

Town of Groton

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Town of Groton Historian

Groton. The Town of Groton is located in the Military Tract in the northeast corner of Tompkins County. It was created in 1817 when Locke, (Military Town No. 18, named for John Locke, the English philosopher) was divided into two portions. The northern part retained the name Locke and is part of Cayuga County. The southern lots, numbers 51 through 100, became part of Tompkins County and the area was named Division.

The first town meeting was held in March 1818 at the home of Isaac Love. At this meeting the inhabitants of Division petitioned to change the name to Groton, and Samuel Crittenden was elected Supervisor and Admanthea Blodgett Town Clerk. According to Glenn Norris, some attending that first meeting had favored the name York. The original settlers, however, came from the vicinities of Groton, Connecticut, and Groton, Massachusetts. The Perrins were from Berkshire County, Massachusetts; Ebenezer Williams from Charlemont, Massachusetts; and Ezra Carpenter, who came in 1797, was from Savoy, Massachusetts. The Mortons, a large family including David, Mordecai, David Jr., Robert, and Andrew Leonard, a son-in-law who came in 1805, and then Zachariah and William who came somewhat after, were all from Colrain, Massachusetts, and might have found the name Groton familiar. This might have also been true of the Trumbles, Crittendens, and Stones, who came from eastern Connecticut.

Groton in Connecticut and in Massachusetts were named by members of the Winthrop family. John Jr. arrived in Massachusetts Bay in 1646 and then moved on to Connecticut. Winthrop's home place in England was known as Groton. Groton, Massachusetts, was named in 1655 by Dean Winthrop, John's brother. Groton, England, is located in Suffolk. It was referred to as Grotena in the Domesday Book, the word meaning "sandy or gravelly stream" and comes from the Old English. In 1671 there was a witchcraft case in Groton, Connecticut, and during the American Revolution the town was known to be particularly patriotic in the American cause. There are Grotons in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, Nebraska, North Dakota, New Hampshire, Ohio, and South Dakota.

Groton was located by John Perrin who arrived in 1797 as an agent for Captain Benjamin Hicks, who had received several land grants for the area for his service in the Revolutionary War. Not needing scattered holdings, Hicks proposed to survey and sell his land in Groton. Hicks had hired Perrin to act as his agent and to survey and then sell the lots. In the War of 1812, Benjamin Hicks became a Major.

The Village of Groton was incorporated in 1860 with a population of 596. At first the area was referred to as Groton Hollow. A notice in the *Ithaca Journal* on April 18, 1871, said that "Groton is sometimes called Drouton Hollow," but no one in recent times has ever heard of this name used. In the nineteenth century, Groton became an active manufacturing center, home of the Groton Bridge Company (beginning in 1849), and the Groton Carriage Works, established in 1876, growing from Charles Perrigo & Company. In 1867 Corydon W. Conger was contracted to build a railroad through the village for the Southern Central Railroad. This railroad later became a line of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, but rail traffic ended in 1978. The Crandall Machine Company, makers of the earliest typewriters, moved to Groton from Syracuse in 1897. In 1909 Standard Typewriter began production in Groton. Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) began in Groton in 1968. It moved to Dryden, its current campus, in 1974.

Most roads in the Town of Groton did not have names until the twentieth century. Then the names given were those of landowners living in the area. On the 1937 map of Groton there was the Morton Reese Road, which became Old Stage Road in the 1950s. There were roads named for local people: Judge Davis Road, Fred Brown Road, Jones-Rogers Road, and Lloyd Durfee Road. In addition, there was one road named for a woman. It was, perhaps, the only one in the county prior to World War II. According to the 1937 map, Miss Wood Road was in the eastern part of Groton. All of these names have since dropped the first name and have become Davis, Brown, Rogers, Durfee, and Wood roads. In 1993 Wood Road was officially changed to Devlen Road. It runs from West Groton Road to the north, then westerly to the existing Hilliard Road in Cayuga County. The Devlin-Gale Road turns a corner, a rather unusual trait in a local road. Gale has been dropped, and today is Devlin Road.

In 1937 Clark Street started at Cortland Street in the Village of Groton going northeast about 1.5 miles, then it made a 90-degree turn and became the Blanchard-Groton City Road. In later years the Blanchard-Groton City Road became Clark Street Extension. Walpole Road was known as Walpole Street in 1937 from West Cortland Street to State Route 38.

The *1892-93 Directory of Trumansburg, Groton, Dryden and Ithaca* gives the names of streets in the Village of Groton as Bacon Avenue, Barrows, Cayuga, Church, Clark, Cortland, Elm, Main, Mill, Park, Pleasant, Railroad, South Main, Spring, South, Sykes, and Williams streets.

Benson's Corners is a crossroads named for pioneer settler Nathan Benson. It marks the area where families with the name of Benson still live. Earlier, in 1833, a post office called Bensonville was established at the crossroads with Nelson F. Benson the first postmaster. The post office was discontinued in 1902 and after that, the name fell from use.

Chipman Corners Road goes from Route 38 in Groton north to State Route 90 in Cayuga County. It is named for the Chipman family, who settled on the north end of this road in mid-1800s.

East Side Road appears on the 1937 town map as running along the east side of Fall Creek. *See also* West Side Road.

Elm Street is shown on the 1937 map. It is in the Village of Groton meeting the corner of Salt Road. After it crosses Salt Road, it becomes Nubia Road near the Cortland County line.

Elm Tree Inn. *See* McLean.

Footville. *See* Nubia.

Franklinville began early in the nineteenth century as a tiny community in the northwest corner of Groton. There were three small lumber mills on the narrow ravine, and some called the place Devil's Den, for the dangerous ravine in the area. This name is no longer used.

Gooseville. *See* Nubia.

Groton City is a small hamlet in the northeastern part of the town located on Fall Creek. Originally called "Slab City," it was a lumbering community with numerous sawmills. The term Slab City was probably derived from the slabs of wood from the mills. The word city denotes a bishopric, or a "see," and it is from that word that city evolved. Groton City was never, however, an ecclesiastical location.

Settlement began even before the change of name. Lot #59 was given to Captain Daniel Niven in payment for his military service. Captain Lemi Bradley purchased a portion of his land and settled there. Bradley became a Major during the War of 1812. Another part of Niven's land was purchased by Jesse Bartholomew. William S. Clark Esq. purchased

water privileges and built a dam and machinery for clothing works. Shortly after the Revolutionary War, Captain Jesse Clark also bought 64 acres in this area and some of his descendants still reside in the town. A post office established in Groton in 1824 was named Fall Creek Post Office but it was discontinued in 1841. The post office was re-established under the name of Groton City in 1849, closing in 1902. The name Groton City is still used for this area.

Grotto might have been adapted from a play on the word Groton. The word grotto means cave. Grotto was situated in the southwest part of the town. There was a post office by the name of Grotto from 1892 until 1902. Edwin W. VanMarter was a merchant and first postmaster. Whatever meaning Grotto had, the term is still used by locals.

Lafayette is named for the Marquis de Lafayette, who made a widely popular tour of New York State in 1824. Many places along his route took his name. There is a Lafayette, sometimes spelled La Fayette, in Onondaga County, and Fayetteville in Madison and Onondaga counties. In fact, there are seven places in the United States named Fayette, at least eight places named Fayetteville, and ten named Lafayette.

The four-corners settlement in the east part of the Town of Groton has always been referred to as Lafayette. It is located on Fall Creek where the Groton-Cortland Road (State Route 222) crosses the creek. A sawmill and gristmill were once located there. When the gristmill was built, it was christened by its pioneer builder George Fish, on the same day that General Lafayette was at Auburn. Fish called it Lafayette Mill. The Marquis never traveled through the Town of Groton but his name is still used when referring to this area.

Lick Street runs approximately four miles in a north-south direction from Summer Hill in Cayuga County through the Town of Groton to the McLean Road. It was named for George Lick, who settled in the Summer Hill area in 1818.

McLean is located in the southeast part of the town on Fall Creek. McLean was originally known as Moscow. Since there was already a Moscow post office and village in New York State, the name was changed to McLean in 1824 to honor Judge McLean, the newly appointed Postmaster General. An early settler of this area, Amasa Cobb, built the first log cabin on the site of the current Elm Tree Inn. The Reverend Benjamin Whipple, a Methodist, was the first to preach in the area, in 1805. By 1860 there were five churches in McLean. In 1864 a cheese factory was put into operation and became one of the largest and most successful in the state. By 1868 it had produced 1,716,200 pounds of cheese.

Moscow. *See* McLean.

Nubia is a small community that formed in the nineteenth century just south of Lafayette. It was originally known as Gooseville because of the number of geese kept there, and later it was called Footville, after a local family. In 1893 the Post Office Department demanded a more formal name because it was about to establish an office there. When none of the names suggested were deemed suitable, someone in the Post Office hierarchy suggested Nubia. The residents, according to Glenn Norris, did not think much of the name. When the Post Office established Rural Free Delivery in 1902, the Nubia Post Office was discontinued.

Why Nubia? Ancient Nubia, located between the first and fifth cataracts of the Nile, was powerful between 3100 BC and AD 400. For a time, Nubia ruled ancient Egypt. Today there is Nubia Lake and the Nubian Desert in the Sudan, but the name is probably most associated with the Bible where Nubia implied any place far off. This place name is still used by local residents.

Nubia Road. *See* Elm Street.

Pleasant Valley was the designation given in the late nineteenth century to a one-room school and a Wesleyan Methodist Church. Pleasant Valley included dirt roads bordered by fields, meadows, and pastures. From some of the hills of Pleasant Valley one could view the church spires of the small village of Peruville.

Peruton was a flag stop on the railroad where mail was collected, and it served as a milk station on the Southern Central Railroad (later the Lehigh Valley Railroad).

Peruville is located in the southern part of the Town of Groton close to the border with Dryden. In 1818 it was known as Peru, which may have been derived from the Town of Peru, which was one of the three original towns in Herkimer County. There was also Peru, Massachusetts, which was near Groton, Massachusetts. Another possibility is that the name might have been taken from the news.

Levi Bodley surveyed the hamlet in 1817. Owasco Inlet flows through Peruville and was used to run saw- and gristmills. There were also a tannery, a blacksmith shop, an ashery, a log tavern, and a distillery. In 1833 Peruville had its own post office. In 1830 Sylvanus Larned was the first Justice of the Peace to be elected by the people.

Reniff Road. *See* Stevens Road.

Salt Road runs approximately four miles in a north-south direction. It derived its name from the route used to haul salt overland from Syracuse to the southern towns of the state.

Stevens Road began in 1937 as Hicks Road, running from State Route 38 to Salt Road. From the Salt Road to the hamlet of McLean, Stevens Road was called Reniff Road.

West Groton. Isaac Allen, arriving in 1804, is considered to be the founder of the settlement of West Groton. West Groton had a post

office in 1833, discontinued in 1902. A sawmill was established in 1848.

West Side Road followed the west side of the bank of Fall Creek. This road appears on the 1937 map of the town. *See also* East Side Road.