

SAMSON OCCOM.

THE FOUNDING OF BROTHERTOWN BY CHRISTIAN INDIANS.

An Interesting Paper Read Before
the Oneida County Historical So-
ciety Last Evening by Rev. Dr.
W. DeLoss Love of Hartford, Conn.
—Business Meeting of the Society
—standing Committees.

A business meeting of the Oneida his-
torical society was held yesterday after-
noon, William M. White presiding.
Fourth of July orations from 1796 to
1823, collected by the late James Reese,
were presented to the society. Dr. E. B.
Clark and E. W. Chapin were elected
members.

Hon. Elliott F. Danforth will deliver
an address in March on the Indians of
New York state, and in April, Benjamin
F. Lewis will deliver a lecture on the
Madoc mystery, an incident of Welsh his-
tory in Utica.

The following committees for the year
were announced:

- Finance—Charlie W. Hutchinson, P. V. Rogers,
William M. White, Robert S. Williams.
- Library and Exchange—Rev. Daniel Bailou,
Rev. Charles T. Olmsted, P. C. De J. Angells.
- Donations and Collections—George D. Dimon,
Charles W. Sayre, W. Pierrepont White.
- Addresses—Rev. Dana W. Bigelow, N. Curtis
White, Dr. W. H. Watson.
- Property and Expenses—William M. White,
Charles W. Darling, James Constable, Jr.
- Publications of Society—Alexander Seward,
Rees G. Williams, W. C. Rowley.
- Natural History and Zoology—Dr. Theodore
Deecke, Egbert Bagg, John C. Schreiber.
- Statistics—N. E. Kernan, G. Alder Blumer, E.
Prentiss Bailey.
- Biology and Necrology—Dr. M. M. Bagg, Rev.
Daniel Bailou, David E. Wager.
- Membership—General Charles W. Darling, Don-
ald McIntyre, Rev. Daniel Bailou.
- Monuments—Alexander Seward, Hon. Charles
W. Hutchinson, William M. White, S. R. Camp-
bell, George M. Weaver.
- Special Committee on Early Utica Publica-
tions—Henry Hariburt, Dr. M. M. Bagg, Thomas
F. Baker.
- On Permanent Building—Hon. Charles W.
Hutchinson, Alexander Seward, William M.
White, George D. Dimon, General Charles W.
Darling, Dr. M. M. Bagg.
- Herkimer Monument—H. J. Coggeshall, John
W. Vrooman, Titus Sheard, Edward Wemple
Eliot Danforth.

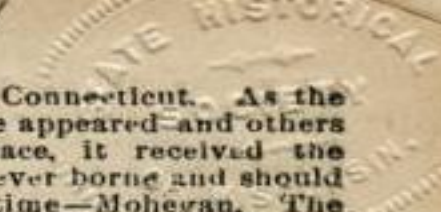
SAMSON OCCOM.

In library hall last evening Rev. W.
DeLoss Love, of Hartford, Conn.,
read a paper before the Oneida historical
society on "Samson Occom, the Christian
Indians of Connecticut and their emigra-
tion to Brothertown, N. Y." An abstract
is given: "Upon some unknown day in
the early part of the 18th century an In-
dian of the Mohegan tribe set up his wig-
wam on the western bank of the river
Thames, and unwittingly located the spot
where this once famous tribe would make

their last graves in Connecticut. As the
wisdom of his choice appeared—and others
gathered to the place, it received the
name which it has ever borne and should
bear to the end of time—Mohegan. The
master of this pioneer wigwam was
known in his native tongue as Aukum,
subsequently Occom, (Aucum, Maucum,
Mawcum,) a fact which would have been
of no great interest had there not been
born to him in the year 1723 a son, who
was named Samson. The mother's name
was Sarah, who is said in 'The life of the
Countess of Huntingdon,' to have been
a descendant of Uncas, which may
have been true, tho she was a
Groton Indian, and probably of the
Samson family, which led her so to
name her son. The establishment of a
permanent Indian village at Mohegan af-
forded an opportunity for the missionary
teacher, and when Samson was ten years
old, Jonathan Barber came among them
to attempt a school. After a time this
school was given up as a failure. Then
the minister, young David Jewett, came
among them once a fortnight in the sum-
mer. Ministers from the region round
about came, and the result was the
awakening of a few in the tribe to a sense
of their heathen condition. Samson Oc-
com, then 16 years of age, was one of
these, and for six months he was strug-
gling out of darkness toward the light.
When he was 17 he found the light,
which roused anew a thirst for learning,
and kindled a pity for his poor people.
In six months he had learned to read in
the New Testament without spelling the
words, and all alone he plodded on, pur-
sued by the idea that he might
instruct the rest of his tribe.
It had been generally supposed
that Rev. Eleazar Wheelock of Lebanon
dug this diamond from the earth and pol-
ished it, but it seems to have been already
glittering before Wheelock met with it.
It was Occom who sought out Wheelock,
and not Wheelock who sought out Occom.
Occom spent four years with Wheelock.
On Dec. 6, 1743, Occom began a diary,
which he continued thro life. During the
winter of 1747 he taught school in a part
of New London, and in the spring studied
Hebrew in Lebanon, under Rev. Benja-
min Poweroy. In November, 1749, he
began a work as schoolmaster, counselor,
judge and preacher among the Montauk
Indians in Long Island, which lasted 12
years, and was greatly blessed to the
permanent elevation of many in that
tribe. About 1751, he married Mary
Fowler, a daughter of the Montauk tribe,
and she was thro'out her life a woman
worthy of him. Occom's pupils made
rapid progress, and some afterwards came
to Brothertown. Among these were
two boys, the brothers of his wife, David
and Jacob Fowler. The former
was born in 1735, the latter was probably
younger. In June, 1751, Samson Occom
and David Fowler set forth to

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carry the gospel and civilization to the Oneida Indians. At Oneida a log hut was built for Occom, and he remained until fall. For three seasons following he made similar visits to Oneida, spending considerable time there, and between his journeys he preached to the Indians of New England. David Fowler, the Mercury of the Indian missions, meanwhile went and came. Jacob Fowler was then at Lebanon preparing to be a teacher, and he met there also Joseph Johnson, a young Mohegan, the eloquent pleader and diplomat a dozen years later, and the future husband of Occom's daughter Tabitha, and so the fourth of this remarkable family group. These four were the projectors of the removal to Brothertown. After 1765 Occom had no connection with the Oneida mission, but Joseph Johnson was for a time teacher under Samuel Kirkland, who followed Occom in 1766, and David Fowler and Hannah, his wife, were the support and comfort of that heroic missionary thro his most trying years. The character of David Fowler is deserving of the highest praise. Occom was in Mohegan in the heat of the renewed controversy on the Mason land case. Rev. Nathaniel Whitaker and Occom sailed for England, December 23, 1765, and were abroad nearly two years. Everyone knows that Occom collected about £10,000 sterling, which was deposited with trustees in England, the Earl of Dartmouth at the head; and that these funds were employed in founding Dartmouth college, which succeeded to Moor's Indian charity school. But few are aware that Samson Occom did not agree with Dr. Wheelock in this appropriation of the money. Samuel Kirkland did not, and both Occom and Kirkland protested that a college in the woods of Coos would not be a material benefit to the Indian missions.

After Occom returned from England he was stationed at Mohegan, sometimes preaching in neighboring or distant churches, but usually engaged in towns among the Indians within a radius of 60 miles. The support afforded him was very meager. It has been repeatedly asserted that during this period he fell into intemperance. The original authority for the charge was a confession by Occom himself. The presbytery entered into a consideration of the matter, and finally decided that 'all the sensations of intoxication which he condemned himself for arose, not from any degree of intemperate drinking, but from having drank a small quantity of spirituous liquor after having been all day without food.' On Sept. 2, 1772, Occom preached a sermon at the execution of an Indian murderer named Moses Paul, and it was the most famous temperance sermon of the time. Occom afterwards issued a little volume called 'A Choice Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs.' Occom is known to-

day wholly thro the hymn beginning 'Awakened by Sinai's Awful Sound,' which was originally 'Waked by the Gospel's Joyful Sound.' This being one of his later compositions did not appear in his own hymn book. Among Occom's manuscripts is one of the Nativity, which is a better sample of his usual composition:

Shepherds rejoice, lift up your eyes,
And send your fears away.
News from the regions of the skies!
Salvation's born to-day.

There were three editions of Occom's hymn book. Occom seems to have exercised a missionary's care over seven particular places: Mohegan, Montauk, L. I., Niantic, Groton, Farmington, Stonington and Charlestown, R. I. And here we gather up again the lives of the other three Indians associated with him, for they were located in one or the other of these places most of the time as teachers and preachers until the revolution. David Fowler was mainly at Montauk. Jacob Fowler taught at Groton, begun to preach in 1774 and the year following became master of the Indian school at Hanover. Joseph Johnson underwent a religious transformation in 1772, and in the next year opened a school among the Indians at Farmington. So it was that they all came to be interested in a plan which was devised by Samson Occom, to remove to New York, to establish in the Oneida country a town governed after the Connecticut model, the townsmen wholly Indians, given to agriculture, who would be a means of Christianizing and civilizing the savages about them."

Mr. Love spoke of the arrangements subsequently made, the offer by the Oneidas to give them lands ten miles square, and continuing said on July 8, 1774, Samson Occom and David Fowler set out to view the lands, and settle its boundaries and they took back a deed of gift dated Oct. 4, 1774. Then came the revolutionary war, which interfered with the plans made. During the war Occom, the Fowlers and Johnson were the Indian heroes of New England. The first emigration to the lands given by the Oneidas was in 1784, altho some families had gone there earlier. Joseph Johnson had been dead several years. The emigrants who started for the Oneida country on May 8, 1784, included about 20 families, and among them were Jacob Fowler and Occom's son-in-law, Anthony Paul. Occom went as far as Albany, preaching thereabouts and sending on funds.

On Oct. 24, 1785, Occom visited the Oneida country, remaining there some time. It was on a Sabbath evening that he and David Fowler, who had met him on the Mohawk, drew near to David's home. It was the best of the settlement and located on the hill which had hitherto been and for several years continued to be the center of the town. As they ap-

proached the house they heard singing, and knew the people were engaged in worship. Occom went in and an affecting scene followed. Before the company separated their Moses blessed them as those who had come into their promised land. The next day Occom was visited by some of the Oneida Indians. The following evening the young folks went a mile to Abraham Simon's to sing. On the 29th they husked corn in true New England fashion, and as they husked they sang Psalms, Nov. 3 there was a marriage, the first celebrated in the new settlement. The next Sabbath Occom preached to the Stockbridge Indians, six miles away. It might have been called an election sermon, and it was appropriate, for the next day, Nov. 7, 1785, Occom's company met at David Fowler's to organize a government.

The town was named Brothertown. Jacob Fowler was chosen clerk, Roger Wauby, David Fowler, Elijah Wampy, John Tully and Abraham Simon were chosen trustees for a year, a new board of trustees to be chosen annually. Andrew Acarrocumb and Thomas Putehauker were elected fence viewers for a year. It was decided to have a center near David Fowler's house. The main streets were to run north and south and east and west, to cross at the center. It was resolved to live in peace and friendship, and everyone to bear his part of public charge in the town. The people asked Occom to be a teacher among them, and he consented, and agreed to make the town his home. This was the founding of Brothertown. The people continued under their own organization, interrupted by land difficulties, until they were empowered by an act of the general assembly, Feb. 22, 1791. Then they went on, until by the act of March 31, 1795, the peacemakers, or selectmen, were appointed by the governor, and council of the state. The original tract was reduced by the treaty of Sept. 22, 1788, to two miles in breadth and three miles in length, and this again was reduced by the act of March 31, 1795, to 149 lots on the western side of the tract now included in Kirkiand and Marshall, and which was set apart to the Brothertown Indians and without power to alienate it.

As to this community of 1785 it is important to emphasize three facts: 1. The center of the settlement was at David Fowler's. The trail left the present Deansville road a mile or more north of the present town and led up over the hill to Fowler's and over it westward thro Stockbridge. They were proposing to intersect this with a road running north and south. 2. We already have the origin of the Samson Occom's ecclesiastical relations, a parish having two places of worship, one in Brothertown at David Fowler's and the other in Stockbridge at Hendrick Aupaumut's or Captain Hendrick as he was called. This relation continued to Occom's

death, the Stockbridgers going to Fowler's and the Brothertowns to Hendrick's on alternate Sundays. On November 28 and 29, 1787, these two conjointly and formerly called Occom to be their minister and he accepted the call. A creed or confession of unusual interest was drawn up, which also declared their purpose in going into the wilderness. The papers are still extant. The church subsequently became Presbyterian, and Occom says it was the first ever organized among the Indians without the assistance of a white man. 3. A considerable part, and certainly the influential part, of these Brothertown settlers were connected by ties of kindred with Samson Occom.

A week after the first town meeting, Occom returned to New England. Each season, until his permanent removal in 1789, he spent with them the time from July to November. Of the balance, much was occupied in his journeys to and fro, as he preached and performed pastoral labors among the new settlements along the thoro'fare of emigration. He was known as the missionary of the wilderness.

All went well at Brothertown until 1787, when those troubles began concerning the lands, which broke up their town government, divided the people into the Fowler and the Wampy factions, alienated the latter from Occom and embittered his latter days. The substance of the matter was that some of the Oneidas wished them to yield their tract, and live at large upon their lands. This Occom and his party properly and wisely declined to do, and tho' the treaty of Sept. 22, 1788, confirmed their title, it did not remove the bitterness which had been engendered by the assistance which Elijah Wampy and others had given to the scheme. Then the whites came in and the Indians began to lease their original locations to them—as they were empowered to do for a period of ten years by the act of Feb. 25, 1789—and when they had taken up other farms they leased them also. Occom, whose party was largely made up from his connections, foresaw the result, and opposed the leasing by individuals without the consent of the whole; and at his suggestion the general assembly of New York, who agreed with him on every point raised, embodied in the act of Feb. 21, 1791, which constituted them a town, a provision for the apportionment and control of the land by three trustees, to be elected by the town and approved by the mayor of the city of Albany. Meanwhile other Indians had come among them from New England, and many of these were part negro blood. With a foresight which was characteristic and remarkable, Occom had introduced into the original deed of gift, Oct. 4, 1774, a condition that no such should have any right to land in Brothertown, for his purpose was to

keep the New England blood pure and preserve a tribal unity. This provision was never set aside and so long as they held the land they were a peculiar people. But these interlopers joined the leasing party, whose actions were of course agreeable to the whites, and it soon became so unpleasant for Occom that he moved in the latter part of 1791 to New Stockbridge. After he had been several years in his unmarked grave, the general assembly of New York, be it said to its honor, undid the mischief of his enemies, and with more moral than legal justice, set apart the one hundred and forty-nine lots, ejecting the whites located thereupon and sold the remainder of the tract to settlers for the benefit of the Brothertown Indians. Then Moses died, but his wisdom had been wrought into the structure of the town, into its stringent laws concerning intemperance and vice, labor and improvements, education and worship, which proved at least to be the salvation of a remnant. These, about 40 years afterwards, sold their lands and removed to Wisconsin; and their surviving descendants, intelligent, Christian citizens, testify to Occom's labors.

We come now to our final inquiry: Where was Samson Occom buried? It is not a point upon which we can expect the testimony of an inscribed gravestone, for he died too early, and unfortunately no chronicler has left a definite record. But with the information we now have we shall surely agree that he was buried with his kindred. When Occom moved to Brothertown in 1789 he had a lot which his Indian parishioners had cleared for him and undoubtedly a house, and this was near his son-in-law, Anthony Paul, who was upon lot 10 in the survey of 1795. John Tuhie had lot 11, and it was upon his land that the log school house was built about that time. All the later settlers located in the valley near what is now Deansville. But this was four years after the founding of the town and seven after the first settlers had arrived, and during that time death had not been idle. As it was the first intention to have a center at David Fowler's on the hill, lots 105 and 119, near Elijah Wampy's lot 117, as they worshiped in Fowler's barn for several years, intending to build a meeting house there, where it would be accessible to the Stockbridge branch of the congregation, it is altogether probable that they early located a burial ground near the place, according to the custom in New England. After the town was established in the valley and the dissensions arose, there was a reason why those who had been bitter against Fowler should not be buried on his land, and so the early cemetery would become a family burial place.

faSamson Occom died at New Stockbridge or Tuscarora, Saturday, July 14,

1792. He had lived there but a few months. Mr. Love here read two accounts of Occom's death, one given in Prime's history of Long Island and copied in Sprague's Annals, and the other from the Connecticut Gazette. Rev. Samuel Kirkland preached the funeral sermon. A Mohegan should not rest away from his own, from their homes and their graves, so it must have been that the body of this Indian Moses was borne up the hill and laid beside his own dust.

On the 20th of June, 1893, a visit was made to Brothertown to find this burial ground, which had been supposed to be near David Fowler's house. This farm is now owned by Andrew Weir, who draws water from the well which David Fowler dug, and which marks the place where the first house in the town stood. In the edge of the woods, which was a grove 100 years ago, a burial ground was found where there are more graves than may at first appear. The woodsman's sled has broken off the tops of a row of gravestones, and unmarked graves have been somewhat leveled, save in the outer circle, where larger mounds indicate some burials after the Indian fashion. The last 50 years would probably have swept away all notice of the place, had it not been that the Fowlers, before they moved to Wisconsin, years after David Fowler's death, and so long after his wife's death that they had forgotten the day of the month she died, raised a white marble stone and enclosed a little space about with a rude fence. None who chance to pass that way pause to honor the most faithful of Indian friends, the first settler of Brothertown. They knew naught of him and only read the inscription: "David Fowler, died March 31, 1807, aet 72 years. Hannah, wife of David Fowler, died August, 1811, aged 64 years." Knowing as we now do the story of these two lives, Samson Occom and David Fowler, how they were associates as minister and convert, teacher and pupil, missionary companions, allies in strife and friends in peace; above all as brothers bound by one they loved devotedly, it must be that the dust of him who was the glory of the Indian nation now sleeps in one of those neglected and unmarked graves.

In conclusion Mr. Love said: "Gentlemen of the Onelda historical society—At the memorial services on the reinterment of Isaac Paris, the melodious voice of one of your members from College Hill, which I have been taught to heed from my youth uttered these words: 'After this day's memorial has been completed an effort should be made to find the lost grave of Rev. Samson Occom, whose fame as a fervid Indian preacher lives in the early history and traditions of Onelda county.' This was the seed, and if it shall seem to you to have brought forth any results, I have but discharged a duty in yielding to you the harvest."

