

David Eaton

Read By

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Among the early settlers of Chautauqua County the name of David Eaton is prominent.

He was born in Framingham, Mass. in 1782, the child of Benjamin and Mary Eaton; of brothers and sisters there were nine. David was the fifth child and when nine years old he began to work with his father as a shoemaker.

Those were strenuous times when a boy of 14 was making shoes for the market; but this lad was equal to the occasion for we read in Dr. Taylor's History of Portland that the death of the father which occurred when David was 18, he continued the business and supported the family until he was 22.

In the meantime he studied and gained a practical education.

In 1805 he and Nathan Fay, another of this country's early settlers explored the whole lake region from Buffalo to Northeast. In April 1806 he married Elizabeth Nevre. In May of that year he, his wife, mother and youngest sister, in company with Nathan, Elisha and Nathaniel started for "the west" to be found somewhere on the shore of Lake Erie. He must have made the journey comfortably for those times as the records say he had a span of horses and a covered wagon.

Before leaving home, Mrs. Eaton showed symptoms of a decline, on reaching New Hartford in this state she was compelled to stop for rest. It was in this town on June 10, 1906 the young wife dies. Soon after, Mr. Eaton left his mother and sister and came to Canadaway, four miles east of Fredonia. History does not tell why he did not locate here. Fortunately for Portland, Mr. Eaton journeyed farther, locating on part of Lot 37 (illegible) of this county on that farm he lived for 67 years.

It was necessary to go back to Batavia to draw up his contract, which bears date of July 1 - 1806. Judge Peacock then known as "William", who was the clerk in the office, filled out the papers. Mr. Eaton often told his neighbors he remembered Mr. Peacock's asking him if he could write his name. A settlement for the farm being made, he returned to Portland, built a log house cleared two acres of land and in October brought his family from New Hartford.

The next winter of 1806-1807 was a very cold one. There was a heavy fall of snow. The mill in Westfield was unable to grind, the Eatons were obliged to prepare their grain with mortar and pestle.

Mr. Eaton's mother kept house for him until 1811 when he married the widow of (??) Fay.

David Eaton was clerk of the Board at the first town meeting held in Chautauqua County, this was in 1807. Instead of the first Tuesday in November as at present the elections were held on the last Tuesday in April and continued during the two following days. The Board had the power to adjourn to such places as seemed most convenient for the settlers. At the first election the polls were opened on the first day at the house of William Bemus on the eastside of Chautauqua Lake. The second day at the house of Widow Perry afterward known as Mrs. McHenry at the Cross Roads or what now goes by the name of Westfield. The third day in the forenoon at Canadaway now Fredonia, in the afternoon in the town of Sheridan. The only way of getting about was on horseback through a deep wood and roads that were no roads, only trails. The Board packed their ballot boxes in their pockets and took up their winding way in single file from one point (??? ?????) designated. There were 69 votes cast and of the voters (?????) from (?????). The expense of the election was \$68, each vote costing almost a dollar – no graft in this – Mr. Eaton filled many official positions in this county; Supervisor of the town, Justice of the Peace for several years; Town

Clerk, 14 years; overseer of the poor. Like most men of that day, he was not aspiring for public honor, he was ever honest, faithful and competent.

This man, Eaton, served his country in the War of 1812. In 1811, Gov. Tompkins commissioned him lieutenant of Militia. He was wounded in the battle of (????????). In 1812 took part in the battles of Black Rock and Buffalo and was with his company on the Niagara frontier in the fall of 1814. At the close of the War, resigned the position of regimental paymaster.

From his early home in Massachusetts, Mr. Eaton brought seeds to fruit trees. These he planted about his house. Trees planted by him are still standing though most of the orchard as you see it now, was grown from the seed of the fruit planted in 1807.

When we eat the now celebrated David Eaton pears we do well to go back to the man who first – gave them to our county.

Mr. Eaton had three children, his son Darwin G. was for many years professor of mathematics in Parker Institute, Brooklyn.

David Eaton lived to be 91 years old, he, and most of his family lie in
Evergreen Cemetery.

Trusting it will be of interest with this society. I read from a manuscript left
by the late David Eaton, dated July 3, 1858: