

## History of The Town of Grove

GROVE, lying on the north border of the county east of the center, was incorporated as Church Tract, March 8, 1827, the territory coming from Nunda. It assumed the name of Grove in 1828, and included the territory of Granger until April 18, 1838. It is surrounded, north by Livingston county, east by the same county and the town of Burns, south by Birdsall and west by Granger. Grove contains 21,070 acres of land. The surface is rough, hilly, with several valleys and ridges. The soil is a gravelly loam in the valleys and a clay loam with hardpan subsoil on the hills. The shipment of products, largely dairy ones, was greatly facilitated by the proximity of both the Erie and Central New York and Western railroads; each having about five miles of track in the town. It was described as being a purely agricultural town, with no great historical features, no manufacturing and a decreasing population, which the census gives as 623 in 1840, 1,154 in 1850, 1,139 in 1860, 1,056 in 1870, 1,125 in 1880 and 954 in 1890.



The settlers of early Grove and Swains were typically Yankee-New England stock. John White was the first settler on the Nunda Church Tract. After cutting his way through the wilderness from Nunda, John built the first civilized residence, a log home, in the town when he settled on a lot in May of 1818. The following year another pioneer braved the wilderness settling on a lot that later became a part of the Town of Grove.

The first annual meeting, for Church-Tract (now the Town of Grove) was held on April 3, 1827 at the home of John Dillars.

The town's first store was opened by settlers Thayer and Smith in 1825 and an inn was opened by Henry Andrews in 1828. Between the late 1820's and 1870's, settlers farmed and the town flourished with the building of taverns, sawmills, a cheese factory, several churches and school houses.

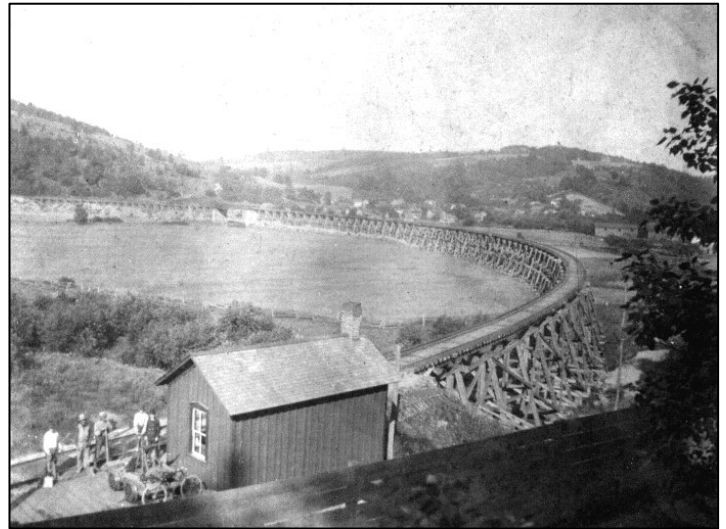
Grove for years was quite famous as the residence of Fredrick Decker, "the Ossian giant". He was born in Geneseo, NY on May 9, 1836, son of John B. and Christiana Decker, people of slightly more than medium size. He, however, grew to a height of 6 feet, 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches with a weight of 300 to 350 pounds. Fred Decker, a lumberman by trade, went on exhibition with the P.T. Barnum shows for several years. The "Ossian giant" made his home in Grove in 1877 and was later laid to rest in the Swain Hill Rd. cemetery after his death on March 21, 1886.

The Hamlet of Swains evolved as the main business center in the Town of Grove. Farms and factories, as well as feedmills, sawmills, and a general store, were some of the businesses operating in Swains during the late 1800's and early 1900's. Train depots were instrumental in providing transportation for both goods and people to and from the area.

In 1852, the Hamlet was named Swainsville after one of the very first settlers, Mr. Samuel Swain, who started a lumber business soon after his arrival. Many other pioneers followed Mr. Swain and settled in Swainsville. Mr. Adison Seager owned and operated a sawmill that was located east of the Shawmut railroad culvert. He was prominent in political affairs and held many town offices. A second sawmill stood on the bank of the New York, Lake Erie and Western Railroad and was owned and operated by Harry Shaw. Some other businesses of mention were the Old Headache Tavern, the Geibel Hotel, a broom handle and a cradle finger factory.

After the railroad came, business started booming for the pioneers. A large depot and dwelling house was erected where every train would stop to load their engines with wood. The wood was kept dry in a large shed on the west side of the crossing. The wood was hauled to this shed from a wood yard located where the church now stands. A large water tank was located near the crossing that furnished water to these trains as well.

The Allegheny Central Railroad began in May 1881 and found its nickname the "Shawmut" which later formed the Shawmut Line in November 1881. The railroad ran from Swain to Angelica, between Perkinsville and Belfast. The Shawmut fell into hard times in 1936 and was later discontinued in March 1947. Parts of the "Horseshoe Bend" can still be seen today in Swain.



In 1947, Swain Ski Slopes opened for business in Grove. The ski area was a dream of Bina and Dave Robinson's; Bina being an avid skier. After being discharged from the military, Dave and Bina moved to Rochester, NY where Dave held a position at Eastman Kodak Co. On weekends and in their spare time, they searched the surrounding countryside for a suitable piece of property and decided to purchase 40 acres in the Hamlet of Swain. Their investment flourished over the years, changing ownership in the mid-70's when Dave decided to retire from the ski business. The Robinsons' initial \$800 property expense burgeoned into a multi-million dollar business that for years was one of the largest single sales tax generating enterprises in Allegany County.

