

[Hamilton (Poolville), Madison Co. NY]

Uri Rhoades Recalls Early Days of County on 95th Birthday

Back in the days when the Loomis gang were active, times were better than they are now, Uri Rhoades, venerable Poolville resident, who celebrated his 95th birthday last Thursday, believes.

"Farmers in the old days were happy old fellows. Although they worked hard from sunup to sundown, they were independent. They raised most of their own food and their wives made a greater part of their clothes. Yet, they always had time for a little fun. They'd come visiting at night, sit around the stove in the winter time and tell stories." Mr. Rhoades related.

When asked how the morals of the people of today compared with those in the days of his boyhood, Mr. Rhoades said, "Humanity is much the same the world over today and it was in the old days. I do think there is more crime now. People seem to quarrel more. With radios we hear about the world in a minute, while when I was young it would take weeks and months to hear similar news."

Mr. Rhoades is unusually active for a man his age. He looks to be 70 rather than 95. He lives alone in a neat white house in Poolville. The rooms are immaculate. He takes pride in his library, although his failing eyesight doesn't permit him to read as much as he used to.

The venerable gentleman was born in the town of Hamilton, November 29, 1850, the son of Uri and Mary Ann Benjamin Rhoades. His grandfather William Rhoades and great-grandfather, also named William, were pioneers of Sangerfield, when that township was in Herkimer County. Mr. Rhoades' father was a pioneer teacher in this area. When he taught in the Terrytown School the Loomis children were his pupils. He later told his son that they were bright, intelligent children no different than any of his other pupils.

"We lived neighbor to the Loomis family," Mr. Rhoades recalls. "Wash and Grove were perfect gentlemen. Plumb Loomis was more like an old farmer. Grove Loomis had a Blackhawk stallion and I bought a colt from it for \$75. It had fallen in the Loomis barnyard and knocked down a hip. It was also a cribber, biting everything. Despite these faults he was an awfully fast trotter."

Mr. Rhoades also recalls when the Rev. Nathaniel Stacy, pioneer Universalist minister of this region used to stop overnight at his parents' home.

"We were Universalists. I worked for Nathan Brownell at Hubbardsville when I was a boy. I used to go to the Universalist meetings when they were held at the old Hubbardsville Academy. The meetings were irregular, so a gang of us boys used to walk crosslots to attend the Methodist Church at Hamilton Center, Mr. Rhoades stated.

Although the 95-year old gentleman was too young to fight in the Civil War, he remembers vividly attending the railroad celebration at Waterville when the first train came through in 1867 and the celebration at Sherburne the following year. Mr. Rhoades also recalls teaching school five winters and receiving 10 shillin' a day which amounted to about six or seven dollars a week.

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