

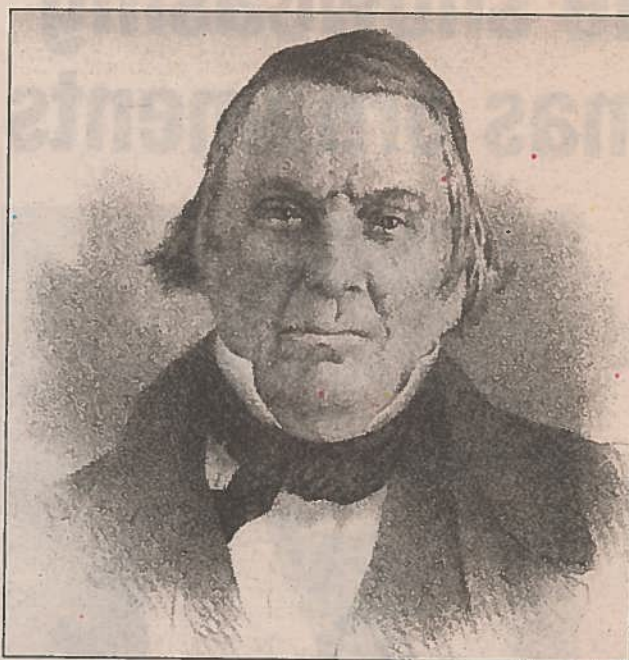
James Mather 1784-1854

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Bethinking of Olde Orleans



James Mather

The following information is taken from Pioneer History of Orleans County published in 1871 by Arad Thomas. "James Mather was born in Marlborough, Vt. July 23, 1784. He came to Gaines in the summer of 1810.

There was then some travel on the Ridge Road, with a prospect of more when the country was settled. The Holland Land Company had established their land office at Batavia and it seemed to him that in time a village would grow up at the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek.

The Oak Orchard trail was then marked from Batavia to the lake, and Mr. Mather shrewdly predicting a village would be founded where that trail crossed the Ridge, took up some four hundred acres of land lying on each side of the Oak Orchard Road and south of the Ridge, on which he afterwards settled and resided while he lived.

Before moving to Gaines, Mr. Mather had resided for some time in the town of Russia, Herkimer County where he manufactured potash which he sent to the Canada market by way of Ogdensburg. He was in this business when the embargo declaring non-intercourse with Great Britain was proclaimed. He continued his trade however, and by the skillful distribution of a few dollars among the government officials, his ashes were allowed to pass the lines and his profits were large.

In the winter of 1811, he broke up his establishment in Herkimer County and moved to Gains. A younger brother Rufus Mather assisted by driving a team of two yoke of oxen before a sled which was loaded, among other things, with three potash kettles.

There was no bridge over the Genesee River at Rochester, and Rufus attempted to cross on the ice when in the middle of the river the ice broke and let the loaded sled into the water. Rufus succeeded with great difficulty in getting out without loss, and followed the Ridge to

his destination. Rufus remained and labored for James the next summer. James Mather had cut down the trees on a small spot south of the Ridge, on the Oak Orchard Road.

Rufus Mather says he felled the first tree in the village of Gaines, on the Ridge Road. That tree stood on the west side of Oak Orchard Road. A piece of land was soon cleared there and James Mather built his log house on that corner in the spring of 1811. He married Fanny Bryant February 15th, 1813. She was born in Marlborough, Vt., October 28th, 1788.

In the winter of 1813 they commenced house keeping in the log house Mr. Mather had built on his lot. Mr. Mather always kept open house, according to the custom of the country then, though he never professed to keep a tavern; entertaining every one who applied to him for accommodations as well as he could, and his house was generally full of newly arriving emigrants who were waiting till their own cabins could be built, or of such casual strangers as came along.

Soon after Mr. Mather settled in Gaines, he set the potash kettles he brought with him and commenced buying salts of lye, or "Black salts" of the settlers as soon as settlers came in and made them. These salts he boiled down into potash and took them to the mouth of the Genesee River, or the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek, and sent them to Montreal to a market.

Early in the spring of 1811, Mr. Mather finding his provisions getting low went to the Oak Orchard Creek, at the head of Stillwater, from the lake, with two men and a seine and caught three barrels of fish in a few hours. These he drew to the Ridge with his oxen and took them to Black Creek Mill, a few miles south of Rochester, and with these fish and

money, he bought wheat and pork, got his wheat ground and took it home, and so he was well supplied.

About the time Orleans County was organized, he built a large brick building for a tannery, in which with his brothers and others he carried on

tanning a number of years, though he never worked at that business himself. He dealt considerably in land, owning several large farms in other places. From the rise of value in these lands, and the profits of his speculations, he became wealthy. He died August 29th, 1854."