

THE  
BEMIS HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

BEING AN ACCOUNT, IN GREATER PART

OF THE

DESCENDANTS OF JOSEPH BEMIS

OF WATERTOWN, MASS.

BY

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405. JOTHAM BEMIS. (386. Ephraim. 9. Ephraim 1. Joseph.) (This Branch of the family write the name Bemus, substituting the *u* for the *i*; and I shall write the name as they do whilst treating of them, although believing it to be a corruption of the name, just as I believe that the name originally in England was Bemish. Author's Note.)

For the data on this Branch, I am almost wholly indebted to Captain Daniel Hazeltine Post of Jamestown, N. Y., who being a descendant himself took a great interest in the matter; In June 1894, he published a most interesting genealogical pamphlet entitled "Jotham Bemus of Bemus Heights;"

and which with Capt. Post's permission I make the basis of what follows, as to the descendants of Jotham Bemus.

Considerable interest naturally attaches to the family which owned and occupied the ground chosen by General Gates, on the advice of Count Kosciusko, for the American defensive works against Burgoyne's onward march in 1777; in view of the fact that the family name became forever associated with the important battles fought in the vicinity, and that members of the family took part in them upon the American side, literally defending their home and fireside.

At the time above referred to, Jotham Bemus, his wife and six children were living on the west bank of the Hudson river, about four miles north of the village of Stillwater. He was a farmer energetic and enterprising, engaged in buying cattle and in other traffic, and evidently a man in easy circumstances. He kept the only Tavern of any note between Albany and Fort Edward, as Lossing relates in his "Field Book of the Revolution" Vol. I. p. 45. According to the English M.S.S. in the N. Y. State Library p. 827. he was in 1774 a Justice of the Peace.

He was born about 1738, and at the time of the Burgoyne campaign about 40 years old. He is described as of stout build and of a vigorous and determined character. From Charles Neilson's account of Burgoyne's campaign, published in 1844 p. 289. he states that Bemus's house was the only frame dwelling included within the military operations at the Heights, it being on the road from Albany to Whitehall.

At the time of the Battle of Saratoga, Sep. 19, 1777, the family had been residents of the vicinity for at least seventeen years, for the Calendar of Land Papers, N. Y. State Library 164. Sept. 9, 1763. p. 325. records, that in 1760, the families of Bemus, Griffith and Park, were occupying land in this region.

In the Battles occurring near the Heights, Jotham Bemus and three of his sons undoubtedly took part. This has always been a family tradition and much evidence exists to prove its truth. William Marvin of North East Pa., a descendant of Jotham Bemus, writes (in 1894) that he has heard William Bemus, son of Jotham senior, relate his army experiences. Jotham Bemus jr., the first child of Jotham sen., certainly was in the American Army as shown by the Archives of New York Vol. I. p. 250 viz :

"Bemus Jotham, Corpl. Rhode Island Regt., Jeremiah Olney, Lt. Col. Commanding, enlisted in Col. Van Schaick's for 1 year '76. Served 6 yrs. 1 month, 10 days. Discharged by General Washington Jan. 15, 1783. A. P. 17-62. Town of Saratoga, badge of merit."

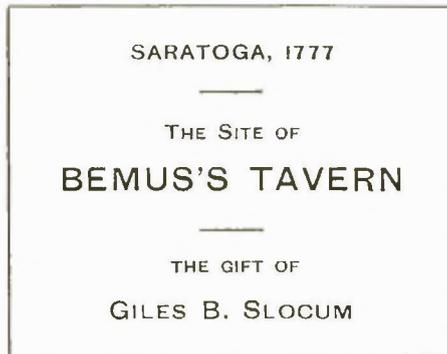
William Bemus, the second child of Jotham Bemus, sen. was a member of Captain Ephraim Woodworth's Company, the 4th in the 13th Regiment, Saratoga District, commanded by Colonel van Veghten, who was on Genl. Gates staff.

Captain Woodworth was a neighbor of the Bemus's, his house about half a mile back of theirs being used by Genrl. Gates as headquarters, after he left the Bemus house. Col. John McCrea at one time commanded the Saratoga Regiment, the tragic fate of whose sister Jane McCrea, formed a leading incident of the Burgoyne campaign. See N. Y. Archives Vol. I. p. p. 271 and 322.

That the third son, John, also took part in the struggle is evident from the following extract from his obituary notice published in the Saratoga Sentinel Sept. 15, 1829. "Though young he was in the American service at the capture of Burgoyne, as a teamster."

The home of Jotham Bemus was used as Headquarters by Geurl. Gates for a time. With the extension of the American fortifications after the first battle, Genrl. Gates moved on to the Heights and into Captain Ephraim Woodworth's house. Geurl. Lincoln, after the battle of the 19th used the Bemus house as headquarters. The fate of the house is established by a letter from the Rev. S. Hawley Adams of Jamestown, N. Y. printed in Stones "Burgoyne Ballads," in which he says: "My grandmother, Salley Bemus Crawford, (daughter of Jotham Bemus Sen.) was born at Bemus Heights May 1768. \* \* \* she has spent hours in telling me of Burgoyne and his army, which she saw;" of the burning of her father's house by the British, and of the sufferings of the family for a time, while they were wintering in a barn—Burgoyne having destroyed all their buildings and crops." Though no mention of the destruction of the house appears in any of the accounts of the battles, it is evident that it was burned in some foray of the enemy after it had been abandoned by Genrls. Gates and Lincoln as headquarters. It was on the extreme flank of the American lines, and probably more or less unprotected after the first days of fighting, the troops being massed at some distance from the river, near Fort Neilson.

The site of the Bemus house is now marked by a stone tablet bearing the following inscription:



The Bemus Heights Farm is now the property of the Hon. James B. Jermain of Albany, N. Y.

Jotham Bemus, Sen. who was born about 1738, died, it is believed about 1786, at the age of 48 years. This date is thought too early by some of the family. His first wife was Tryphena Moore, who was of Scotch descent. She was a woman of much refinement and culture. His 2d wife's name is unknown.