, and black silk with a gold breast-pin for Sundays. Her white hair was parted in the middle, primly waved, and she wore a sun-bonnet in summer and a shawl in winter.

Continuing around the Byway, past the two early houses now owned by the Stones [*16 the Byway*] and the Gutermans [*20 the Byway*], we come to the Big White grist mill, later called the Empire Mills. A photograph shows it to be a well-built and very prosperous place at the north west corner of the bridge. It went up in a spectacular blaze some time in the 90's in spite of bucket lines formed by every man, woman and child from the creek and the pump. It was never replaced. Most of the sturdy wall and the flume by which water was drawn from the log dam, still stands. Across the roadway [*the Byway*] under the bank, was a low hitching shed which remained for many years, and nearby was the town pump given by Mills McKinney as a public water supply. For many years this was the best source of drinking water on our side of the creek.

Isaac Cradit's furniture factory stood on the south west side of the old wooden bridge and directly across the creek was Peter Manning's saw-mill and Brown's cider mill. The latter was the objective of annual cider-raids by the students of the new university, many of whom found rooms in Free Hollow. Their antics kept the village in an uproar in those days, I can tell you. Great gangs of them, having pre-arranged with the proprietor, would march on the mill of a crisp fall night firing shot-guns and apples right and left - and consuming barrels of good cider. The ruins of the cider mill, saw-mill and tannery, stood on into 1900. I regret to say that my sister and I were allowed to use the old tannery ledgers, bound in calf-skin, for drawing books and they soon disappeared. They would have been a

source of great interest today, not only for their daily accounts of hides bought and sold, tanbark purchased and tanning done on shares, but they would have given us the names of many of the older residents of the period between 1830 and 1880. For a time McKinney and Slocum ran a retail store, advertised in the Ithaca Journal of 1865:

“New Leather Store.

McKinney and Slocum, manufacturers of Calf, Kip and upper leather, and also of Harness Leathers at Free Hollow, have opened a shop for the sale of the same, at wholesale and retail on the east side of Aurora St., Ithaca, at the shop lately occupied by W. J. Egbert, as a shoe store. They have been led to this course for the purpose of accommodating many of their customers who can more easily be supplied in Ithaca than at the tannery. The stock is so favorably regarded as to make it very generally sought after.

Hemlock bark, hides and skins bought, and the highest price paid in cash. Stock tanned on shares for those who desire it.

Store open on the 15th June, 1865.”

Alfred Hasbrouck was the proprietor of a leather finishing shop which stood on the middle curve of the Kline Hill, now the Pleasant Grove, road. Here he tanned and finished fine calf and kid-skins for ladies' shoes and book-bindings. Only one product of the old tannery remains – the song book which my grandfather bound with soft calf-skin, replacing the hard board covers so that he could roll it up and carry it in his pocket on horseback to singing school. The flume under the bridge abutment, and the general outline of the tannery can still be seen.

Children loved the precarious sport of riding the logs on the old saw-mill as they moved toward the shining, whining saw. They no doubt ate apples and sampled the new cider, played with wood curls from the cabinet shop and burrowed in the fragrant piles of clean sawdust. There was no allure, however, in the tannery. It stank of hides and tan-bark soaking in the great vats. Free Hollow was a wonderful place to grow up in – it still is. In the spring the woods were full of hepaticas and violets; in the summer the swimming hole in the gorge behind the Red Mill, and wading for the younger ones above the dam was great fun. The boys fished and hunted, and the girls picked berries, the best patch my grandmother always said was on the site of the University Library. In the fall there were chestnuts and hickory nuts and butternuts to gather, there were election parades with top hats and flares, and in the winter there were sleighrides and church sociables and square dances. There were barn-raising and hornings for newly-weds, singing-school and spelling-bees. Ladies dressed up of an afternoon with a clean white apron, took their work-bags and went calling and stayed for tea. They sat up with the sick, and the dead, did hair-jewelry, made charcoal drawings, and on rare occasions saw a play or heard a lecture in Library Hall. Or there were the

quiet evenings at home when neighbors dropped in and grandmother would make popcorn and egg-nog.

From the first [*downstream*] bridge to Pond's corner [228 *Forest Home Drive*], there were no business places except the little grocery which stood in front of the Whetzel house [206 *Forest Home Drive*] and later in the familiar location next the Northrop house (Konvitz) [220 *Forest Home Drive*]. The old store was built by the men in the town for Mr. Van Valkenberg who was a wounded veteran of the Civil War. He must also have taught school at one time, for his name appears as teacher on one of the merit cards. Andrew Conlon, a well known resident of Lansing and supervisor of that town, also taught here as a very young man.

Glenn Palmer's house [229 *Forest Home Drive*] is one of the few remaining factory landmarks. It was first the rag-room of Gauntlett and Andrus' paper mill where the local girls worked at sorting over rags from which a good grade of book-paper was made. This firm, under various names, published a great many books and pamphlets, maps and tracts over a long period of time.

Later the Forest Home Knitting Works was located in this same building and here mittens for men, women and children were manufactured as the business card informs us. Inside the house which was built by Hazen (Pond) [228 *Forest Home Drive*], were a few special machines where more skilled operators made hosiery.

Beyond the second [*upstream*] bridge in the little white house to the left [300 *Forest Home Drive*], Mr. Criddle ran his necessary if lugubrious business. Mrs. Wilcox, a rare and lovable character who occupied the house some thirty years ago, treasured a hand-full of coffin nails and some trimmings she found in the attic.

I am reminded of an epitaph in the Pleasant Grove burying ground where most of the old settlers are lying. It read:

“While on earth my knee was lame,
I had to nurse and heed it.
But now I've gone to a better place
Where I do not even need it.”

Farther up the creek, above the [*upstream*] bridge and the wading pool, beloved by children for generations, was the slaughter house - but no more than mention need be made of that place of business.

A hundred years ago there were only a handful of neat white houses with green blinds in Free Hollow - just twenty-seven of them. Cows grazed in the little

meadows and behind every house was a tidy garden, fruit trees and a chicken house. There were spreading, shady trees and long stretches of white picket fencing over which spilled damask and moss roses, and those charming old-fashioned cloth-of-gold roses. Prim posy beds, bordered with shells were on either side of the door-steps. The yards were choked full of bushes and flowering shrubs, lilacs and honeysuckle – and there were neat flag-stone walks from the front door to the gate. Big willow trees dipped their slender branches in the stream, and here and there in the woods were giant pine and hemlock and oak trees, remnants of the virgin forest.

Coming back through the village we pass the Fletcher house [*216 Forest Home Drive*], later the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bantam where the Sundervilles now live; and next, to the north were Mr. and Mrs. Miles Cook [*214 Forest Home Drive*], where the children were always sure of getting a big, soft molasses cooky from the crock in her butt'ry. Across the road, in a little house backed up to the creek, lived one of the most colorful characters in the village. He was Bonaparte Niver, a skinny little old fellow who had gone to war and played in a fife and drum corps. Warm summer nights Bony would bring his fife and sit on the flag-stone steps and play to my grand-parents, and tell them yarns about the war. Grandfather, like so many young men with growing families, had been drafted and had bought a substitute to go in his place. These impromptu concerts came a bit later on Saturday nights when Bony would come staggering up the pitch black woods road, playing away on his fife and no doubt imagining himself at the head of a charging regiment.

Two of the houses in the village departed from the Greek Revival style, perhaps built by men with a feeling for New England architecture. Helen Washburn lives in the one [*112 Judd Falls Road*] which formerly stood on the site of Mr. Bullock's house [*136 Judd Falls Road*] – and the other was the Underhill house [*11 the Byway*], which, in those early days must have been the most imposing place in the village. It was occupied by Dr. Oliver Barker, listed in the Tompkins County Medical Society from 1830 to 1843. According to tradition, it faced to the south and had a beautiful door-way with fan-light, and a garden which lay between it and the main road [*Forest Home Drive*], with a picket fence on all sides. "Old Dr. Barker" as I have always heard him called, was a much respected and beloved country physician.

The Byway is the oldest settled part of the village, all the houses being of early date. For years a big red barn stood on the corner where the Forest Home Building [*130 Forest Home Drive*] is located, and there was a little triangle of grass in front of our house [*2 the Byway*] which was a favorite play-ground for children. The only possible danger was from an occasional run-away horse and buggy.

Mrs. Mapes' house [*4 the Byway*] was the home of my great-grandmother and her spinster daughter Kate during the last years of their lives, and until the early

1890's it was a story-and-a-half house of great charm, having a latticed Dutch stoop with benches on either side. There was a cellar kitchen with bed-sink – a recessed alcove for a bed with curtains which could be drawn during the day-time or on an especially cold night.

The McIntyre house [*now located at 112 Judd Falls Road*] and the Cradit house (Bizzell's) [*137 Judd Falls Road*] were the only dwellings on the Judd Fall's road until about 1900. It was all good farm land, the fields separated by stumpfences and belonged to the Van Nattas and McIntyres.

Life remained slow-paced and peaceful in Free Hollow throughout its first one hundred years. There were no poor and there were no rich. No famous man was born here though hundreds of useful men and women have gone out into the world in all sorts of professions. Free Hollow has always been a place where every man was as good as his neighbor. No one has ever gone to jail or been guilty of an unpardonable sin. There have been neighborhood spats and family feuds, but that is only natural among people who have spunk. When real trouble comes, such petty feelings are forgotten.

The end of Free Hollow's first century showed a few changes from the earlier days. There were perhaps a few more houses and a few less cow-stables and pig-pens in the back-yards – and life was much more comfortable and even luxurious. The establishment of a post-office brought about the last change in name, perhaps because of a conflict with other similar place-names, or perhaps because the old name did not seem very high-toned. At any rate the old rugged, meaningful name was abandoned and so came to an end the village of Free Hollow – and so comes to an end my chronicles.

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HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN FOREST HOME

It seems strange perhaps, that one hundred and twenty years passed by before a church was built in Forest Home. Services were first held in the original house in the village, the home of a "saintly old lady" which stood on the site of the present parsonage [*222 Forest Home Drive*]. But for at least fifty years, people in Free Hollow attended either the Presbyterian or Methodist churches in Varna.

After the old school-house was built (now Trevor Teele's garage) [*131 Judd Falls Road*], letters and programs show that services, meetings of the temperance societies, and later a Sunday-school were held there. Ministers from the Varna church and groups of students from Cornell University led the meetings.

By 1900 the Sunday-school was very active. Prof. Riley, an entomologist, was the superintendent, and taught the adult class. The well-loved sisters, Francina

and Nellie Drake, taught the children. Some of us still have the old, brightly-colored cards which were passed out each Sunday for the following week's lesson. Church sociables and Christmas exercises with a shining tree, were events in those days.

Preachers from Varna conducted services in the evening, Mr. Lane and Mr. McConnell being the best-remembered. The plain little room with its unpainted kitchen chairs and oil lamps in brackets and big pot-bellied stove, would seem very unlike a sanctuary these days. But there was a sense of church-worship there which one does not always find in handsome edifices. When Marion Kline led off the singing in her clear soprano voice, and Mabel Cornelius pulled out all the stops of the little parlor organ and everyone joined in with a good heart if not a melodious voice, the humble room rang with "There shall be showers of blessings" or "Onward Christian Soldiers" or one of the old hymn tunes.

Soon after the establishment of the College of Agriculture, young faculty men began to build homes in the village. Among them were Edward S. Guthrie and Charles M. Chupp who, perhaps more than any others, stimulated an interest in building a church for the growing community. This was no doubt helped along somewhat by the cussedness of a school trustee who posted a notice on the locked school-house one day, stating that its use for other than an educational purpose was illegal. The next Sunday the whole village turned out for services in a house next to his which happened to be vacant, and where meetings were held until his term of office expired.

After much discussion as to what denomination the new church should be, with a good deal of sentiment in favor of a community non-sectarian group, the past affiliation with the Methodist church and the fact that this church organization would bear a part of the financial burden, tipped the scale in favor of that denomination.

So it was that the Forest Home Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated on December 5, 1915, nearly forty years ago. The building was designed by Dean C. A. Martin of the College of Architecture along Colonial lines, modified by the use of modern materials and to meet present-day demands. It would be hard to improve on its simple, dignified interior as originally planned. It stands today as fitting and appropriate in design as when it was built - and a worthy tribute to the vision and consecration of the good people who were its first members.