

# ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## WILLIAM B. WHITE, CADIZ BLACKSMITH

Many of the inhabitants of Cadiz will remember the little white house and shop at the crossing of Main Street and the Ischua Creek in the Village of Cadiz where for twenty years lived and wrought William B. White, the blacksmith.

He was born in the Town of Columbia, on Pleasant River, in them, "Province of Maine," on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1808. His father, Luther White, was a shipbuilder and among William's earliest recollections was the excitement and ceremony attending the landing of finished vessels.

They lived near great forests still inhabited by wild beasts and Indians, and were in constant fear of the British. The stories of the press-gangs, whose business it was to kidnap men and boys and take them to sea, so wrought upon the mother's mind, that she took her children (one daughter and three sons) and went back to her early home, near Northfield, Massachusetts. Her husband died soon after and she was left alone to support and train her children.

How thoroughly this was done may be inferred from the fact that though forced to earn their bread by her work as a seamstress, she brought them up to fear God and love their country and their fellowman. She also gave them all a common school education and the three boys trades. They all grew up to be Christians and each of the four families attested their patriotic training by sending a son to the army in the late Civil War.

After learning his trade, William went to Springfield, Massachusetts where he was married in 1833 to Nancy Leonard, who died some six years ago. In 1835 they moved to Cadiz, where he worked at his trade until his health failed and the family moved to Hinsdale. In 1869, they went to St. Charles, Minnesota.

Long years of bodily infirmity shut him out in a great measure from active life and its duties. Looking back on this, we see a man of vigor and energy, with a quick sense of humor of dedicated convictions, conscientious and faithful to duty. He was a zealous Baptist, an active temperance man and an abolitionist, when the name was a term of reproach. He kept up the village prayer meetings for years and was always in his place. In his father's family there was some mechanical and musical genius and he shared in these sufficiently to be interested in both subjects.

During his last years he never wearied in talking of the old days when horse nails and shoes, hoes, forks, chains, etc. were forged by hand from a "Russian bar" and contrasting them with these days of invention and mechanical improvement.

His musical genius found expression through his son, George L. White, now of Fredonia, New York who trained and conducted the world famed Fisk University Jubilee Singers, in their great work of founding that institution of learning for Freedmen (former slaves).

His old neighbors and friends in Cadiz remember how weakness and pain crippled his body and wrought lines of suffering and despondency in his countenance. He entered into rest at the home of his daughters in St. Charles, Minnesota on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1888 in the eightieth year of his age.

From THE CATTARAUGUS REPUBLICAN on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1888

Submitted by William Watkins, Machias Deputy Town Historian.