

205 Park Avenue

PREQUIL

The Village of Brockport owes its existence to the location of the Erie Canal; that man-made marvel of engineering and transportation super highway of the early 19th century. Villages grew along the length of the canal, with services for the packet boats and their occupants located next to the waterway. By the mid-19th century, however, a new, faster mode of transportation – the railroads -- was destined to eventually make canal transportation largely obsolete.

Lorenzo and Telitha Porter

Owners/Builders: 1851 to April 1861

Lorenzo Porter, a farmer from Ogden, completed construction on this house in the summer of 1851, just in time to serve as a hotel for railroad customers. Located on the corner of Main Street and Railroad Avenue, this fine brick building became the first of several hotels to be located near the railroad tracks; and is the only original hotel standing today.

What was it like to be a customer at Porter's Hotel? According to Beatrice DeRuyscher, in an interview for the Brockport Community Museum, the hotel served as a stagecoach stop in addition to being a convenient location for railroad travelers. When "fancy" people came to stay, they were accommodated in one of the four upstairs bedrooms. For stagecoach passengers and others, however, hay was brought in and scattered on the floors. Women slept on hay in one room; men slept on hay mounds in another room. It was also customary at that time, for several men to share the same bed.

Although the Porters had servants to help in running the hotel, it became their business and home. Lorenzo, Telitha and their younger daughter, Rumina, lived there. The Porter farm, near Adam's Basin, was still in the

family, but probably run by Francis "Frank" Porter, Lorenzo's son. Frank also owned a hotel in Adam's Basin, and applied for a liquor license in 1857, along with his father. We don't know if Porters were successful with their applications, because licenses were given in limited numbers. "Liquor intoxication" was seen by many as a serious problem at that time.

We know a little about the Porter family. They arrived in New England during colonial times and Lorenzo's grandfather, George Porter, served in the Revolutionary War. There were innkeepers in the family. The Porter's son, Francis "Frank" Porter, married twice and adopted a daughter, Frankie L. Porter Brown. Julia A. Porter Doty married and had a son named Lorenzo. Rumina, the youngest child, attended the private Le Roy Seminary but died young and unmarried. As for Telitha, nothing could be found about her parentage, but on census documents she stated that her birthplace was Broom County, New York.

Lorenzo sold his hotel in 1861 for an unknown amount of money, but the assessed value of the hotel was \$2,000. The property included about 12 acres of land, parts of which eventually became Fair Street, the Union Agricultural Fairground, multiple house lots and the High Street Cemetery. Lorenzo and his wife retired to their Adam's Basin farm. Ever the entrepreneur, Lorenzo found a way to make additional money during his retirement, by advertising his personal endorsement for Dr. Darrin's "modern method" to cure a variety of diseases. Although members of the Porter family left nothing in terms of community service to the village, their hotel still stands, a reminder of the man who had the foresight to take advantage of new opportunities.

Timothy and Alvin Frye

Owners: Abt. 1861 to 1863

Long-time village residents and merchants, "T. & A Frye" as they were known, purchased the property and owned it briefly. The exact dates of their ownership are unclear. In a newspaper report from February of 1865, we learned of the sale of the building and property to Charles Ellison for \$3,500. Ellison was supposedly going to use the building as a private residence but the sale, apparently, fell through. Later in 1863, a newspaper reported the sale of the property to Stephen A. Beach.

The Frye brothers ran a well-known village drug store early in Brockport's history. They sold a little bit of everything, including musical merchandise, perfume, "fancy goods," Sabbath School books and bedbug poison "guaranteed to do the business --- dead shot and no kicking," in addition to medicine.

Although not Brockport natives, the brothers lived here for about 60 years and into old age. Timothy was a noted member and deacon of the Baptist

Church, where he frequently played his "bass violin" for the congregation. Upon his retirement from the drugstore business, the store and its contents were sold to Thomas G. Dobson; a long-time village druggist.

Timothy was a member of the local board of the Collegiate Institute in 1866, when village taxpayers approved a bond of \$50,000 to pay its debts and enlarge the building, thus paving the way for the institute to survive and become a Normal School. His daughter, Nellie, graduated from the Institute and became a well-known singer and teacher of music.

Alvin Frye was also active in the religious community, serving as the secretary for the Young Men's Christian Association. Alvin and Timothy, with their families, lived at #1 and #3 Erie Street, respectively; locations considerably more upscale than today. Their final resting places are adjacent plots at the Brockport Cemetery on High Street. How fitting.

Stephen A. Beach

Owner: May 1863 to 1865

Porter's Hotel, reportedly "thoroughly renovated" by Stephen Beach, became the Union Hotel, an obvious reference to patriotic sentiments in the village during the Civil War. As an added service at his hotel, Beach advertised free transportation to and from "the Cars;" not our cars of today, obviously, but railway cars. He built a barn and enclosed a paddock for the stabling of horses and convenience of passing "drovers." Beach added a "large new dining hall" to the hotel, as well.

According to the IRS Tax Assessment of 1863, Stephen Beach paid a \$20 tax for a retail liquor license and a \$10 tax as a hotel keeper. He also paid a \$10 tax for the purchase of a stallion. No documents survive showing his income, unfortunately.

Although not a Brockport native, Beach's grandfather, Michael, moved to Genesee County (which was subdivided into several smaller counties, including Monroe County) as a pioneer settler of Parma in 1795. The family moved here from Connecticut, where Michael Beach was a "salt boiler." Stephen Beach was previously a farmer in nearby Greece, New York and later, in Brighton. As with the Porter family, the children of the Beach family, daughters Emily, Abby and Florence, were grown by the 1860s. Stephen's wife, Polly M. Budd, didn't survive him.

In his old age, Stephen lived with David and Thomas Hicks, in Parma. He died, quite suddenly, of heart disease at their home in 1877.

Rufus Haskins and Corena Guild

Owner: Abt. 1865 to 1867

At the time Rufus Guild purchased the hotel and land for \$4,000, he was living and working as a farmer in the town of Sweden. He had previously been a farmer and a lumberman in southern New York and in Pennsylvania. His tenure as a Brockport hotel proprietor was brief, as by 1870, the family was living in Oil Creek, Pennsylvania and running the "Bucklin House."

Perhaps the move back to Pennsylvania seemed to be a better opportunity for the Guild family. The business was sold at a profit for \$4,750. No other advertisements or records could be found to document the business during the Guild ownership; nor were the Guild family members mentioned in contemporary newspaper articles. As suddenly as they had settled in Sweden Township, the Guild family departed.

Rufus lived into his late 70s and was survived by his wife and two of his children. At the time of his death, he and Corena were living in Porkey, Tionesta, Pennsylvania.

Sanford E. (Emmett?), Katherine "Kate" Williamson Goff and Family

Owners: 1869 to April 1907

Sanford Goff was a self-made man. Although not a Brockport native, he spent his adult life here as a respected resident and successful businessman. After his mother, Betsy Thompson, died, Sanford's father left him and his brother, Henry, and at least one more of his many children in the care of relatives in Barre, Orleans County. Roswell Goff remarried for a third time, moved to Michigan and raised seven additional children. He never returned to New York to reclaim his sons, who, according to brother, Henry, were expected to do farm chores to pay for their clothes and board by the time they were nine years old.

The opportunity for an education beyond that of the common grades (perhaps paid for by their father?) and the availability of the Collegiate Institute, brought Sanford and his brother Henry to Brockport to study at the Institute in 1842 and 1844, respectively. Sanford was living in Murray, Orleans County and working as a blacksmith in 1850, but returned to Brockport shortly after that, and never left. He married Kate Williamson and had two children, Alice and Emmett, who lived to adulthood. A single sentence reported by the local newspaper, in 1861, tells us that there was a third Goff child, who died "in this village, Dec. 3, infant child of S. Goff." The whereabouts of the Goff family's burial plot is uncertain, but likely in the Brockport Cemetery. Only one mention of a burial location was found; that of Kate Goff. Perhaps the family erected no headstones to mark their final destination. On line records for the cemetery list no Sanford Goff family members buried there.

By the mid 1850s, Sanford Goff was working in Brockport as a blacksmith, owned a livery and stable on Clinton Street and had established a trade in building and selling carriages. He employed six full time workers, some of whom lived with the family and hired live-in servants to help his wife run the household.

As so many women of her time, Katherine "Kate" Goff was a mother and housewife whose name was rarely mentioned in print. We know little of her life's interests and nothing of her family history, but she did participate regularly in an interesting yearly social rite in which society matrons, or "The Ladies," as they were called, held open houses for their respective friends during the holiday season, from Christmas to New Year's Day. In December of 1878, Katherine and Allie Goff, among others, "assisted" in Mrs. N. B. Baker's open house. The Baker house was decorated in "evergreens, vines, and natural flowers, and a genuine old horse shoe was hung over the dining room door." Refreshments, of course, would be served. These were occasions in which women shined, literally, in silks, satins, opals and diamonds, for all their friends to see. Kate Goff was attired in black satin and silk on this occasion. Did Kate ever hold an open house in her grand home? We don't know for sure, but we suspect it might have happened.

During the late 1860s, Sanford Goff was actively involved in a number of business ventures, such as the sale of "Johnson's Pat. Portable Clothes Dryer," for which he had "Town and shop rights for sale." Home and property sales were a continuing interest for many years. He was even willing to trade his carriage stock for village lots. In 1868, Goff advertised "Choice Village Lots" for sale on "College, Utica and Monroe Streets." Shortly after that, he advertised lime, sand, gravel and loam for sale to builders.

Also during the late 1860s, Goff sold the Clinton Street livery to Alpheus Veazie and, in rapid succession, purchased the jewelry store of Richard Mockford and sold Mockford a house and lot on Clark Street. With these property exchanges, Sanford acquired the business in which his son, Emmett, was the experienced jeweler. Goff also purchased the Union Hotel from Rufus Guild and turned it into his private residence. The adjacent stable became a drive barn for railroad patrons, with horse and buggy rentals and sales for arriving passengers. This business was the 19th century version of our "Park and Ride."

Goff next turned his attention to the building which would house his family for decades to come. He seems to have extensively remodeled the exterior, adding a front porch and other decorative elements uncharacteristic of a circa 1850s building. Subtle changes in the exterior brickwork hint at a roofline change, as well. By 1874, the local newspaper

reported that Goff had "again materially improved his residence by the addition of a rear wing." The 1877 Monroe County Directory included an engraving of the completed Goff residence. These books were popular publications, supported by prominent citizens who paid to have their engraved portraits and/or homesteads included in the texts. Unfortunately for us, Sanford didn't have portraits of himself and his wife included in the book.

Some of the acreage Goff purchased with the former hotel was given to the village to create "Fair Street," named not because it was so pretty, but because it led from Main Street to the former grounds of the Union Agricultural Institute; later the Monroe County Fair. Generations of prominent businessmen and farmers worked together to organize events and eventually built a grandstand, "driving track" (horse racing oval) and various other exhibition halls. It was customary in that time period for men of a certain social or financial standing, such as Sanford Goff, to become members of organizations like as the Agricultural Institute; but Goff apparently had no time or interest in such customs. Family and business were his interests. The establishment of Fair Street made it easier for Goff to subdivide and gradually sell the land as building lots, which had become far more valuable because of the street access. The eastern part of his land was eventually sold to the Village of Brockport and incorporated into the High Street cemetery, thus greatly increasing its size.

Alice and Emmett Goff grew up with the kind of advantages unknown to Sanford and his brother. In the 1865 IRS Collection Schedule, Sanford paid a \$2.00 tax on the purchase of a piano forte, presumably, for his talented daughter. By 1878, for example, "Miss Allie Goff, Pianistes" was a featured performer at a concert to benefit the Silsby Hose Company. That was the same year in which Belle Milliken published three musical pieces, one of which, named "June Roses," was "dedicated to Miss Allie Goff, of Brockport."

Allie took full advantage of the local schools, where she was repeatedly noted as having perfect yearly attendance. She joined the Alpha Delta sorority and served as its "chorister." In 1915, Allie graduated from the Normal School music course and was memorialized for "a modest blush she wears not formed by art." While other students left to pursue careers as teachers, Allie returned to her family home, where she made her living as a music teacher. She also became a dealer in musical instruments and eventually built the house on Park Avenue which stands next door to her family's home.

Emmett, a jeweler, was less of a student than his sister, but like Allie, he was more involved in village activities than either of his parents. While Allie contributed her musical talents to local concerts, operettas and Baptist Church events, Emmett became a founding member of the Horace Silsby

Hose Company and a member of local "Theatre" companies. Both Goff children enjoyed gatherings with friends and relatives and participated in social and fishing trips to the Thousand Islands. They continued to live at the family home; in Emmett's case, even after marrying Anna Frances Field and having a son, Roy Emmett.

Sanford Goff's business ventures slowed down in the 1880s, perhaps due either to his advancing age or lack of necessity. Perhaps a slower-paced life gave Goff, a member of the local Baptist Church, more time to be active in the congregation. He hosted a "society social" for the young ladies of the congregation, "which all are invited to attend." His Goff family, only several generations removed from their Welsh homeland, were known as fervent Baptists. Sanford's father was named after the Reverend Roswell Goff, or Elder Goff, a noted Baptist preacher. It was Allie, however, who seemed to be most involved in the local Baptist congregation.

The local newspaper gave a hint of the trouble to come; in the final year listing Emmett Goff, he had no stated occupation. Shortly after that, in 1884, Emmett Goff "disappeared" from his home and family, amid allegations of "doing an irregular insurance business" and "forgery."

Emmett moved to Mexico, Oswego County, New York. He never returned to Brockport, not even to attend family funerals. Whatever consequences Emmett faced for the charges against him is unknown, as not a word about him was ever again mentioned in contemporary newspapers. The departure and disgrace of Emmett Goff must have been a severe blow to this close knit family. Frances and Roy Goff stayed at the family home in Brockport and she worked from the family home doing dressmaking.

The passing of time gradually removed members of the Goff family from their home. Sanford died in 1892. Frances Goff, his daughter-in-law, died suddenly from heart disease. The house was sold. Allie Goff moved to her own home, but she lived in poor health for many years before dying in her 50s. Roy, an accountant for the railroad, cared for his grandmother here until her death, after which, he and his family moved to Phelps. His only child, Robert W. Goff, is buried in a military cemetery in California.

William Gregory and Elizabeth Blanche Lynch Dailey, Jr.

Owner: 1905 to April 1907

Very briefly, the home passed to the family of William Dailey, his wife Elizabeth and their two young daughters. William was the son of a very successful local produce and grain dealer, also William; a first generation Irish immigrant who started life working on the family farm. His namesake son followed in the father's footsteps and was equally successful in the family business of buying and selling produce, grains and apples. An

indication of his early success is the gift William presented to his young bride as a wedding present: a mahogany grand piano.

Elizabeth Lynch Dailey was the daughter of Thomas and Margaret Lynch, Brockport residents. Thomas was born in Ireland. His father, Bernard, was a day laborer in Clarkson. Thomas became a successful tin smith and owner of a village business. He was able to provide his daughter, Elizabeth, with a lovely wedding in the Church of the Nativity. Elizabeth wore a gown of silk and lace, a large chiffon hat and carried "bridal roses." Before departing on the evening train for a "Southern tour," the couple and their guests consumed an "elaborate dinner" at the Lynch's village home. It seemed like the perfect beginning to a charmed life.

In 1906, while living in their Park Avenue home, however, the two daughters, Margaret and Jessica, were stricken with fatal illnesses. Margaret died of heart failure following a severe case of diphtheria. She was four years old. Jessica, only two years old, died three months later. Cemetery records tell us that William and Elizabeth actually had six children, in all; and all died young, including Thomas, born in 1939, their last child, who lived only a day. Jessica, Margaret, Mary, Mary L. and William Dailey's remains were moved to a family plot in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in 1917, joining their sibling, Thomas.

Soon after the deaths of Margaret and Jessica, the Dailey home was sold to Mertice L. Pettit. The couple sold their furniture, as well; advertising bedroom sets of oak, mahogany and rosewood, "reasonable for cash."

After leaving their Park Avenue home, William and Elizabeth first lived in a house on West Avenue but soon moved to Albion, Orleans County. It was a location nearer to William's cold storage warehouses and produce suppliers, although William eventually expanded his business ventures well beyond the produce business. His only confirmed tie to Monroe County was his continued membership in the Oak Hill County Club.

Elizabeth died in 1948 and William died two years later. He left an estate of over \$100,000. The entire Dailey family now rests together in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Rochester.

Mertice L. "Mertie" Pettit

Owner: April 1907 to August 1911

She bought the house, but did "Mertie" Pettit ever live there? Did her husband, John Howard, ever live there? Probably not full-time, but maybe they visite or stayed for a while. So, who, exactly, lived in this grand home? According to the Brockport Directory for 1906/07, John H., student Fred W. and Iva Pettit lived at #4 Park Avenue. But wait, there were two

John Howard Pettits, the father and the son. The tenancy of the Pettit family was brief and confusing.

Mertice Babcock married John Howard Pettit, who was usually known as "John H." and they had a son who was usually known as "J. Howard" or just "Howard." There were also three other Pettit children: Fred Wilber, Iva Louise Pettit Brewster (Mrs. Albert) and Margueriete E. "Daisy" Pettit Burnham (Mrs. William B.). The Pettit family lived in Avoca, Steuben County, New York, where John H. was an employee and then general manager of the Avoca Wheel Company. By his early twenties, the son, Howard, was also employed at the wheel company.

In 1906, there was a fire at the Avoca Wheel Company which destroyed its main building. Whether that was the reason, we'll never know, but John H. left his position in Avoca at that exact time and purchased an interest in the Rochester Wheel Company (which was actually located in Brockport). He assumed the management of the Brockport business and hired his son J. Howard to work in the office. J. Howard left for Brockport in December of 1906 and was much lamented as an active member of the Avoca social scene, "musical matters" and Sunday school or church work. Avoca hated to lose him.

Although making wheels in the late 1800s and early 1900s was difficult and dangerous work, it paid \$1.25 per day. Village residents were thrilled when the Rochester Wheel Company was enticed to occupy the vacant building of the departed D. S. Morgan Company (the stone building; later Brockport Cold Storage). The company had been established in 1858 but by 1895 had outgrown its headquarters at the corner of Hill and Elizabeth Streets in Rochester. Rumors of the company's move began to swirl around the village in August of 1895. Unnamed village businessmen had "sweetened the pot" with an offer of financial assistance and a lease was finally signed for three years with the possibility of two more. Heavy machinery and raw materials were transported from Rochester to Brockport on the Erie Canal and the entirety of Morgan Shop #2 became the company's new home. Large kilns were built, more equipment purchased and the building was wired for electric lights. The work force expanded from around 40 to about 100 employees. Products from the plant were shipped "all over the United States, Mexico, Central and South America, Australia and South Africa." While the original business owned by S. B. Roby failed in the late 1800s, Benjamin Gleason stepped in and reorganized the company, becoming its president and ensuring its success and continued location in Brockport.

While living in Brockport, it seems that single older daughter Iva ran the household. Her younger brother, Fred was in school, but not Brockport Normal. Fred graduated from Union College and became a surveyor and civil engineer in Pasadena, California. J. Howard became secretary of the wheel works and in 1907 joined the Capen Hose Fire Department.

Perhaps he was even a member of the Wheel Works team in the popular Brockport Baseball League. Mertie, the home's owner, kept her financial interest in the property and in 1909 sold a portion of the remaining original 12 ½ acres to Cora M. Jones for a home lot. We know that John H. kept his Avoca home because the local newspaper reported him spending the Christmas holidays there in 1906.

On August 17, 1911, an ominous news article appeared in the Brockport Republic. "Gifford Morgan, president, and J. Howard Pettit, superintendent of the Rochester Wheel Works Company, of this village, tendered their resignations Saturday." Morgan was going to turn his attention to his "landed estate." John Pettit was leaving in a few days for Pasadena, California. In fact, the Pettit family had already relocated to Los Angeles and were recorded living there on the 1910 Federal Census. Iva became the manager of an apartment and married late in life. "Daisy" had three sons but sadly, died at the age of forty. J. Howard purchased a store. John Howard, "the well known capitalist of Pasadena" became president of the Los Angeles Midway Oil Company. It was a world away from Mertie's beginning as the daughter of a blacksmith and from John's beginning as the son of a Dutchess County farmer. It was a world away from Brockport and the Rochester Wheel Works, which struggled but carried on for a couple more years, finally closing its doors forever in 1914.

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The former hotel passed through several hands in quick succession after the departure of the Pettit family. Banker Henry and his wife Jesse Hiler lived there together until Henry had something akin to a "breakdown" and left his wife in 1925. His mother-in-law quickly foreclosed on the property.

Next to own the building were Henry and Caroline "Carrie" Etzel, both immigrants born in Germany. Henry was born Richard Heinrich Etzel in Nussdorf, Germany and came to the United States in 1908. His wife arrived in 1910. Henry was a machinist who worked at Taylor Instrument Company in Rochester. Carrie Lotocke Etzel was a housewife. The three Etzel children, Mae, Elsie and Henry all served in WWII. Henry, a pilot, survived a horrific plane crash which caused internal injuries, burns and broken bones. He wrote to a friend in Brockport saying he was anxious to visit his old home town --- as soon as he was released from the hospital.

The Etzel family moved to Gates in 1941 and attempted to sell or lease the house for several years.

Finally, in 1944, the house became the Cupola Nursing Home. Mabel Good and her daughter, Elizabeth Beikirch were the owners. Before selling the house, they rented it to Ambrose and Eileen Corcoran.

The house became a private home, once again, for Russel A. and Helen Virginia Wagner Parish. It stayed in their family for sixty years and two generations, eventually becoming an owner occupied rental property.

In 2017, the house changed hands for the final time and is currently undergoing an extensive renovation. The first railroad hotel is in the process of becoming a B&B. Will Lorenzo Porter's hotel come full circle and return to its original roots as a village inn? Wait and see.