

TURNPIKE TALES

by Jim Ford

"TURNPIKE TALES" #35

(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 newsletter, 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.

WILLIAM C. BOUCK – FARMER, GOVERNOR, AND BOUCKVILLE NAMESAKE

William Christian Bouck was born on January 7, 1786 at Fultonham, Schoharie County, New York. (Fultonham today has a population of approximately 300.) He was the son of Christian Bouck (1753 to 1836) and Margaret (Borst) Bouck (1762 to 1806). His siblings were Joseph Bouck (1788 to 1858), Harmanus Bouck (1789 to 1851), and John L. Bouck (1796 to 1850). Joseph was elected as a member of the United States House of Representatives from New York's 12th District during the years 1831 to 1833.

William Bouck was raised on the family farm on Bouck's Island, located in Schoharie Creek. He was educated in the local schools of Schoharie County. His overall education was limited due to the fact that he was needed on the farm.

As he reached adulthood, Bouck became a farmer and began a long career in government and public service. In 1807 he was elected Fulton Town Clerk. From 1808-1809 he served as the Fulton Town Supervisor and from 1812 to 1813, he was the Sheriff of Schoharie County.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY –

William Bouck married Catherine Lawyer (8-16-1785 to 5-3-1861) of Schoharie, New York. They were married at New Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, New York on September 13, 1807. William and Catherine had eleven children during their marriage. They were:

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| James Madison Bouck | 1808 to 1865 |
| Joseph William Bouck | 1809 to 1886 |
| Margaret Bouck | 1811 to 1837 |
| Ann Bouck | 1813 to 1890 |
| Christian Bouck | 1816 to 1909 |
| Christina Bouck | 1818 to 1836 |
| Catherine Bouck | 1820 to 1899 |
| Caroline Bouck | 1822 to 1913 |
| Elizabeth Bouck | 1825 to 1826 |
| Gabriel Bouck | 1827 to 1904 |
| Charles Bouck | 1829 to 1910 |

**** Charles Bouck was a member of the New York State Assembly in 1878.

**** Gabriel Bouck commanded the 18th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. He later served as Speaker of the Wisconsin State Assembly in 1860 and 1866, Attorney General of Wisconsin, and was a member of the United States House of Representatives from Wisconsin's 6th Congressional District in 1877.

MILITARY CAREER –

- In 1809 William Bouck was appointed Adjutant of the New York Militia's 18th Regiment.
- Appointed Quartermaster of the 28th Brigade in 1815.
- 1817 – Promoted to Major in the 113th Regiment.
- Later in 1817 he was promoted to Lt. Colonel in the 25th Brigade.
- From 1819 to 1822, Bouck commanded the 18th Regiment with the rank of Colonel.

STATE GOVERNMENT –

- William Bouck was a member of the Democratic Party. He served in the New York State Assembly from 1813 to 1816 and again from 1817 to 1818.
- He was a member of the New York State Senate from 1821 to 1822.
- From 1821 to 1840, William Bouck was a member of the Erie Canal Commission.
- In 1840, Bouck was the nominee for Governor. He lost to William H. Seward. However, in 1842 he ran again. This time he won and his term in office was from 1842 to 1844. He was the 13th Governor of the state.
- After completing his term as Governor, Bouck served as a delegate to the 1846 State Convention
- He served as a member of the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York from 1845 to 1847.
- In addition, he served as Assistant United States Treasurer in New York City from 1846 to 1849.

SERVICE ASA CANAL COMMISSIONER –

From 1821 to 1840, William Bouck served as a Canal Commissioner. His first assignment was overseeing the construction of the western end of the Erie Canal. This was the most difficult section of the canal to build because of the area around today's Lockport.

He was in charge of bringing the pay for the workers from Albany to the job site. Bouck had a favorite white horse and earned the nickname "White Horse Bouck." Both well-known and highly visible on this special horse, he was held in such great esteem that he was never accosted or robbed in his travels across the state.

Following the completion of the Erie Canal, Bouck supervised the design and construction of branch canals joining the Erie including the Cayuga, Seneca, Crooked Lake, Chemung, and Chenango canals. He developed a strong reputation for competence and integrity.

The projects that he oversaw required an expenditure of more than 8 million dollars of state funds. (More than 250 million today), all of which he was able to account for during audits of his work.

RETIREMENT –

In retirement, William Bouck returned to his farm on Bouck's Island and once again became a farmer. He died on April 19, 1859 and is buried in the Middleburgh Cemetery, Middleburgh, New York. Many other family members are also buried there.

OUR CONNECTION TO WILLIAM C. BOUCK –

The community that is now known as Bouckville was originally given the name McClure's Settlement for Dr. Samuel McClure. In addition to being a doctor, he also ran a tavern to serve settlers who were moving to lands in the western part of the state.

In c.1824 the name was changed to Johnsville, in honor of John Edgerton, a prominent local figure. It is said that his name was chosen at a rather drunken social event. In any case, the name for the community continued until the Chenango Canal was reaching the point of completion. A post office was applied for and the name Johnsville was rejected because the name John already appeared in many locations across the state, such as Johnstown and St. Johnsville.

Many members of the community were fond of Canal Commissioner William C. Bouck – his efforts to secure the route of the canal through our township and his supervision as a commissioner during the construction of the canal made him well-known. The citizens thought that a fitting tribute would be to name the community Bouckville in his honor. This was in 1837.

Our Bouckville is just one of two places where the name of this illustrious public servant is found. The other is Bouck Hall at Cobleskill College.

HISTORIC BOUCKVILLE –

Bouckville has had a storied history. During the same general time period that the name Bouckville was given, there were a number of prominent names associated with the community.

Moses Maynard built what was known as the “White House” in 1837, located next to the canal and on the Cherry Valley Turnpike.

James D. Coolidge grew the first hops in the county in 1808 and set off a craze that brought prosperity to the entire region.

Chauncey Crain opened a scales manufacturing facility in the mid-1800’s and sold scales that became famous throughout New York.

James E. Coolidge designed and supervised construction of the “Stone Store” from 1847-1851. The store was of cobblestone and is the home of the Landmark Tavern today.

Samuel R. Mott arrived in Bouckville in 1868 and began a company that is known nationally.