

LITTLEVILLE

NAMED FOR NORMAN LITTLE
WHO SETTLED HERE IN 1830.
CENTER FOR MILLS & FACTORIES,
FIRST MILL BY T. HOSMER 1796.
VIED FOR COUNTY SEAT c1821

Special thanks to Christopher and Noella Frail, Kathy Shaw Harrison, and Thomas Crye
and the Crew of the Avon Highway Department

Welcome: David LeFeber, Supervisor, Town of Avon

Introductions: Maureen Kingston and Holly Watson, Historians, Town of Avon

Greetings: Amie Alden, Livingston County Historian

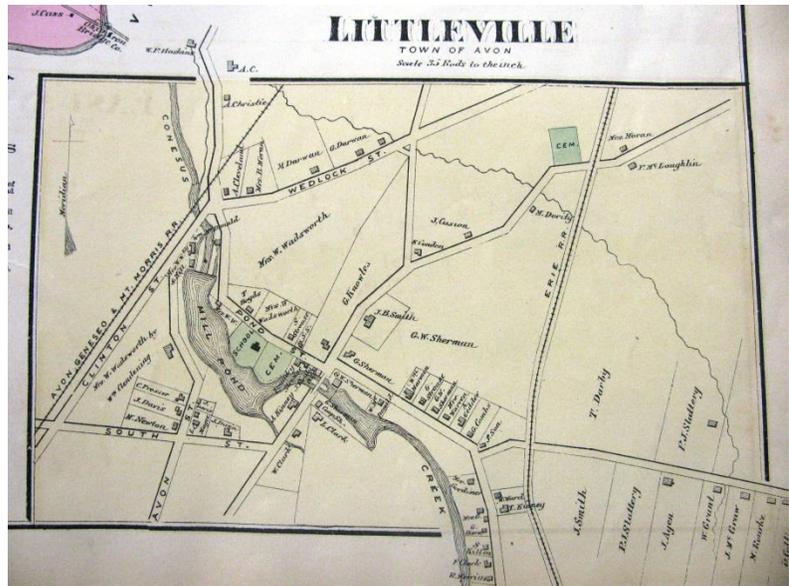
Dedication of the Littleville Historical Marker

November 20, 2014

LITTLEVILLE

The 1860 *French's Gazetteer* describes Littleville as being one and one-half miles south of Avon and containing a church, gristmill, furnace manufacture and 23 houses. The community had been a busy industrial center from the early beginnings of area settlement. Adequate water power supplied by Conesus Outlet and a pronounced topographical decline from Conesus Lake to the Genesee River prompted early placement of mills. The first saw mill was built in 1796 by Timothy Hosmer, one of the five proprietors who purchased lots 10 and 11 of the Phelps and Gorham tract in 1789. These "lots" became the town of Hartford, officially established in 1797 and later renamed Avon in 1808. The saw mill was situated on the south side of the Outlet opposite the site of the later Light's flour mill. The first mill on the north side of the creek was built in 1810.

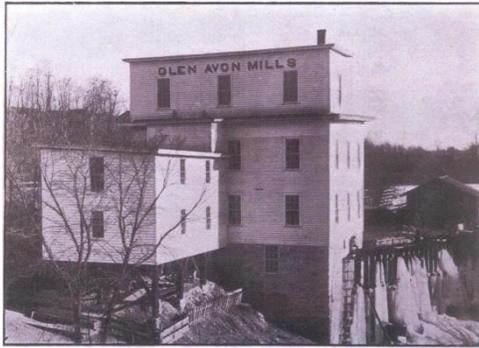
Paul Knowles, clothier, arrived in Lima from Berkshire County, Massachusetts in the early 1800s. With Jeremiah Riggs, he purchased the Hosmer property and soon established a grist mill near the Outlet. A distillery was erected next, followed by a carding and fulling mill for the processing of cloth fabric. Knowles built a large house on the corner of what is now Littleville Road and Cemetery Road (formerly Pond Street). The stone retainer is still visible.



The grist mill and distillery were purchased from Reuben McMillan by Norman Little about 1830 and a store was added nearby. Norman Little was the son of Dr. Charles Little of East Avon and it is for him the community is named. He moved to Michigan in 1837 and was instrumental in the establishment of Saginaw. The *Saginaw News* article of May 11, 2010, headline reads "Saginaw's First Founders Day Acknowledges Visionary Norman Little". He had visited the area as a teenager in 1822, with his father. Dr. Little soon sold his land after he saw the swamps, bayous and numerous mosquitos. The son, however, returned to the area with his wife Jane in 1836-37, and helped build a city. He started the first weekly newspaper, *The Saginaw Journal*, built a hotel, operated a steamship run from Buffalo, New York, built a saw mill, and was a charter member of the First Presbyterian Church. He died there in 1859 and is cited as "Founder of the Saginaws", so stated on his monument.

The first bridge across the Outlet at Littleville was built in 1818, replaced in 1850 by a stone bridge. Remnants of this “two arch bridge” are still visible. There were two main roads connecting the Village of Avon with Littleville. One started near the Springs, and ran south to the Five Arch Bridge along Mill Street (Stone Mill Road). The other began at Genesee Street, crossed the Outlet at Littleville, continued to the Genesee Road and thus to Geneseo. Careful observation will reveal a tree line stretching north from Far View to Ashantee.

Archibald Green of Rush built a foundry about 1825 on the south side of the Outlet opposite the flour mill. Samuel Strouse later bought the property in 1851 and very successfully manufactured the Strouse Plow, favorite of many farmers in Western New York. The Donelly blacksmith shop was on the corner near the foundry.



About 1862 the Marsh Brothers and Dr. Campbell became owners of the mill property and called it Glen Avon Mill. George Sherman became the sole owner about 1865, sold to Griffin and Dobney of Buffalo who ran it until it burned to the ground in 1878. Mr. Light was born in Lower Canada in 1847, settled in 1875, and in 1879, purchased the property and constructed a mill which still stands today having been repurposed as a residence. He was a custom and merchant miller, dealer in flour, feed and grain. Two of

“Light’s Mill” trade pastry flour brands were Sweet Violet and Daisy, well known for many years for their quality. The mill remained in the Light Family until the 1950s.

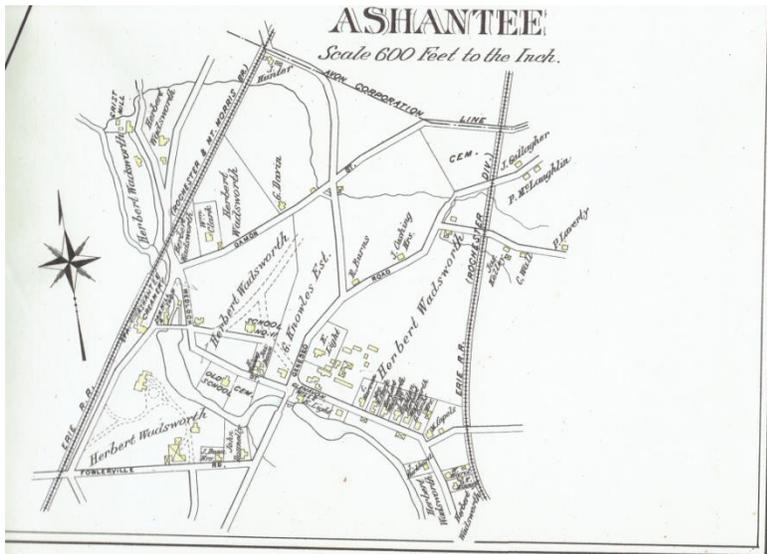
The Free Church of Avon was established in Littleville in a meeting of the Presbytery of Ontario on December 16, 1834. It was the purpose of those present at the subsequent meeting on December 28, to establish a church in the southern part of the Town of Avon. Included were Norman Little, William F. Southworth, Solomon Hunt, Jane Ann Little, Lewis G. Howard, Edwin Cook, Sarah Wallage, Harriet Hunt, Isaac Osgood, Jemina B. Osgood, Martha Miller, Rebecca Scott, Ezekiel Scott, Sally Post, Mahitable Fuller, Eunice Weed, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas H. Lyon of the church at Canandaigua. Rev. Hezekiah B. Pierpont was installed as pastor by the Presbytery on February 18, 1836. He served until August 25, 1841 and was followed August 24, 1842 by Rev. Roderick L. Hurlbert. By 1856, many of the original members had died, moved away or joined other churches and the church that was located in a building on the north side of Littleville road near the present Antonio Drive was disbanded. The building was taken down in 1864.

The first Littleville School, District number 11, was built in 1846 adjacent to Littleville Cemetery. In 1902, a new schoolhouse replaced the older one at a cost \$1,265. That was used until centralization of the Avon districts in 1943. On October 16, 1949, dedication ceremonies were held at the “new” school, in presentation of the building to be used by the Avon Girl Scouts



and Boy Scouts as their permanent clubhouse. Among the teachers at the Littleville School were Miss Belle Sutton (Sutton Road family), and Mr. Francis Moran of Avon, who went on to become a professor at Notre Dame University.

Herbert Wadsworth was the grandson of early Genesee Valley pioneer and settler, James Wadsworth. Born in 1851, he came to own considerable acreage in Avon, including the Silo Farm, Sylvan Spring Farm, School House Farm and Sugarberry Farm, among others, renting them to various farm families. His marriage to Martha Blow of St. Louis in 1888, initiated a rich presence of the couple in the Valley. Herbert's stucco hunting lodge became the twenty-five room mansion lovingly and/or sarcastically named a shanty, that is, "Ashantee".



Herbert was an innovator, businessman, inventor and poet, and his socialite wife was a strong personality who greatly influenced the breeding and raising of horses on the farms of the Genesee Valley. The Genesee Valley Breeders Association and Lookover Stallion Station trace their beginnings to this couple.

In the 1890s, Ashantee Creamery was built near the Erie Railroad. The blacksmith shop of Peter Zifka was located north of the Creamery, a saw mill, cider mill, woolen mill and Morton's Flour Mill were located farther down the Outlet. Ice was harvested from Wadsworth Pond during the winter season. Ashantee was the original home of the Troop M, 1st Cavalry, New York National Guard. Organized in 1914, Troop M served at the Mexican border and during World War I. The riding hall from this era still stands, but the armory was destroyed by fire in 1919. The unit was removed to its present location on Avon Road, Geneseo. It is interesting to note that the 1872 *Atlas of Livingston County* shows a map of Littleville (above), but the 1902 *New Century Atlas of Livingston County*, only pictures Ashantee (also above). Same location, changing influence.

The Five Arch Bridge which spans the Conesus Outlet was built in 1856 and remains one of Avon's most famous landmarks. It served as part of the busy Erie Railroad hub that served Rochester, Buffalo and the Southern Tier until abandoned in 1941. The tracks were removed and the right-of-way made available to adjacent land owners and others interested in the property. In 1971, the Bridge was donated to the Village of Avon by George Stewart and became part of the Avon Village Parks system.

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Pictures and files in the Office of Avon Town Historian, 23 Genesee St., Avon, NY.

PHOTO CREDITS

- 1) Littleville map, from *Atlas of Livingston Co.*, 1872
- 2) Glen Avon Mills, from Kathy Shaw Harrison
- 3) Littleville Dist. #11, c. 1902, from Kathy Shaw Harrison
- 4) Ashantee map, from *New Century Atlas of Livingston Co.*, 1902

Maureen Kingston and Holly Watson, Avon Town Historians 11.20.14