

History of Bucks Bridge, Town of Madrid, NY

The hamlet of Bucks Bridge was established in 1806 by Isaac Buck of Shoreham, Vermont. It is located on the western side of the Grass River about 4 miles south of the town of Madrid. Mr. Buck was a native of Connecticut and a soldier in the Revolutionary War. In 1809 he built a sawmill, opened a store and established a potash industry. The area was heavily forested and it is believed that the water level of the Grass River was higher and the river more navigable by larger boats than those that can transit the rapids today. Mr. Buck started farming on some of the land he cleared for lumber. Isaac Buck died in 1841 at the age of 78.

Isaac Buck's oldest son, Orrin Buck, was born in Vermont and he too contributed much to the history of Bucks Bridge. He arrived with his father in 1806. He was instrumental in having a post office established in Bucks Bridge in 1836 and he was the Postmaster. He operated a store from 1838 to 1848.

Alfred G. Buck, grandson of Isaac and son of Orrin added a great deal to the history of Bucks Bridge. Alfred purchased a store located on the eastern side of the river from a man named Franklin Castle in 1884. Alfred was a steward and trustee of the Bucks Bridge Methodist church.

Early merchants of Bucks Bridge were W.H.Wilcox, A.A. Simons, and Franklin Castle. Shops and industries were cheese factories, by various owners; a furniture factory operated by A. Fenton; a Cooper or butter tub shop run by Winfield Olin, which was located where Charles Curtis later had a residence; and Weaving business run by Kate Hall. A factory, owned by the W.H.Wright family was located on the eastern side of the river, made shingles, boxes, and broom handles and contained a grist mill for grinding farmers grains.

Prominent families in the Bucks Bridge area were:

The Wrights who were frequently visited by NY State Governor Silas Wright; Mr. John Smith, an uncle of the celebrated Mormon leader Joseph Smith; John Westaway, Senior, a pioneer who cleared the forest and expanded his operations until he had 1000 acres of land. Mr. Westaway then went to the gold fields of California. He spent 101 days on the water around the southern tip of South America. Whatever his fortune, Mr. Westaway was robbed by bandits on the way back home.

The lumber used to build the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Bucks Bridge came from the land in back of the house later occupied by Mrs. Judson Westaway.

The John Lockwood house, a stone structure, was built in 1803.

A covered wagon left Bucks Bridge for the California gold rush. The people never returned nor heard from.

At one time Bucks Bridge had a brass band and it was considered a baseball town fielding three teams, grown men, young men and teenagers

The sawmill built by Isaac Buck was located on the farm later owned by Lloyd Kingston. The sawmill was on the western side of the river and it passed through a number of hands over the years. The last owner and operator was James Spears who purchased the property in 1892. A shingle mill operated by W.H. Wright was built on the eastside of the river across from the sawmill. A bridge crossed the river between the sawmill and the shingle mill and there was a dam at this

point, which furnished power to the mills. The first electric lights in Bucks Bridge were installed in the saw and shingle mills and people came from miles around to see the electric light for the first time.

As you approached the sawmill, probably on Cemetery Road, there was a long lumber shed on the right side between the road and the river. On the left side of the road, away from the river, were high piles of lumber and wood and that area was appropriately called City of Lumber. The long lumber shed extended nearly the full length of the mill yard and was used for storage of lumber. A railroad bed of regular ties and wooden rails, ran throughout the mill yard. A horse drawn, four wheeled railroad car was used to convey lumber. Plank roads went in all directions from the railroad tracks. Horse drawn two wheeled carts loaded with huge loads of lumber chained to them, with one end of the lumber dragging on the plank roads, was moved out of the mill yard and into the various fields of the City of Lumber. There was a blacksmith shop to repair mill equipment, shoe horses and repair wagons, the Office of the Bucks Bridge Lumber Company, and two boarding houses all on the left side of the road before you got to the bridge. At the downstream end of the sawmill was the bridge to the eastside of the river and the shingle mill. At that time the road on the eastern side continued on up from the river and connected with the road then known as the Old Military Road, the present NY State highway 310.

A hotel known at the Whitney House was located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Buck Road and the Madrid-Morley road. There were three different cellars in this hotel; one was a wine cellar, another was the kitchen and the third was divided into four different rooms which were plastered and had woodwork and contained the dining room and pantry. The Whitney House was a stage stop for the stagecoach run from Canton to Massena. The hotel later became the residence of Lloyd Kingston and what was his living room had once been the barroom of the hotel and there was a filled in round hole in the floor which used to be the dumb waiter used to bring bottles up from the cellar.

Directly across the Buck Road from the Whitney House on the southwest corner of the intersection with the Madrid-Morley road was a house used as an underground railroad stop where fleeing slaves were concealed overnight. The house was later owned by Mr. Eugene White from the early 1900 until the 1970s, when it was sold to David Kingston.

The next structure south of the Eugene White house on the Madrid-Morley road was the store previously owned by Alfred G. Buck and later purchased by Oscar V. Veich who operated the store until it closed as a store

Bucks Bridge Churches:

There are a number of different selections of worship services in the Bucks Bridge community. Early on, missionaries traveling on horseback did the occasional preaching.

In 1837 a church was built. In 1877 it was made higher by placing a new roof over the old roof. A belfry was built and an addition known as the session room was built on the back of the church,

The Seventh Day Adventist church at the sharp bend on the western side, of the Madrid-Morley road, was built in 1853.

In the early 1850s, John Byington, a Methodist minister, led his flock of 50 people, whom he called the Sabbath Keepers Fold, to Bucks Bridge. Their church was organized in 1861 with regular preaching done by Rev. John Byington, Henry Buck and S.B. Whitney. By the late 1890s there was no pastor and in the early 1900s the church was torn down.