

# ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## THE INN ON BRYANT HILL ROAD

Inns and taverns played a major role in the survival of early pioneers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They provided food, shelter and a place to rest their animals. Taverns and inns were usually located between one and seven miles along the road. The reason for so many inns was the fact that travel was by wagon, sleigh or foot. Roads were poorly maintained, filled with muddy ruts, or sometimes made of felled logs. Travel was difficult and necessitated a number of stops. Wagons were filled with families traveling to a new farm or westward. When the railroads came into being, inns and taverns gradually began to disappear.

Some of the inns and taverns served alcohol while others prided themselves on being Temperance Hotels. The inns also provided a place for dances as well as a meeting place for neighbors. Ads were posted for produce, wandering showmen put on exhibitions, and jury lists and reward posters appeared on the doors.

On March 14, 1912 Mrs. Seth W. Thompson read a paper before a meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution. It discussed an inn that was located on Bryant Hill Road half way between Franklinville and Ellicottville. It was strictly a temperance house. This inn existed here in 1845 when she first visited it. She described it in these terms: it was a very large house and the eaves reached to the road. There was a platform in front. One door went into the bar room and the other into a sitting room. The bar room had a huge fireplace and the sitting room had a Franklin stove. The cooking was done in the kitchen over a mammoth fireplace. The kitchen also served as the dining room. The downstairs had three bedrooms and a pantry. Two large rooms were located upstairs. She was five years old when she first spent time in this inn.

She considered the landlord a scholarly man and his wife an energetic and ambitious woman who maintained the reputation of the house. When she was ten years old she revisited the inn and was surprised to notice that it seemed so much smaller to her than when she had first been there. The inn was consumed by fire several years later and the family was saved by their barking dog. Unfortunately the dog perished in the flames.

This is one of the only descriptions of an early inn in Franklinville. She never gave the exact location or the name of the innkeepers.

Curious to learn more about the author I began checking through early records. I discovered that Seth Thompson had married Emma Lurancy Pratt. Her parents were Homer Pratt and Electra who had married in 1836. Emma was their fourth child. I traced them to Chautauqua County in 1860, but found that her family had been living in Franklinville according to the 1840 census. So Emma had lived here, possibly close to the inn since she had such vivid memories of it. We have this description of an old inn because Emma Pratt Thompson took the time to record her memories. If any of your ancestors left descriptions, diaries, memories and letters that would give us a picture of life in Franklinville, please share them with us. We would be happy to have copies so that you could keep the originals. These would be held in our files to share with researchers and preserve the history of our area.

Maggie Fredrickson

Curator of The Miner's Cabin and Howe –Prescott Pioneer House.