

# The Story of Mayfield

ERIC CLOSE, TOWN AND VILLAGE HISTORIAN

FOURTH ISSUE - AUTUMNAL RETROSPECTIVE - OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER 2024



## A TALE OF TWO ... WATER TOWERS

PHOTO BY DOUG SIEG, OCT. 2024

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW. A RARE TIME IN HISTORY AS THE OLD WATER TOWER LOOKS UPON ITS REPLACEMENT.

Apparently, a picture is worth about a thousand words or so. But sometimes it doesn't even take one word to invoke the feeling of nostalgia. An image, smell, taste, or sound can teleport us directly into our memories. And just for one fleeting moment, we can feel young again. So, what are our memories worth? A thousand words? A million bucks?

No and No. They are *priceless*.

The Great Fire of May 18, 1922, in the Mayfield Village started from the backfire of an old Metz automobile being worked on. It destroyed nine structures on the block bounded by W. Main St, Green St, First Ave and School Street. Gasoline and oil in Donlon's garage helped the fire spread, supplemented by strong winds.

The fire resulted in a new water system for the village, including the construction of a water storage tower.

### In This Edition:

- Photographic Correspondence
- Survey Project
- Ghost of The Past – *Pinckneyville*
- Living History – *The Mayfield Patent*
- Sacandaga Valley – *Summer House Point*



**RICE HOMESTEAD, APRIL 1936**

Come take a step back in time at  
The Rice Homestead! We look  
forward to seeing you!

**Bob Suits**  
*President,*  
**Mayfield Historical Society**  
Rice Homestead  
328 Riceville Road  
Gloversville, NY 12078

## MAYFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Mayfield Historical Society at the Rice Homestead Museum: a year in review. We had great singers and speakers that came to entertain and educate the public on different subjects at the Mayfield Presbyterian Church with awesome attendance by the public. The historic Rice Homestead's careful maintenance continues. Better drainage in basement will hopefully take care of spring run-off water problem. Also, a beam in the basement got added support. We had a new sign erected with a flower box around the base along Route 30. More brush and dead trees long the fence line was cleared to get better exposure along Route 30. There will be more to clear in Spring. The little porch roof on the South side is done and we added gutter guards to gutters so the house roofing project is done. The flower gardens looked AWESOME.

Inside the house a painting of Jane Smith Gridley, great, great, great grandmother of the Hartman family, was donated by the Hartman's, relatives of Oliver Rice. Gridley's family are direct descendants of Thomas Rogers who sailed over on the Mayflower in 1620. In the Victorian parlor room is a book area with older books from the early 1800's and one in particular "After Ninety Years", signed by the author, Edwin Wilbur Rice, grandson of Ebenezer Rice, son of Oliver. Also, a book on Rev. Elisha Yale, a founding father of Gloversville. History buffs, come take a look next time you visit our book collection.

2025 is here and we are planning for another great year at the Rice Homestead which is open June through August and special events in October and December. Keep an ear or an eye out for more great speakers and entertainers this coming season. Many thanks to all the volunteers and public for supporting us. If you would like to get involved, please contact us on Facebook or email –

[Mayfieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:Mayfieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

Bob Suits, President

"Like" us at

[www.facebook.com/ricehomestead!](https://www.facebook.com/ricehomestead!)

***Would you like to be interviewed for a town history project?***

*As your historian, it is an important part of my job to not only share our local history, but to preserve the present. Capture details about your life in Mayfield to be stored in our historical archives. Preserve a piece of yourself for generations to come!*

*Generations of our ancestors are forgotten. Their pictures have nothing written on the back. Their stories, memories and likeness have all faded with time, and all that remains is a gravestone. Some gravestones are faded beyond legibility—but some of our ancestors don't even have a marked gravesite. There are many abandoned, unmarked graveyards in the mountains here in town, and everyone buried there is forgotten. Don't let yourself be forgotten.*

*I will be placing forms in the entryway of town hall. The form is one page, double sided, and titled "FACES OF MAYFIELD."*

*For more information, send an email to [historian@mayfieldny.org](mailto:historian@mayfieldny.org) or get ahold of me, Eric Close, through Facebook, or call (518) 774-0703*



The old Anthony Pond. The road at center went over the hill to Riceville. The road was later graded and became State Highway NY-30.

## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

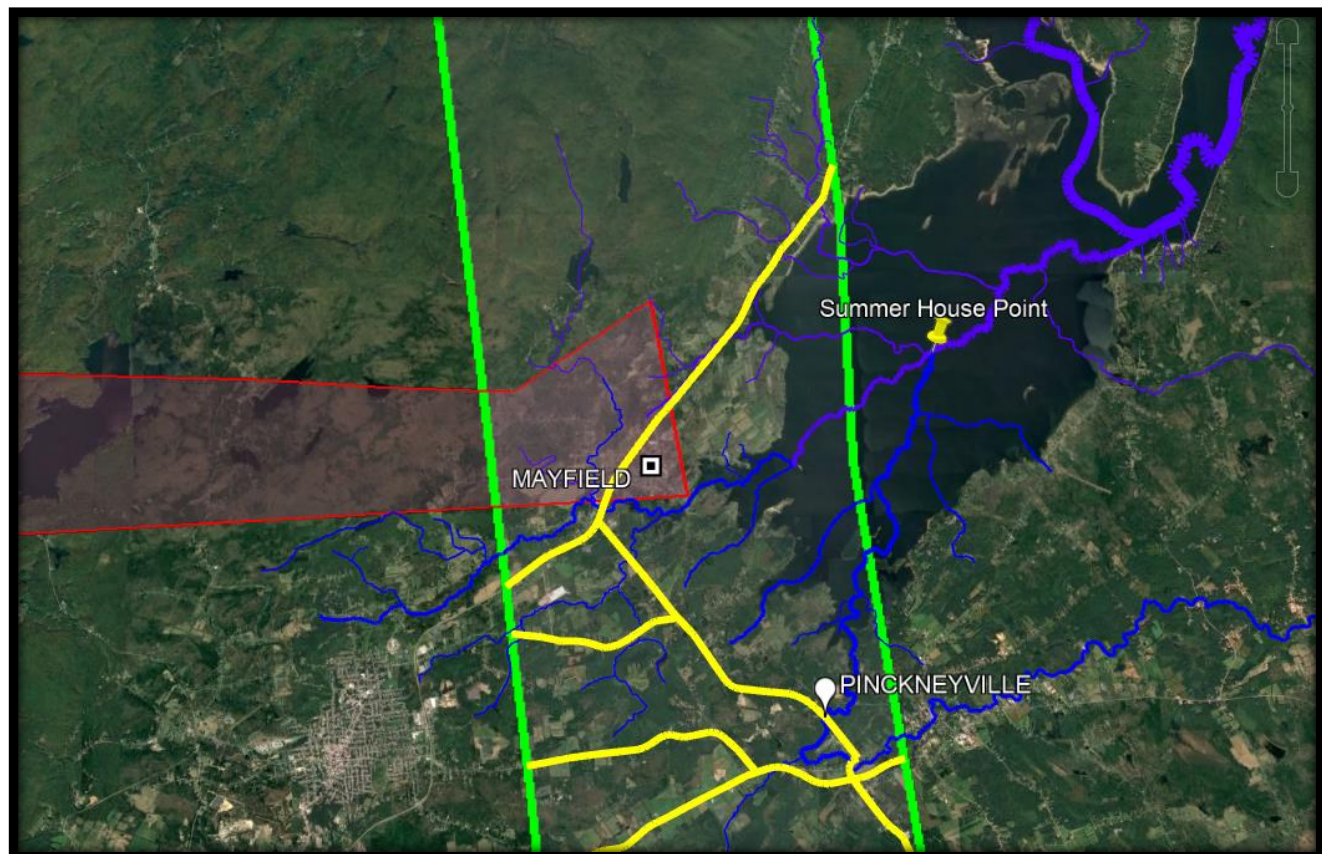


ERIC CLOSE  
MAYFIELD TOWN HISTORIAN

IF YOU ARE NOT ON FACEBOOK, YOU CAN FIND SOME OF MY WORK PUBLISHED ON THE MAYFIELD TOWN WEBSITE. I PUBLISH A WEEKLY MEMORIAL ON THE FACEBOOK PAGE, IN HONOR OF A CITIZEN OF MAYFIELD WHO HAS PASSED AWAY. YOU CAN FIND THESE ON THE HISTORY SECTION OF THE TOWN WEBSITE, UNDER THE LINK OF "[Town Historian's Digital Archives](#)" THE LINK TO THE WEEKLY MEMORIALS CAN BE FOUND AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND HONORED IN THIS MANNER, PLEASE CONTACT ME. – [HISTORIAN@MAYFIELDNY.ORG](mailto:HISTORIAN@MAYFIELDNY.ORG)

(518) 774-0703



## Mayfield's History Tour FALL 2024

Find out where Mayfield got its name—the Mayfield Patent (Red) was a roughly 16,000 acre tract of land granted by the crown in 1770. On the southern end of town, the long lost community of Pinckneyville is examined; and we look beneath the waters of the Sacandaga Reservoir at “Summer House Point.”

# A Ghost of the Past

## PINCKNEYVILLE

If you were born within the last 100 years, there is a very good chance that you've never heard of "Pinckneyville." Pinckneyville was, for a brief period in the middle-1800s, a small hamlet that prospered on the Kenneytto Creek, just north of Vail's Mills on the old state road (NY-30).

Where the Kenneytto Creek winds and twists on its transition to the Great Sacandaga Lake, some evidence of civilization presents itself upon the shallow creek bed. The remnants of an old dam can still be found nearly 125 years after its construction.

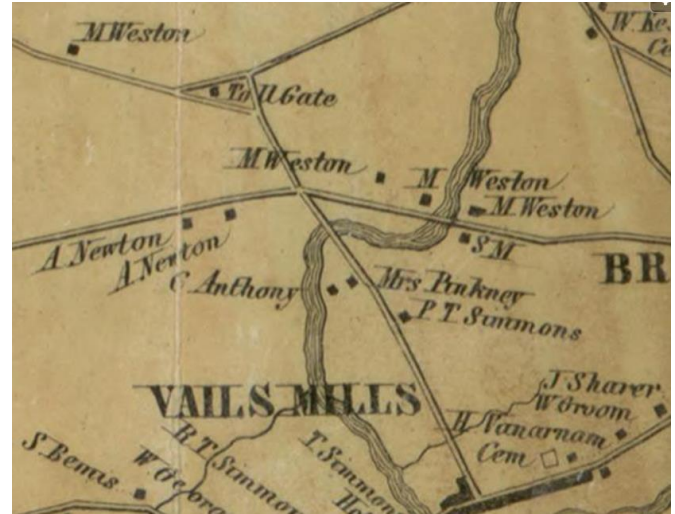
After the Revolutionary War, several families of Dutch Colonial descent began to move to the Mayfield area from the Hudson Valley. These settlers brought their culture, traditions, and church. A Dutch Reformed Church was established in 1793, and fully organized as the Low Dutch Reformed Protestant Congregation of Mayfield and Fonda's Bush the following year. The congregations split and in 1799, the Fonda's Bush sect reorganized as The Dutch Reformed Protestant Congregation of New Harlem. They built a church in 1800, and a graveyard was established, now known as the Vails Mills Cemetery. With this influence, the old Dutch settlers continued to flock to Mayfield.

In 1818, Cornelius Leversee—with his wife and 10 children—purchased land on the "Fonda's Bush Creek (Kenneytto) in the Sacandaga Patent and relocated to the town of Mayfield. On the east bank of the creek, Leversee built a small dam and a sawmill near what was once known as the "Spook Bridge." That bridge was on the old Gloversville-Broadalbin Road, which followed Turkey Farm Rd to Sandhill Road, then on this old road over the bridge, crossing the Kenneytto Creek, and connecting with Second Ave in the Village of Broadalbin. Mr. Leversee moved from there to a farm on the east end of Sand Hill Road, where he died in 1835. That farm was later acquired by Archibald Newton's family, descendants of Scottish settlers brought to Johnstown by Sir William Johnson. After the Leversee family left the Kenneytto, the mill property was acquired by Marcellus Weston, an affluent property owner and the second judge of Fulton County.



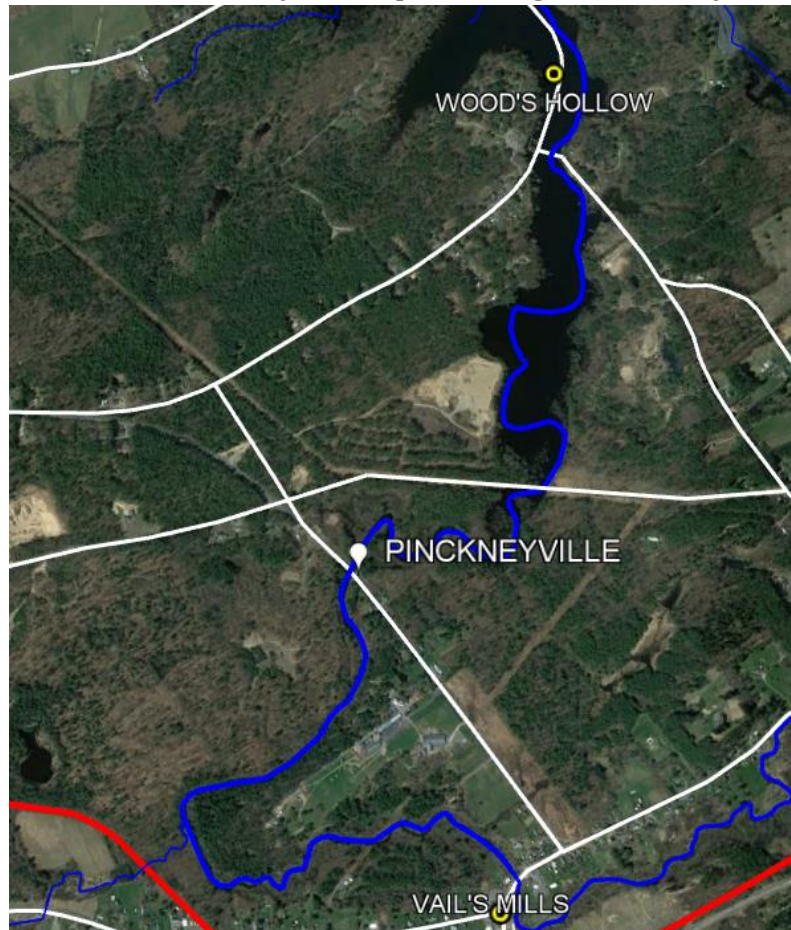
*Pinckneyville's location within the Town of Mayfield. Google Earth*

In October of 1852, A widow, Mary Pinckney, and her four sons: Barnabas, George, Henry, and James purchased a small farm just north of Vails Mills. The Pinckney's farm itself wasn't prominent in terms of production. On their 17 acres, they had a couple of cows, pigs and horses, each and grew a little bit of corn. However, the family was active in various industries, public affairs, politics, and their influence attached their name to the area as Pinckneyville. Mrs. Mary Pinckney died in 1862, and after which the farm was taken over by her son, Barnabas, who operated it until his death in 1895. Finally, Darius Pinckney inherited the farm from his father, where he lived in affluence for the next 35 years until he became infirmed and later taken by death in 1931.



Excerpt from *Map of Fulton County, New York: From Actual Surveys, 1856*. Digital Library of Congress.

Also in the early 1850s, Cornelius Anthony moved from his family homestead in Anthonyville and set up a blacksmith shop of his own on the Kenneyetto Creek, behind the Pinckney estate. He operated this business there for at least a decade, and by 1865, had packed up and moved to Schenectady. Leversee's old sawmill at the Kenneyetto's Spook Bridge in Pinckneyville operated for nearly a century. With the death of



Close-up of the Pinckneyville area, showing the paths of the old roads (white), F.J.&G. Railroad (red), and Kenneyetto Creek (blue).

Judge Marcellus Weston in 1867, the old bachelor willed his entire estate to an orphanage in Albany.

The mill, properties, and the road to the Spook Bridge are not shown in the 1868 Atlas of Fulton County. This suggests either the area was sold off and demolished after Judge Weston's death or was in a long decay leading up to it. What little remained of Pinckneyville at that time continued in obscurity, overshadowed by nearby Vail's Mills to the south and Closeville to the north.

In January of 1900, excitement at Pinckneyville stirred up on the banks of the Kenneyetto Creek, as the Broadalbin Electric Company began seeking a suitable location to generate waterpower to illuminate the village of Broadalbin. They chose the site of Leversee's old mill at the Spook Bridge, and improvements to the area began that fall. The dam was to be 14 feet high and 85 feet long, flooding lands to be acquired from Mrs. Pinckney at \$20 per acre. The company entered into court proceedings to commandeer private lands to reopen the old

road to the Spook Bridge, and subsequently began erecting their power poles along this corridor. After two years of hindrances, construction was nearing completion in the spring of 1903 until a catastrophic flood washed out 36 feet of the dam and essentially ruined the project. C.F. Lehman, treasurer of the Broadalbin Electric Co., expressed the intent to replace the washed-out section with a wooden structure, but the relevance of this project subsequently faded into oblivion.

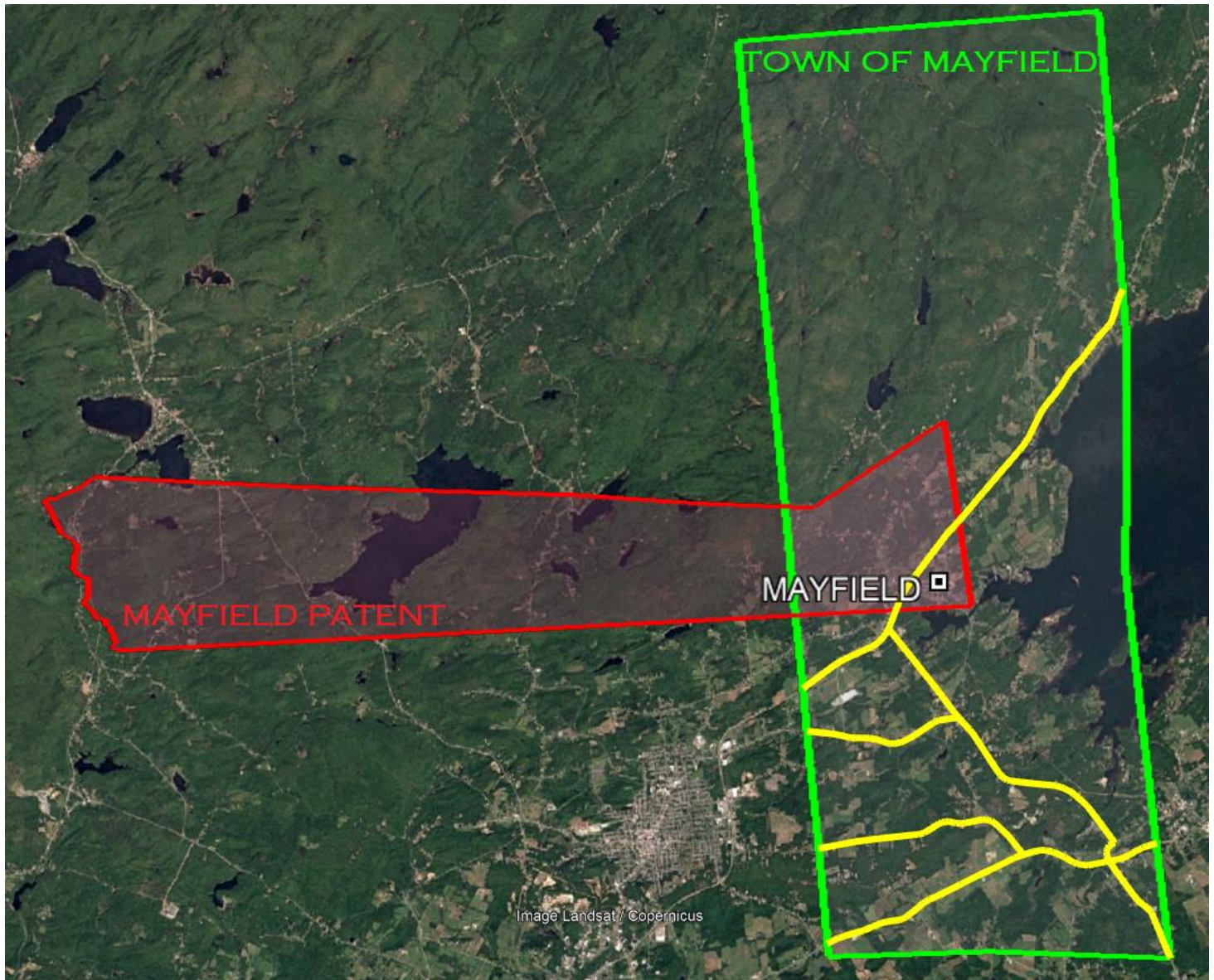
Once wide-open fields, the area around Pinckneyville has grown back into woodlands. The last mentions of Pinckneyville in newspapers were made in the 1930s, as the old site near the Spook Bridge was a popular site for many local area clubs, church groups, scouts, etc., to have an afternoon picnic and enjoy the outdoors. The old structures there may have long since decayed, but a little piece of Pinckneyville's story will be carried on.



*The remnants of the old dam built by the Broadalbin Electric Company on the Kenneytto Creek, just after 1900. Photo courtesy of Grant Rauch, Autumn 2024.*

# LIVING HISTORY TOUR

## THE PLACE WE LIVE: WHAT'S IN A NAME?



*Modern satellite imagery showing an overlay of the Mayfield Patent (Granted 1770) relative to the Town of Mayfield, (established 1794, at present size 1860)*

Our hometown holds a significant role in our lives. Its name is printed alongside our own names on all legal documents that pinpoint our existence throughout our lives. The name of this place is adorned across the jerseys of our local youth as they represent our hometown in gymnasiums and on athletic fields across this state; and the name will be intertwined with their lives as well.

There are some noteworthy stories of how some of our nearby communities earned their names. The village of Fonda was named after the Revolutionary war hero Douw Fonda, who was brutally killed by the raiding parties of Sir John Johnson on May 22nd, 1780. Previously that settlement was known as "Caughnawaga," which was a Mohawk term used to describe the rapids on the river.

Canajoharie and Sacandaga are also Mohawk names attached to places which are still used today. The former has a translation of "the pot that washes itself" describing the way the rapids whirl around a pothole in the creek there, and the latter referring to the lowlands of that valley inundated by the annual spring floods means "drowned lands." The town of Broadalbin was named by Daniel McIntyre, an immigrant and settler who proclaimed those lands to be named for his birthplace of Breadalbane, Scotland.

A great story of the town of Bleeker relates that two woodsmen were lost while on a hunt. Trying to gain a perspective on their location, one of the men climbed a tree. "How's it look up there?" Called the other man.

"Bleak." He said. The man in the tree called back down, "How's it look down there?"

"Bleaker."

This was obviously a joke, and in truth, it was named for Barent Bleeker, an original patentee of much of the land that comprises that town.

### ***But how did Mayfield get its name?***

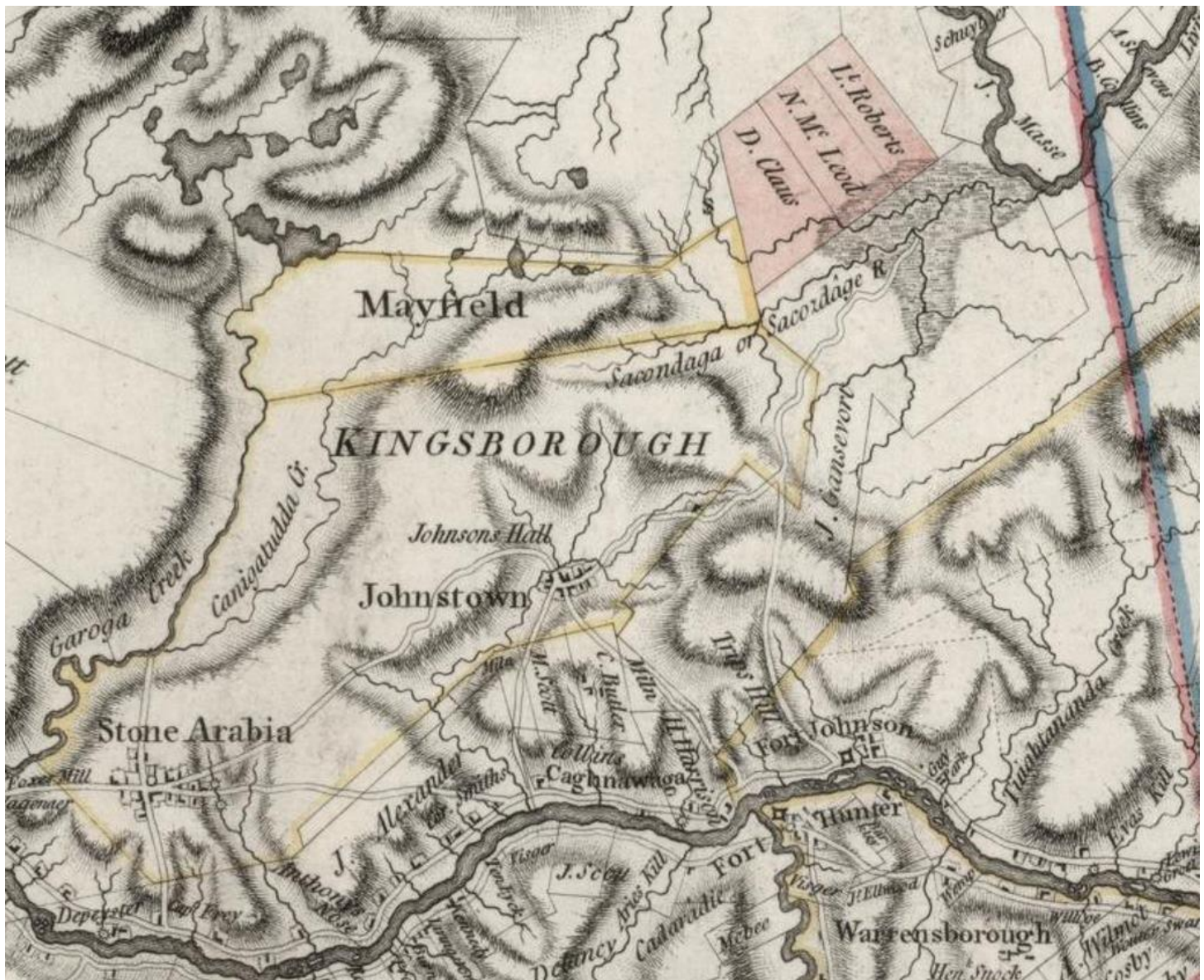
The plains and rolling hills that lay between the Sacandaga valley and the mountains have been called Mayfield for a very long time. The town of Mayfield itself was established in 1793 and fully organized the following year. Prior to that, this area was a part of the town of Caughnawaga, a territory that covered the present towns of Johnstown, Mohawk, Amsterdam, Perth, Mayfield, Broadalbin, Northampton, and extended in that breadth all the way north to Canada. But, even prior to the town's formation, there was a small community of pioneers living in the wilderness on the edge of civilization, which was known as the Mayfield Settlement.

The name came from the Mayfield Patent, which was a 16,000 acre (25 square mile) tract of land established during the late colonial period. It spanned 13 miles west to east, from Caroga Creek just southwest of the Caroga lakes to the eastern side of the Mayfield village. Around the same time that Sir William Johnson and his agents were having patents granted in their names, Francis Beard and thirteen of his associates in London petitioned the Lords of Trade and Plantation to have lands granted to them. Thus, a Royal Patent, dictated to be immediately north of the Kingsborough Patent in New York Colony, was granted to them under the name of "Mayfield," on June 27, 1770.

### ***Why "Mayfield?"***

The origin of the name is still shrouded in mystery. Not enough is known about the 14 original patentees to ascertain a valid origin story for the name of the Mayfield Patent, however some speculation exists instead. One or more of the patentees may have been native to one of two English villages named Mayfield. One is located in East Sussex, about 50 miles south of London; and another in Staffordshire, about 150 miles northwest of London. Another theory mentions the patent was named in honor of a Royal Navy officer of that era, but no such Ensign, Captain or Admiral Mayfield has been found in the records. Regardless of the origin, this is our name and has taken on a new story and new meaning.

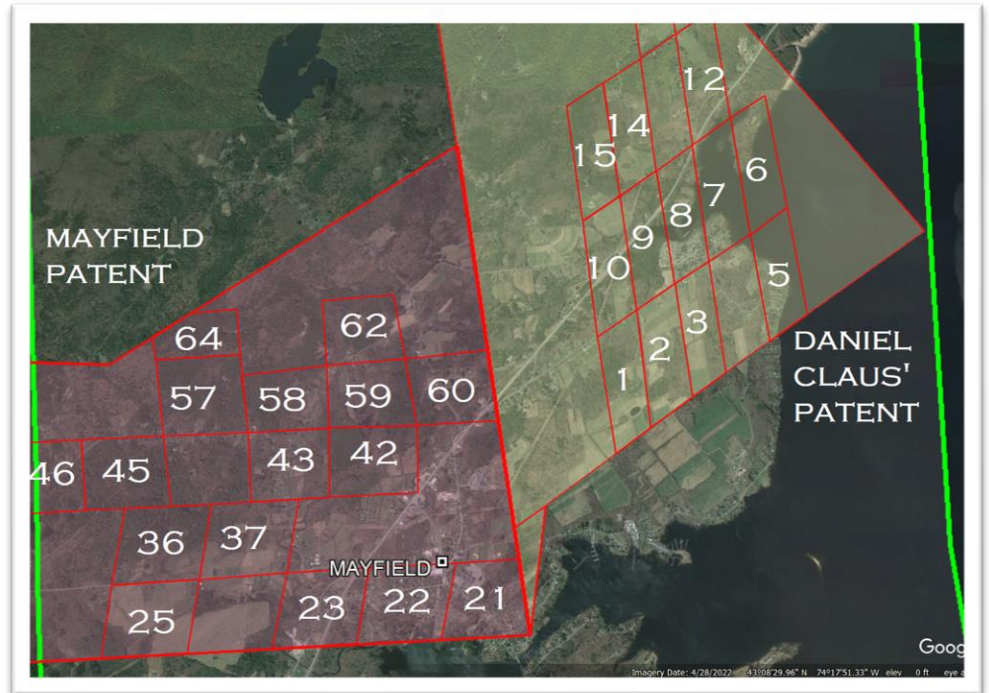
When the patent was granted, the land was a part of the expansive territory of Albany County, which theoretically extended to the Pacific Ocean. At that time the area was populated mostly by the descendants of the Dutch inhabitants of the Hudson Valley, but also contained the Iroquois Confederacy and Scottish immigrants brought by Sir William Johnson. The rising tensions and hostilities in New England began to beckon many of them to the frontier. In 1772, Tryon County was split off and established from Albany County, and its seat was made at Johnstown, a settlement built by Sir William Johnson from wilderness ten years prior. Around that time, intrepid pioneers described as "enterprising Yankees" came to the frontier and settled in the southeast corner of the Mayfield patent. This is presently the area including the village and two miles north and west. The remainder of the Mayfield Patent extended into the mountains and was not settled until after the revolution. Those lands are now the southern portions of the towns of Bleeker and Caroga.



An excerpt from: "Chorographical Map Of The Province Of New-York" Made from actual surveys of counties, manors and patents by Claude Sauthier, Esq. By order of Major General William Tryon, engraved and published at London by William Faden, January 1, 1779. Digitally retrieved from the David Rumsey Map Collection.

The names of these early settlers were recorded in several documents dated May 25, 1774, as they appeared personally before Sir William Johnson to pay a mortgage bill. These “heads of families” and their (lot no.) are recorded as follows: John Collins (37,42,59), James Reynolds (25, 58), Samuel Bentley (62), Amasa Stephens (36), Jeremiah Bickford (57), Jonathan Canfield (60), Selah Woodworth (22), Henry McLean (69), John Reynalds (27, 43, 46), Selah Beech (45, 64), William Bradley (23), Thomas Ganong (21).

Col. Daniel Claus’s patent was granted immediately east of the Mayfield Patent on September 29, 1770. The first settlers on this tract were also recorded in that mortgage record, and are mostly of the same people. They are listed with their(lots): William Bradley (3, 18), John Collins (7, 27), Jeremiah Bickford (9, 10), Henry McLean (12), Selah Beech (5, 6), John McIntire (1, 2), and Asahel Buck (14, 15, 20). Two other patents, of Capt. Norman McLeod and Lt. Benjamin Roberts, (both agents of Sir William Johnson) were also granted in 1770, but were largely untouched until after the war.



When war came to the colonies in 1775, Sir William Johnson had been dead for a year, and was replaced by his son John, who escalated the tensions, and there was a minor skirmish in Johnstown not long after Lexington and Concord. In the Spring of 1776, Johnson and his loyalist counterparts fled the settlements of Tryon County for the safety of Canada. With this, settlement on the frontier effectively halted, and many settlements were left half empty or nearly abandoned, only the fervent patriots having remained.

The war took a heavy, heavy toll on the Mayfield Settlement. There were four raids in three years, which resulted in the brutal deaths of Pvt. Henry Kelly, Cpl. Amasa Stephens, Jacob and Samuel Dunham. It also resulted in the burning of the grist mill and the homes which the pioneers worked so hard to build. Their crops were torched and the livestock was slaughtered or chased off. Survival for these patriot pioneers was made impossible, and the settlement was abandoned.

After our independence was won, the families of Selah Woodworth, Jonathan Canfield, and Ebenezer Dunham made their return to Mayfield and began to rebuild. They were soon followed by scores of veterans and their families. The name of Mayfield earned a new meaning: **Resilience**.

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*There's a sleepy little town that sits across a well worn bridge...  
Beloved by all who've lived here. Some gone, who we dearly miss...  
There's no more treasured time to see our cherished little town...  
Than when the leaves begin to turn, and the magic changes our frowns...  
To cheerful smiles with memories, of childhood days gone by...  
When Mayfield blooms in Autumn, it brings a joyful tear to the eye...*

*Photo and poem by Terrie Zierak  
January 1st. 2025*



# The Lost Sacandaga Valley

## SUMMER HOUSE POINT

Underwater now for 94 years, Summer House Point was a well-known landmark of the Sacandaga Valley.

By the spring of 1760, Sir William Johnson came to a small knoll among vast meadows and swamps and built a summer home at the confluence of the Mayfield and Kenneyto Creeks. He shortly thereafter built a carriage

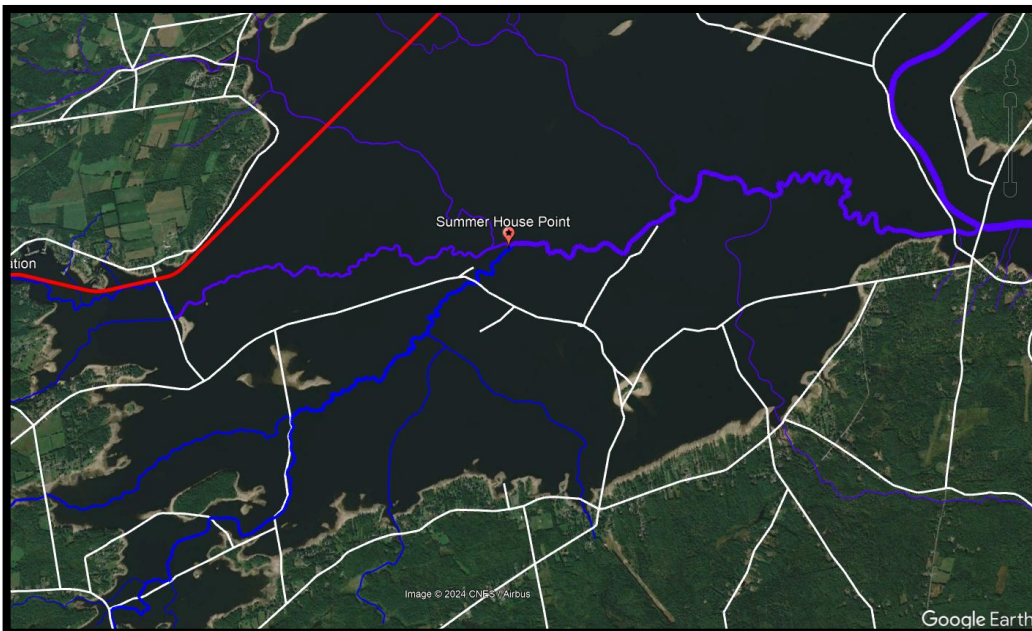
road to the edge of this swamp from his new village of John's Town, about 14 miles away. The Mohawks called these marshy lowlands the "Sagendaga," which meant drowned lands, referring to the spring floods that inundated the valley.

Sir William's summer villa, which was one story in height, was named Castle Cumberland in honor of the Duke of Cumberland, a son of King George, II. The Baronet, Johnson, spent much time at his summer home until his death in July of 1774.

With the outbreak of the American Revolution, Castle Cumberland was commandeered by Colonel John Nicholson in August of 1776 and fortified and quartered by his regiment of New York militia. At the end of that summer, the post was abandoned as the regiment continued into Tryon County. During the Loyalist Raids of 1778 and 1780, the villa was used to house prisoners of war, as the Loyalists prepared to bring

them to Canada. According to Robert W. Chambers, Castle Cumberland was burned down by the Loyalists and Mohawks in 1781.

That land sat vacant for over a century, and folklore arose about the old "Summer House Point." The Vlaie, as the swamp became known, was an endless paradise for hunters, trappers, and outdoorsmen alike. The knoll at "Summer House



Point" came into the hands of the Benedict family, who discovered human remains buried in "Indian" tradition, while digging a cellar for a house and barn.

The Benedicts ran a small farm at the point. There was a small strip of land to the west of the knoll which was arable. However, during spring floods, that land was usually submerged, and the knoll was known to become an island.

Since the Spring of 1930, this historic landmark has been submerged beneath the waters of the Sacandaga Reservoir. It is unknown how many people are still buried there, as none of the Indian burial grounds were excavated leading up to the flooding of the valley.



Summer House Point shortly after its construction north of Broadalbin in 1900. The fishermen are holding long bamboo poles often used in fishing along the Vly streams.

From Larry Hart's *Sacandaga Story, A Valley of Yesteryear*



Aerial of Summer House Point, center-right. North at top right corner. The Confluence of the Mayfield Creek (top) and Kannyetto Creek (bottom) formed Vlaie Creek, which joined the Sacandaga River at the Fish House Bridge. The road crossing the image is Vlaie Street, which connected Munsonville (Vandenburgh Point) to the present site of Sand Island, where it intersected the road between North Broadalbin and Fish House.

(1927, courtesy of HRBRD)