

West Of The Genesee River

by Lynne Belluscio

The transfer of land and the land tracts west of the Genesee River are complicated by the fact that Massachusetts claimed rights to the land (as an extension of their western boundary) until 1784. At a convention held in Hartford, Connecticut in 1786, New York State was granted full authority over the entire state. In return, Massachusetts was granted preemptive rights to negotiate with the Indians for the purchase of the land.

In 1788, following the agreement made in Hartford, Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham contracted with Massachusetts to buy the preemptive rights. This allowed Phelps and Gorham to purchase the land directly from the Indians. In July 1788, Oliver Phelps met with the Indian chiefs at Buffalo Creek where they released all claims to their land between the Preemption Line (near Geneva) to the Genesee River and in addition, Phelps bought land immediately west of the Genesee River, twelve miles wide, running parallel to the river and extending inland from Lake Ontario for a distance of twenty four miles. This area has since been called the "Phelps and Gorham Mill Site."

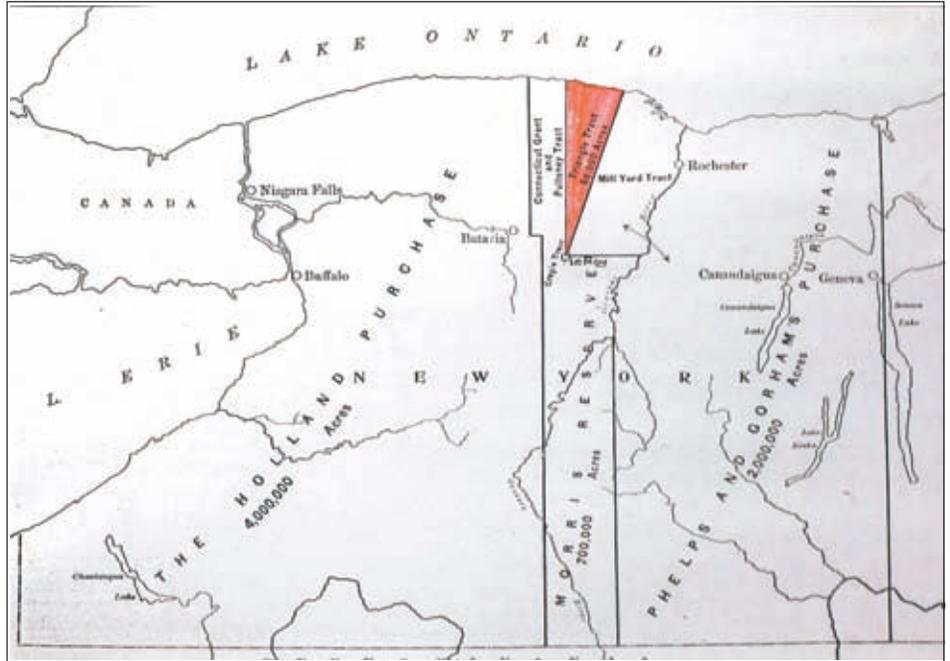
On March 12, 1791 the State of Massachusetts agreed to sell to Robert Morris its preemptive rights to all the land in New York, west from the Mill Site. Morris set aside land that became known as

the "Morris Reserve." But Morris was in need of money and he sold off several tracts to other developers. A tract of 100,000 was sold to Watson and Craigie. Another 100,000 acres was sold to John B. Church. Andrew Craigie

bought another 35,000 acres. Tracts of 50,000 acres each were sold to Samuel Ogden and Gerrit Cotringer. Jan & Wilhem Willink bought 40,000 acres and 175,000 acres were sold to Samuel Sterritt.

It was at this time that Morris sold the 76,000 acre Triangle Tract to Herman LeRoy and William Bayard. All of the land was sold with the understanding that Morris would proceed as soon as possible to extinguish all the Indian claims to the area. This was done late in 1797 at Genesee with the signing of the Big Tree Treaty.

In 1792 and 1793 Robert Morris sold off the rest of the land. It was illegal for foreign inves-



tors to buy land for speculation, so a group of men, including Herman LeRoy, John Linklaen, Garrit Boon, William Bayard and Matthew Clarkson, acting on behalf of wealthy Dutch land speculators, purchased 3,600,000 acres which became known as the Holland Purchase.

Settlers wishing to purchase land in all these tracts had to register their legal documents in Canandaigua, which was the county seat.

Finally, on March 30, 1802, the State Legislature established a new county, known as Genesee, with the county seat in Batavia. At that time Genesee County was divided into four towns: Batavia, Northampton, Southampton and

Leicester. Eventually other towns were formed and from the Town of Caledonia, on June 8, 1812, the town of Bellona was formed. Named for the goddess of war, the town would be renamed less than a year later, on April 6, 1813, as the Town of LeRoy. (The Village of LeRoy would be incorporated much later on May 5, 1834.)

So I guess, if the Town of LeRoy wants to get ready for a party, it should be prepared to celebrate its Bicentennial on April 6, 2013. (Note: I didn't research all of this information and much more, in the Genesee County History, published in 1985.)



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Just to clarify the new pricing that will take effect:

1. Anyone wanting to purchase a **Lifetime License**, may do so at the old rate before **October 1, 2009**.
2. All other licenses (except for lifetime licenses) that are sold **beginning August 17, 2009** for the 2009/10 season will be sold at the new rates.

If you have any questions or for a listing of new pricing, please feel free to stop at the Town Clerk's office or call 768-6910 ext. 229.