

**A CENTENNIAL OFFERING; BEING  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
COOPERSTOWN WITH A  
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF  
JAMES FENIMORE COOPER**

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A Centennial Offering; Being a Brief History of Cooperstown with a Biographical Sketch of James Fenimore Cooper by Isaac N. Arnold & S. M. Shaw & James Fenimore Cooper

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**ISAAC N. ARNOLD & S. M. SHAW & JAMES FENIMORE COOPER**

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A CENTENNIAL OFFERING.

BEING A BRIEF

HISTORY OF COOPERSTOWN

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER,

BY DR. ISAAC N. ARNOLD,

TOGETHER WITH OTHER INTERESTING LOCAL FACTS  
AND DATA.

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EDITED BY S. M. SHAW.

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1886.



TO

THE GOOD PEOPLE

OF COOPERSTOWN

THIS BOOK IS VERY RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE EDITOR.

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1886.





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## P R E F A C E .

There has been an expressed desire on the part of many of the residents of Cooperstown, for several years past, for a new and more complete "History of Cooperstown," than has heretofore been published, the old volume bearing that title being out of print; and since it was issued in 1862 many events of local interest have transpired which should go upon record. In compliance with this general desire and an occasional personal request on the subject, I have undertaken to collate and edit this volume, which is issued a century after the first settlement of Cooperstown; with what degree of success as to meeting the just expectations of my esteemed fellow-citizens of one of the most noted villages in this country, I must leave to their kind judgment. I will only say, I have conscientiously and with much pleasure done the best I could with the material and time at my command, and have preserved for some other writer at a later period, material that otherwise might have been lost.

Next to Mr. Cooper's "Chronicles"—which were carried down to 1838—the most prominent feature of this book is the appreciative tribute which the late Hon. Isaac N. Arnold of Chicago, formerly of Cooperstown, paid to the memory of Mr. Cooper in an Essay which first appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* in 1884. He had a few copies of the same, illustrated by a number of photographic views, printed in pamphlet form. This tribute of a scholarly and well-known author and admiring personal friend of Mr. Cooper, has been sought for by literary writers and publishers in different parts of the country, by some of whom it is esteemed the best essay ever written on America's most noted Novelist and naval Historian.

S. M. S.

## OTSEGO LAKE AND VICINITY.

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It is doubtful whether any white man ever visited the shores of this beautiful inland lake previous to the year 1737—nearly a century and a half ago—at which time it was the favorite resort of the red man. In 1737, Cadwallader Colden, surveyor-general, in his report to the Hon. George Clarke, lieutenant-governor of the province of New York, made this statement: "At 50 miles from Albany, the land carriage from the Mohawk river to a lake, from whence the northern branch of the Susquehanna takes its rise, does not exceed 14 miles. Goods may be carried from this lake in battoes or flat-bottomed vessels, through Pennsylvania, to Maryland and Virginia, the current of the river running everywhere easy."

In 1753 the Rev. Gideon Hawley—"ordained a Missionary to the Indians, in the Old South meeting house [of Boston,] when the Rev. Dr. Sewall preached on the occasion"—journeyed as far as here, and left on record this memorandum: "May 31st. We met with difficulty about getting a canoe, and sent an Indian into the woods to get ready a bark, but he made small progress. In the afternoon came from Otsego lake, which is the source of this stream"—the Susquehanna. It is probable that other christian Missionaries made the same journey at a later period, to this part of the territory of the Six Nations.

What was long known as the "Bowers Patent," in Middlefield, was originally owned by John R. Myer, of the city of New York. His daughter married Henry Bowers, who was the father of John M. Bowers, and who inherited the large tract of land which subsequently bore his name. John Nichols was the first settler who lived on this patent, in a little house which stood near the river on "the Lakelands." He leased a tract of land, and made the first clearing on this patent. It was at his house that Mr. Henry Bowers and his wife first lodged. Nichols' log house was burned in 1802, at the time the timber was burned which was being kiln-dried for the construction of the mansion of Mr. Bowers, who had that day left for Albany.

In 1791, when Cooperstown had but few dwellings, Mr. Henry

Bowers caused to be laid out and surveyed by Philip R. Frey, the proposed village of "Bowerstown," which extended from the Susquehanna river to the base of the hill on the east, and from the Lake to a point about 950 feet south thereof. The map of this projected village, now in the possession of Mr. H. J. Bowers, shows that this plat of land—now represented by "the Lakelands" and 350 feet south of the road which forms its southern boundary—was laid out in 82 building lots, nearly all of them 50x130 feet, and in a building lot 200x260 feet for the "Manor Square" on which Mr. Bowers proposed to build, and being part of "the Lakelands," near the Lake and River. "Division street" was to be "as wide as Cooper's street," and started from the eastern termination of our present Main street. "Bridge street" was the northern boundary, and terminated on the west at the first bridge built across the Susquehanna. "Water," "Myer" and "Washington" streets ran north and south through the village. "Otsago" street ran from a point on Bridge street north, near the Lake, where the present owner of "the Lakelands" has constructed an avenue. Later on, Mr. Bowers probably changed his plans, for we do not learn that these "village lots" were ever put upon the market. It is a pity that "Cooperstown" was not originally as well laid out as "Bowerstown." The former will probably ere long cross the river, by legislative enactment, and embrace within its corporate limits all of the former, and a tract of land lying east and south of it.

A saw mill was built by Rob't Riddle, on Bowers patent, on Red Creek, in 1791, being the first saw mill in this part of the country, and one has been maintained there until now. This locality, now embracing a number of dwellings, school house, mission church, and the mills, has long been locally known as "Bowerstown."

In 1783, a little more than a century ago, came Gen. Washington, as is mentioned in the "Chronicles," who said in his published letter: "I then traversed the country to the head of the eastern branch of the Susquehanna, and viewed the lake Otsago."

When the Editor of this book came here in 1851, he had the pleasure of meeting two venerable ladies who had been well acquainted with General Washington, and who had met him in society, with other Revolutionary celebrities and chiefs—Mrs. Wilson, whose father was at one time on Gen. Washington's staff, and her daughter Mrs. Bowers. We often listened with great pleasure to the personal reminiscences of the latter of Washington, Lafayette, Baron Steuben,