Andrew B. Dickinson, For Whom Earlier Hotel Was Named, Was Pioneer

State Senator and Minister To Nicaragua Founded Town of Hornby and Built Roads

(By Claire Lane)

Seventy-seven years ago, on the site of the new Baron Steuben, Hon. Andrew Bray Dickinson built the old Dickinson House, and after whom it was named.

Associated with him in the venture was Hiram W. Bostwick, who was very prominent in the early history of Corning, then a village of about three thousand population. The hotel was completed and opened to the public the week of September 3 1851; it was then the most imposing building in this vicinity, and the Erie Railroad stopped its trains for passengers to eat at this famous hostelry. During the recruiting of soldiers for the Civil War, the men slept at the barracks and were fed at the Dickinson House; it was also the place of the first meeting for organizing the Railroad Brotherhood of Engineers in this section.

Major Dickinson, although limited in early education to the meager advantages of his time, was a man of sound intellect and much initiative. He was born in Covert, Seneca County, and came to Hornby between the years of 1820 and 1824, purchasing about a thousand acres of land just east of what is now Hornby Forks and became later, one of the most remarkable and distinguished men who ever lived in that Town.

In 1836, he instigated the organization of a Town Board, and was elected Hornby's first Supervisor. In politics the Major was a zealous Democrat, until 1837, when as one of the Conscript Fathers, he left the party on the financial question. In November 1839, he was elected by the Whigs, State Senator and served four years, gaining a reputation for integrity and intelligent comprehension of Legislative topics. Again in 1853 he was elected to this same office, and in April 1861 was appointed by Abraham Lincoln, United States minister to Nicaragua.

The story is, that the Major being a great personal friend of President Lincoln, but a very poor writer, wrote the President for the appointment of minister to Germany; but the President being unable to decipher his letter, mistook Germany for Nicaragua, and appointed him to that Republic; it was said that had the President been able to read his letter clearly, would have gladly made the appointment to Germany.

After a few years, the Major resigned this office and returned to New York, and was appointed United States Marshal for the Northern District of New York. A few months later he was appointed again by President Lincoln, United States Minister and Envoy Extraordinary to Nicaragua; this was a special request of that Republic, where he had displayed so much diplomatic ability that they offered him pecuniary inducements to return; he finally consented and purchased a large sugar plantation, doing much to introduce modern labor-saving machinery and implements, and becoming very popular and influential with the officials and people of that country. There he died on the 21st of April, 1873; death resulting from injuries he received from being thrown from his horse, while riding over his sugar plantation.

Hon. A. B. Dickinson opened the first general store in Hornby Forks in 1824, and at that time was the most extensive farmer and stock grower in this part of the State. But he was obliged to build a high fence around a field to guard against the wolves, which were a great menace to his sheep; wild-cats were also numerous, and occasionally panthers killed his stock. The Major was notoriously good to his help and many humorous incidents are told of their relations; among his many employes he had a queer old fellow named Ide Sedan, faithful as a dog and carrying out the Major's every order, to the letter; one day the major observed Ide driving into a high fence post with a load of hay. The Major said jokingly, "Ide, if the fence posts are in your way, get the axe and cut them down." Later in the day the Major came upon Ide faithfully cutting down fence posts. He said, "Ide, you needn't cut down any more." Ide replied, "Well, this is the last one."

On another occasion the Major told Ide that they were expecting company and to go out and kill some sheep; Ide asked how many, and the Major said, "Well, kill until I tell you to stop." The company came and other things occupied the Major. He had forgotten his order until later he came upon Ide still killing sheep. He said, "Ide, stop killing," and then going back to his company, he said, "You can stay a little time, for we have plenty of fresh mutton."

What Our Forefathers Endured

Little the present generation knows of the hardships and deprivations the early settlers endured, while blazing the trail of civilization, and making possible all our present day luxuries; these early pioneers were men and women with the strength that is born of clean hearts, clear minds and willing hands, who tackled this job.

But a century ago Steuben County was: "The forest primeval, with murmuring pines and hemlocks; bearded with moss and clothed in green, indistinct in the twilight." The silence of the wilderness was only broken by the moccasined feet of Indians and the softer tread of wild animals. The roads were but Indian trails, and the streams were rushing rivers. The creek which flows from Lamoka Lake, into the Cohocton River at Savona, was navigable to Bradford with 75 foot Arks, as the boats were called at that time.

The Erie Railroad was pushed to completion through this section in the year 1851. A. B. Dickinson established the first stage-road through to the Town of Hornby, which opened up new territory for other early settlers. Goods were brought from Newburg on the Hudson, in wagons and consisted of bake-kettles and skillets, no stoves at that time. Ammunition was a heavy item in trade as all the early settlers carried a gun. Tea, coffee and notions were exchanged for hides and grain which was sent down the river in Arks.

Hon. A. B. Dickinson was twice married; his first wife was Miss Hannah Hopkins, by whom he had five children, three daughters and two sons, Orlando and Mahlon, who resided in Chicago. Emma, the wife of a Mr. Wood, Eliza, wife of Mr. Hall, and Mary Ann, who was the wife of Isaac C. Hardon; he was a lawyer and a fine Spanish scholar, and was made Secretary of Legation under his father-in-law to Nicaragua. He penned the first treaty between Nicaragua and the United States, that may someday, result in a canal across Nicaragua. He died in Paris and a daughter still lives in that city.

Major Dickinson's second wife was Abagail Kerby, oldest daughter of Peter and Judith Kerby Robison, pioneers of Hornby, by whom he had a daughter, Hannah and son Leon. Hannah died in early life and Leon is still in Tomalles, Cal. A grandson, Ray, visited this section a few years ago and was a guest at the old Dickinson house his grandfather built.

Many nephews and nieces survive in this vicinity. Two daughters of his brother, William Dickinson, are Mrs. H. D. L. Adams of Decatur street and Mrs. Josiah Easterbrook of Hornby. Mrs. Elizabeth Ryon, the wife of Attorney Verne R. Ryon is a great grand niece.

Mahlon Dickinson, the son of Major Dickinson, was killed by the Sioux Indians in November, 1869, 20 miles south of Fort Laramie, Indian Territory. The army troops at Fort Laramie were sufficient only to guard the Fort; the country round about was constantly raided by the Sioux.

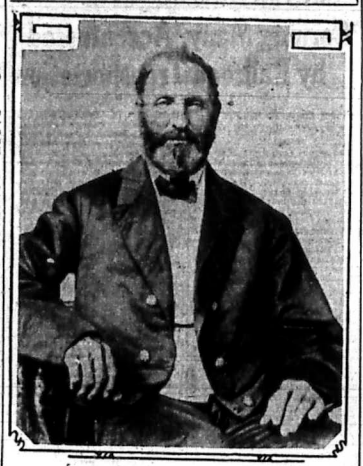
First Hotel Built on Pulteney Street in 1796

The first hotel in the town of Corning was built in 1796 by Col. Williamson, agent of the Pulteney estate, on a tract of land he purchased on the north side of the Chemung river on the high road now known as Pulteney street.

It was a two story frame building and was the first two story structure of its kind in the town that was clapboarded. It was a commodious hotel for that time and was long known as the Jennings Tavern, Mr. Jennings having bought the property from the Pulteney estate and kept the tavern until his death in 1834. The tavern was later purchased by Robert Sly, and is still in existence in its remodeled state at 66 West Pulteney street. The building is now owned by Edwin Dodge, of Hornby.

This tavern was first conducted by Benjamin Patterson, a famous hunter and guide, and in the fall of 1796 he killed a large amount of game and had salted down great quantities of bear meat and dried deer hams to supply his hotel the coming season.

A RUGGED PIONEER



Andrew Bray Dickinson, Supervisor, State Senator and Minister to Nicaragua, one of the builders of the Dickinson House, which bore his name 76 years.

Dickinson House History Links in Names of Fullers

Popular Hostelry in Early Days was Managed for 44 Years by Dwight A. Fuller and His Two Sons

RECALLS CITY'S PROGRESS

George W. Fuller, Last Survivor, Prominent in Life of Corning, and Especially in the Local Masonic Lodge

Just 71 years ago, the Dickinson House, the predecessor of the Baron Steuben, was completed and opened to the public and throughout the 71 years of its existence, it remained the leading hostelry of this section. For many years it was one of the leading taverns of this section of the state.

In 1904, 53 years after the completion of the hotel, extensive repairs and improvements were made in the building and this was the cause of a lengthy article appearing in the Corning Journal of September 10, 1904, which told of the opening of the Hotel and its dedication in addition to explaining the added improvements which at this time were the last word in hotel construction. The article is of much interest especially at this time and is given in full as follows:

"The extensive improvements in the lobby and office on the first floor of the Dickinson House in this city are nearly completed, and a transformation has been wrought. A beautiful mosaic tile floor has been laid, the interior woodwork of the lobby and office has been replaced with quartered oak and the arches with iron columns, a cosy fireplace has been installed, while massive new outside swinging doors have been hung at the entrances on Market and Pine Streets. By narrowing the ladies parlor, which formerly for years was a favorite place for holding Congressional and Senatorial Conventions, and by moving the office back to occupy a part of the space thus gained, a larger lobby has resulted. Drake & Co. of this city have had the contract for the improvements and have done a fine job. The old hotel customers hardly know the Dickinson House in its modern and up-to-date interior appearance.

"The Dickinson House is one of the oldest and best known hotels in Western New York. It was built in 1850-51 by Hon. Andrew Bray Dickinson, of Hornby, (whence its name), and Col. H. W. Bostwick, of Corning, and it was opened to the public in September, 1851, fifty-three years ago. The first landlord was S. B. Dennis, who was succeeded by Major Field. In 1865, George W. Fuller became the proprietor, and in 1871 his brother, D. L. Fuller, became associated with him in the management of the hotel. The veteran and experienced firm of Fuller Bros. is known by the traveling public throughout the country. For many years W. J. Fitzpatrick has ably and satisfactorily occupied the position of day clerk, and M. J. Brann has been a very popular night clerk. Under Fuller Bros. many improvements have been made in the hotel, and the building has several times been enlarged.

Opening of the Hotel

"On the completion of the building and the furnishing of the hotel, the present Editor of the Corning Journal wrote the following, which was published in the Corning Journal, Sept. 3, 1851

"'Dickinson House This spacious Hotel will be opened this week for the reception of travellers. It is an ornament to the village, and there is occasion for congratulation that Corning can boast of a Public House inferior to none, in its expensive furnishings of numerous well planned and commodious rooms. The building is 70 feet by 80, and five stories high including the basement, containing in all over one hundred rooms The dining hall is 30 feet by 80. The parlors are large and well lighted and ventilated. The reception room on the first floor (above the basement) is fitted up conveniently, and the numerous parlors above show that great expense has been lavished upon them in accordance with a refined taste. Costly mirrors, enticing sociables, (such as must necessarily provoke volubility), sofas of the latest style, chairs of rosewood, whose satin damask seats must surely tend to encourage habits of indolence: 'Velvet Tapestry' on the 2d floor above the base ment, and 'Brussels' on the 3rd, and handsome Ingrain Carpetins upon the fourth, with dressing Bureaus, Wash Stands, Bedsteads, etc., of highly polished Walnut, make a tout ensemble, impossible fully to describe. The costly furnishing of the house indicates the taste and wealth of the enterprising and spirited proprietors, who have amply fulfilled their promise to build and fit up a Hotel, inferior to none in the State.—S. B. Dennis, long and favorably known at Owego as a popular landlord, has leased the Dickinson House for a term of years and under his management we infer that it will take its appropriate place in the estimation of the travelling community as a Public Hotel of the first rank. Mr. Dennis's agreeable manners and assiduous attention towards his guests will go far towards securing an overflow of custem.

Dedication of the Hotel

Sept. 24, 1851, the new Dickinson House was dedicated with imposing ceremonies, there being a banquet at the hotel and a grand ball in the new Concert Hall which had then just been opened. We find in the Corning Journal of Oct. 1, 1851, the following with reference to this affair, the account being copied from the Karlton, a daily newspaper published at Elmira:

"'Dedication of the Dickinson House, Corning.—Not having attended the Dedication Ball, we copy from the Karlon an account of that festivity:

"'This capacious and elegant Hotel was, as announced, dedicated at Corning, on Wednesday night. The company was unquestionably the largest ever congregated in Corning upon any festive occasion and the interest and enthusiasm which were kept up far exceeded the expectations of its friends. At about nine o'clock the party entered Col. Bostwick's Concert Hall, which is the largest and most beautiful room in Western New York, with the exception of Corinthian Hall at Rochester, and began to trip it lightly to the sweet music of the Luca Family. The graceful forms and beautiful figures were now seen floating in the wavy mazes of the dance, and as the brilliant light fell upon the voluptuous music guided the fair dancers, the scene was truly enchanting. Among the most accomplished and interesting dancers, Mrs. R., of Elmira, shone conspicuous. Nothing occurred to mar the enjoyment—all were happy. The company at twelve repaired to the Hotel where a most sumptuous feast was in readiness. After the best of wine had flowed freely, Col. Bostwick was toasted, to which this gentleman replied in a short but very appropriate speech giving at the close, Major Dickinson, the gentleman after whom the Hotel is named, and who was a co-partner with himself in its erection. The Major responded in an eloquent address, which was received with rounds of applause. Mr. Haight of Elmira, was now called for. Mr. H. began by saying he was not used to speaking but he was used to drinking, at the same time raising his glass and giving as a sentiment S. B. Dennis, Esq., the gentlemanly landlord of the Dickinson House. Mr. Haight's remarks were received with shouts of approbation, and one fellow showed his friendship by familiarly helping himself to Haight's wine, declaring at the same time it was

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WHERE THE B.P.O.E. HOLDS FORTH

Corning Lodge of Elks, No. 1071, is one of the most active Elks' lodges in the Empire State. Its members meet regularly in their commodious home at Walnut and First streets in good fellowship. They contribute annually and on special occasions for the poor of Corning and they have been very instrumental in fostering citizenship by participating in the Americanization movement in Corning.

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