

TURNPIKE TALES

by Jim Ford

"TURNPIKE TALES" #5

(Historical items from the "Madison Bouckville Antique Week" region)

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The Madison-Bouckville area has been rich in history from the arrival of the first settlers to the present day. As an addition to the website, we have decided to share some of that history in order that the patrons who travel to the Madison-Bouckville Show will have a better understanding of our truly unique region.

A NATIONAL COMPANY BEGINS IN BOUCKVILLE PART 2

In part one of the story of Mott's in Bouckville we looked at the arrival of Samuel Rogers Mott and his efforts to build a nationally known company. He was aided by his son, John Coon Mott, who had a cider mill in New York City. With the combining of the two firms, Mott's became a household name.

We now turn our attention to information concerning the individual members of S.R. Mott's family, beginning with Mr. Mott himself.

Samuel Rogers Mott was born in Saratoga County in 1826. He learned the art of making cider from his grandfather when he was only 16 years old. From that point onward Samuel was known as an excellent orchard manager and cider manufacturer.

In 1867 he traveled by way of the Erie and Chenango Canals to purchase a one-third interest in a vinegar distillery in Bouckville, N.Y. Vinegar was the main item of production at the time because the railroad through our section of the country had not been completed and there was not a convenient way to ship sweet cider. However, that will change in 1870.

Mr. Mott not only owned the home next to the proposed railroad line but sold the property to the railroad where the depot was to be built. That first railroad depot burned. The rebuilt depot is now the home of Depot Antiques.

Mr. Mott brought his family to Bouckville in 1868. Four of his children arrived with him, the oldest son, John having already settled in New York City. By 1869 Samuel Mott had already bought out the interests of his partners in the firm. His business grew immensely in the next few years.

Samuel Mott was a generous employer, especially at the holidays or whenever a worker or member their family was ill. Bonuses were given at the end of a good season and community activities were generously contributed to.

Mr. Mott served as Supervisor of the Town of Madison for 17 years and in the years 1890-91 was a member of the New York State Assembly. Following an illustrious career, Mr. Mott died on April 24, 1915 and was buried in the family plot at Woodlawn Cemetery in Hamilton.

Samuel's wife was Ann Mary (Coon) Mott. She was also from Saratoga County. They were married in 1847. A person of strong faith, she and her husband were members of the Madison Congregational Church.

Since their son John ran the other Mott mill in New York City, Ann enjoyed trips with her husband to New York and had the chance to show the younger children the wonders of big city life.

Ann died of pneumonia on January 31, 1913 and is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in the family plot. Three of her children had died previous to her death.

The oldest son in the family was John Coon Mott. He had left for New York City prior to 1867 and eventually opened a cider mill close to what is now the site of the Jacob Javits Center, near Pier 76.

The combination of Samuel and John in business, with John also running the sales operation in New York City, further enhanced the prosperity of the company.

However, in 1890 the company was sold to a new firm called the Genesee Fruit Company of Rochester, N.Y.

John lived in Manhattan, was on the Board of Directors of the Weston-Mott Wheel Works Company of Jamesville, N.Y. and also C.S. Mott & Company of New York City, makers of soda fountain carbonating machinery.

Suffering from ill health for many years, John Coon Mott died in 1899 at Warminster, Pennsylvania and is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery. He was only 50 years old.

The only daughter in the family was Mary Frances Mott. Nicknamed Fannie, she moved to Bouckville from Saratoga County with her family in 1868. She married George vanWoert of New York City at the Congregational Church in Madison. That former church is now the home of Taylor's Auction Service in Madison.

The couple lived in Chicago for many years. Mary died from complications of an appendicitis attack while at her home. Both she and her husband are buried at Woodlawn Cemetery.

Frederick Gates Mott was born in Saratoga County and began working at his father's mill at an early age. He was eventually made foreman of the mill and was in charge of the refining and bottling departments.

By 1896, Frederick was also a principal owner of the Weston-Mott Wheel Works. They produced metal wheels for bicycles, carriages and rickshaws. The company eventually left Jamesville, N.Y. for Utica. In Utica, production of wheels for the early cars became a focal point of operations. The business thrived there and soon they were offered a proposal to build a plant in Flint, Michigan and produce wheels for the new "horseless carriages."

Frederick decided that he would not go to Flint when the company moved, but would instead turn the company over to John Coon Mott's son, Charles Stewart Mott. Charles had come to Utica to work for his uncle and was greatly interested in the new automobile technology.

By 1902 Frederick had purchased a home at 22 Payne Street in Hamilton. Gala parties were held at his residence and he was a supporter of many activities in Hamilton, including early efforts for a golf course. He is also buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in Hamilton.

Samuel Rogers Mott, Jr. was another family member born in Saratoga County. Samuel was the free spirit of the family and soon left the cider business to try his hand at a variety of careers. These included clerking at a dry goods store in Hamilton, poultry raising, cedar fence post sales and finally ranching in Arco, Idaho after having lived in Rochester, N.Y., Valley City, Illinois, and Tremonton, Utah.

Samuel was also buried at Woodlawn Cemetery after his death in 1943.

The last child of Samuel Rogers Mott was Seward. As the baby of the family, he was cherished and loved by all. While growing up, Seward attended the local school in Bouckville and also Colgate Academy. He had dreams of attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. That appointment finally came in 1881.

Seward graduated from West Point in 1886 as a 2nd Lt. and was assigned to the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona to participate in the Apache Pacification Program to transform the natives into settled farmers.

While dividing out parcels of land, an argument ensued and a young brave grabbed a weapon and started to fire. Lt. Mott was hit and subsequently died of his wounds. Samuel Mott traveled by train to bring the body of his son back to Bouckville. Internment was at Woodlawn Cemetery. The granite monument to the Mott family was placed there at the time of Seward's death.

We would be remiss if we did not mention Samuel Rogers Mott's grandson, Charles Stewart Mott, in this family section. Charles was educated at Hoboken, New Jersey and graduated from the Stevens Institute of Technology, also located in Hoboken, with a degree in Mechanical Engineering.

Traveling to Europe at the request of his father and uncle, he studied Zymotechnology, that is, the science of fermentation, in both France and Germany. He joined his father in the production of carbonating machines. This knowledge was helpful in both the cider and the soda fountain businesses.

After his father's death in 1899, Charles relocated to Utica to work at the Wheel Works and was soon promoted to Superintendent of the factory. When the offer was made to transfer the company to Flint, Michigan, Frederick Mott sold the company to his nephew Charles and retired. Charles moved the company and success soon followed in the form of an offer from a newly-formed company called General Motors.

Charles was placed on the Board of Directors of the new company in 1913 and remained on the Board for the next 60 years until his death in 1973. He had become in that span of time one of America's first self-made billionaires. He donated more than 130 million dollars to organizations during his lifetime. He fully exemplified the Mott family motto – "Let us be known by our deeds."

We stated earlier that the name of the company in Bouckville had changed over the years. The following is a listing of those name changes:

- 1868 – Brown, Beach & Mott
- 1869 – Mott Cider Company
- 1879 – S.R. & J.C. Mott Cider & Vinegar Company
- 1890 – Genesee Fruit Company
- 1902 – American Fruit Product Company
- 1914 – Duffy-Mott Company
- 1968 – Duffy-Mott becomes part of American Brands Inc.
- 1982 – Duffy-Mott becomes part of Cadbury-Schweppes
- Today Mott's continues as a brand name owned by Cadbury-Schweppes and sold as a division of the Dr. Pepper/Snapple Group.

The Mott's facilities experienced three devastating fires over the years, the first being in 1891, a year after Mr. Mott had sold the company to the Genesee Fruit Company. The buildings along the west side of the Chenango Canal were destroyed. The building on the east side was saved and is the Bouckville Mill building today.

In 1910 a second fire destroyed the bottling plant in the complex across from Mr. Mott's home, which had been built in 1882. The Genesee Fruit Company rebuilt soon after the fire.

In January of 1931 the third fire struck the plant, destroying the bottling works, which was also located across the road from Mr. Mott's home. This time the Duffy-Mott Company decided that it would not rebuild at Bouckville and the plant was closed after the remaining inventory was sold. This was a tremendous blow to the fortunes of Bouckville.

Today none of the buildings across the road from Mr. Mott's home and the former depot are standing. Time, decay and the bulldozer have taken them all. We only have the pictures from the past to remind us of what Samuel Rogers Mott achieved in our area.