

GLIMPSES INTO THE PAST

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VOL. III; NO. 4

JULY 2016

Part Two

JUST WHO OR WHAT ARE OUR STREETS AND ROADS NAMED FOR?

Last month I explored two of the first named streets in the former village of Westport. This month we will look at some roads in the western part of our town.



In the June newsletter I reported a little bit about Charles Hatch who was one of the early settlers, having come here shortly after 1800 and establishing the first wharf in Westport. Hatch also had a hand in the separation of our town from the Town of Elizabethtown in 1815. He helped to determine that the border would be the eastern shore of the Black River. (Thereby leaving the responsibility of building and maintaining a bridge over the river entirely in the hands of Elizabethtown.) The Black River was important to the early iron industry in both towns. Brainard's Forge was established along the River in Elizabethtown shortly after 1800. And another forge a little farther to the southeast was built about the same time by Jonas Morgan, which was also located on the west side of the River. He sold out to Jacob Southwell, who then sold to John Lobdell. About 1830 a flood caused much damage to the area and that attempt was abandoned.

Twenty years later, Guy Meigs rebuilt the forge on the old site, and built his home on the Westport side of the River. He employed a number of men and a little community was formed. A schoolhouse was built among the homes scattered on the hillside. This settlement became known as "Meigsville." It is partially in Westport and partially in Elizabethtown.

Although Meigs did not stay in Westport long, this little area on our western border retains his name. In one of Carlin Walker's 1980's newspaper blogs, he says that many years ago, the Meigsville school house was moved to Ledge Hill where it continued its use as a district school and has been a private residence since the 1930's.

According to the 1855 New York State Census, Guy Meigs was born in Highgate, Vermont about 1817. [He was the son of Luther and Phebe Stockwell Meigs]. His father served Vermont in the War of 1812. His wife, Lavinia Walbridge was also born in Vermont. His three oldest children, Lucy, Julia and Mary were born in Canada, and the youngest daughter, Adelia, was born in Essex County, NY. By 1860 they had settled in Winnebago, Wisconsin. A son, Solomon Walbridge Meigs born in 1856 died in Wisconsin at the age of 8 years old. Guy Meigs died in Wyoming in 1885. His wife and 2 daughters died in Winnebago, Wisconsin. Another daughter died in Kansas.

The Meigs family name is echoed throughout the country as many places have been named for these adventurous pioneers. Towns and counties called Meigs are located in Ohio, Illinois, Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee; as well as an early 19th century elevated monorail steam powered train in East Cambridge, Massachusetts and a hiking trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Also attributed to the surname Meigs is an Army transport ship (the USAT Meigs) sunk in WWII by a Japanese air attack; and a Navy transport ship (the USNS General M.C. Meigs) that served in the Korean war and received six battle stars for service during that war.

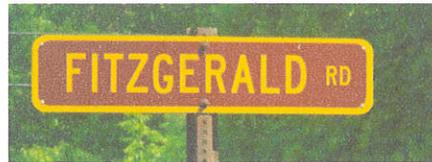


I would guess that the naming of this road is obvious. Just west of the Depot, this road leads from Main Street, down to Hoisington Brook, and up a fairly steep and rocky hill...hence "Ledge Hill" road. As to how long this name has been in existence is not known, but there is reference to it in an 1885 newspaper: *"Highway Commissioner Phinney, let the job to repair Ledge Hill highway to Wm. Welch last Saturday, consideration \$140"*. [The Elizabethtown Post, July 09, 1885].

There were settlers here before 1815 when the town of Westport separated from Elizabethtown. Names that are no longer familiar to many are recorded in the Hoisington Cemetery located on this road near its junction with McMahan Road: Loveland, Babcock, Westcott, Holcomb, Nichols, Slaughter, and Elmore; while others are still in existence here such as Decker, Hathaway, Welch, Smith and Tryon. The earliest burial here, as evidenced from the remaining and legible stones, is that of Datus Loveland, buried 1811. Earlier, in 1800, His father, Enos Loveland, founded the settlement at the little neighborhood in West Westport, which came to be known as the "Hoisington Neighborhood" . He was the first supervisor of our town when it was divided from Elizabethtown in 1815, having previously served as Supervisor of Elizabethtown in 1809, 1810 and 1814. He was married to Anna Finney. In addition to Datus, they had children: Sylvia who married Marcus Hoisington, Sr. and had son, Marcus, Jr., then married Diodorus Holcomb after Marcus, Sr. died; Asa who married Margaret Fraser; Erastus who married Lucy Bradley; Amanda who married Warren Harper; Lucetta who married first Lemus Bradley and second Ebon Egerton; Narcissa who married Elijah Angier; Aretus who married Emaline Manning; Harriet who married James Stringham, and Enos, Jr. who died young. Enos, Sr. died in 1844. If you are

familiar with past Westport surnames, you will recognize that these early descendants of Enos Loveland continued to populate Westport and its surrounding communities.

The aforementioned schoolhouse that was moved from Meigsville, now a private residence, stands between the Hoisington Cemetery and the intersection with the Fitzgerald Road.



There are only a few houses located on the Fitzgerald Road which connects Route 9N with the Ledge Hill Road. The Fitzgerald farm is not the first place you come to when you enter this road from 9N. It is situated on the southeast side of the road a short distance past the Trainor residence which is on the corner of 9N and the Fitzgerald Road.

The Elizabethtown Post dated THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1897, had this front page announcement •*“The marriage of Miss Katie Connors, of Westport, and Daniel Fitzgerald, of Elizabethtown, occurred at Westport Tuesday, Rev. Father LaChance performing the ceremony. Mr. Fitzgerald takes his newly wedded bride to the farm he recently bought and paid for with money he earned in the far west—the old Cortes Bennett place—and there they will entertain their friends hereafter. Success and happiness to Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald.”*

Daniel and Katie (Katherine) raised their family of six children there. Oldest daughter Kate married Carey “Cooch” Merrow; Daniel J. married Maude Collins of Saranac Lake, Frank married Muriel Leary and lived in Schenectady, John died of pneumonia at the age of 2 yrs., Tom married Mary Music and they raised their 3 girls on the farm, and Mary married Charles White, Jr. Now, nearly 120 years later, a grand-daughter of Daniel and Katie Connors Fitzgerald still lives on this farm.



The Goff Road is the third road in “West Westport” that leads from Route 9N to the Meigsville/Ledge Hill section of our town. And, as was the Fitzgerald Road, the Goff Road is named for a family who has lived there for many years.

—*The marriage of Edith Begor to Addison Goff of Lewis is reported. — The Adirondack Record, July 05, 1918*

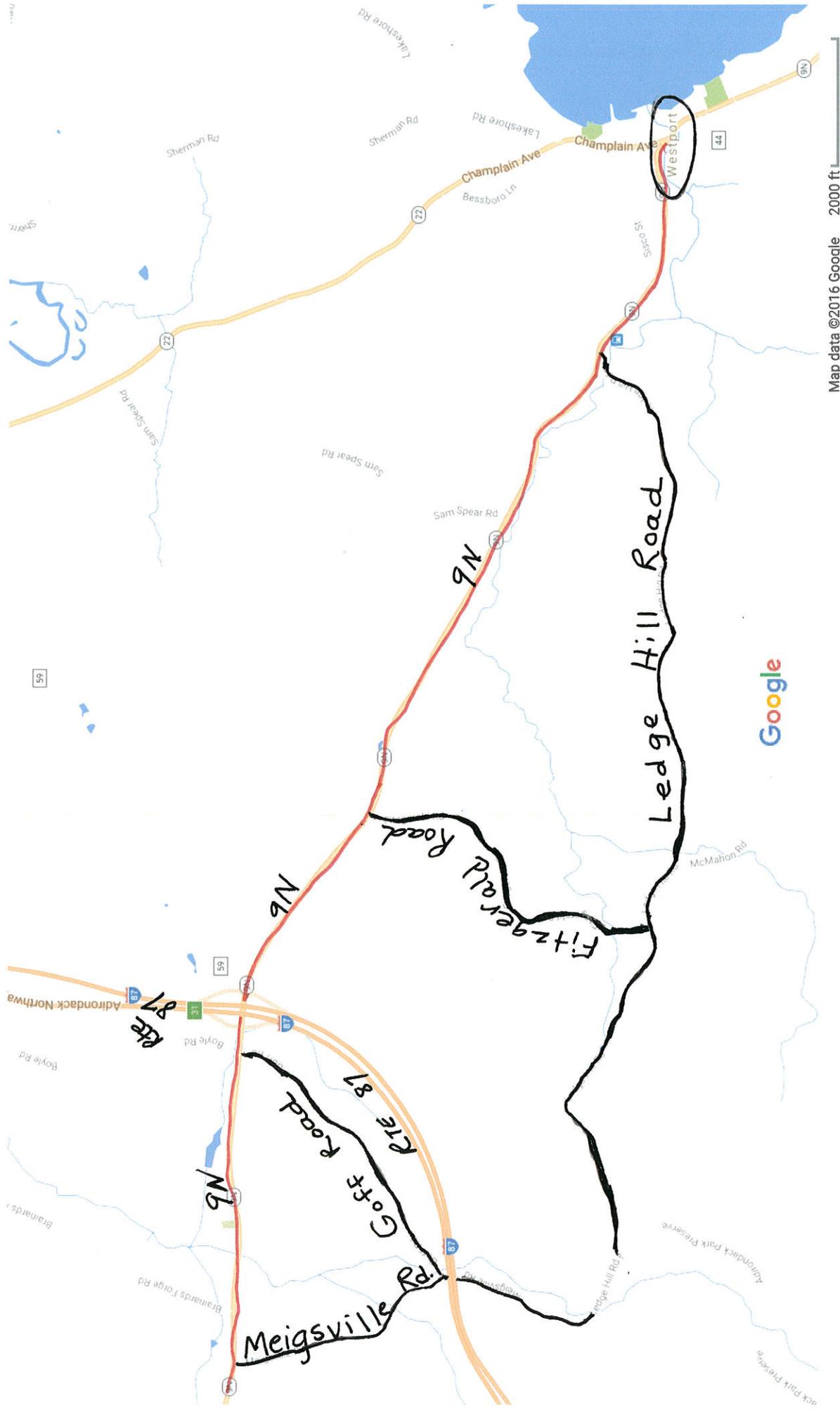
J. H. Godfrey Mills of New York city, who recently purchased a place in Meigsville, is up looking over the property with the view of building a summer place the coming year. His caretaker, Addison Goff, has moved into the Carl Norton house in that community {1920}.

Addison Goff has purchased the Hooper farm in Westport . Ticonderoga Sentinel., February 16, 1922,

The above 3 newspaper articles are evidence of the fact that Addison and Edith Goff moved to the Goff Road in 1920 after their marriage. Their first child, Catherine, was born Nov 13, 1921. So the “Goff Road” has been named for this family of Goffs that have lived there for nearly 100 years. Some of that family still owns and occupies property on that road. Many Westporters will remember Edith Goff as a teacher in our schools. In 1923 she taught at the Brainard’s Forge School and later at the Central School after it was built in 1933. Some of us former students still remember being in her sixth grade classroom. She also was the correspondent for the local community of Meigsville and reported the news of that community to the Essex County Republican in the 1950’s.

Ad and Edith Goff also had two sons, Robert and Richard.

NOTE: Meigsville Road and Goff Road west of Route 87; Fitzgerald Road and Ledge Hill Road East of Route 87



This series of articles pertaining to the derivation of names of our streets and roads will continue in the next newsletter focusing on the Dudley Road and the street signs found along that road. That will be followed by the Stevenson Road Neighborhood before returning to the streets found in the former village and then heading to the northern part of our town which, of course, will include Wadhams.

Other upcoming newsletters will center on our District Schools, businesses which once thrived and are now gone, the cemeteries and tombstone styles found there, organizations that are or have been active, but most of all the people who were associated with them.

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