

THE THREE ERAS OF BUFFALO STREET.—

Era No. 1.—Or from the opening of Buffalo street in 1814, to the time of opening the Burying Ground upon it in 1822—8 years.

Measrs. Editors.—There are many unwritten histories—some that never will be written. And there are many written histories—some that ought not to have been written. Some histories call in romance to help them out, and some have romance enough in them to claim the keen attention of the mind as their detail opens out. There are many streets in our goodly city, upon whose finished and pavy edges long rows of beautiful edifices stand, with their nice proportions and embellished fronts, gracing them more than any scenery that ever was seen on a dramatic stage. And there are many, too, where families dwell—clean spread over with chaly stones, and fringed with dustless walks that are embowered in trees and scented from the aromatic gardens that lie back. And there are many which lie low in their original fens, with the added offal of other cleansing. But I have chosen only one street for my theme, and any one may do as I have done, take his pick, and write its history.

I propose to write under three eras, and believe that the history of Buffalo street, will fully warrant the reader in spending his time to read it. I cannot exactly determine when the street was opened, tho' it might have been in the fall of 1813, or spring of 1814. I well remember in the fall of 1812, that a young lad got lost in the woods between State street and Washington, and was severely punished for the anxiety he had caused his parents—and I am certain there was no street there then. Soon after the opening of the street, and at its intersection with Brown street, near Halsted Hall, it discovered the squatting place of a Dutchman, named Van Bickle. He was a giant in that day, six and a half feet high, with long muscular limbs, huge fists and head; stooped and trembled as he walked, said but little and thought much. Of his great feet it is sufficient to say, that he having bragged upon his strength once upon a time, av'ldging that he had lifted six bushels of wheat upon his shoulders while standing in a half bushel measure, the falsity of it was proved by bringing a measure, when lo! both his feet could not be got into it! The first buildings of the city were erected on Buffalo street, tho' for many years nothing was done upon it above Pittsburgh, and it is within the recollection of many, that the stone edifice now used as the Exchange Hotel, was a riddled "rookery," an open storm-catcher for many years, and that the old bathing house was a neglected and tenantless place, and proved the ruin of Doct. J. G. Wright, an enterprising and early citizen. The first "improvement" of the street was burning and grubbing out the stumps from the bridge to Pittsburgh street in 1815, which was mostly done by citizens on their own account. Roswell Habbit, Martin Clapp and Phelps Smith made early purchases near Buffalo Bridge, and early removed a hill of gravel which lay along the street in that locality. All these men died before receiving any benefit from their purchases, and some of them suffered from the pecuniary outlays.

In Oct. 1821, at a meeting of the Trustees of the village of Rochester, held at the office of M. Chapin, present M. Brown, jr. Elisha Taylor and W. Whitney, Trustees, it was voted that the lots Nos. 103 and 104, now used as a Burying Ground on Sophia street, be exchanged with Roswell Hart, for then lot No. 43 on Buffalo st. and that said lot 43, when cleared, shall be appropriated for a village burial ground. This was carried into effect in 1827, and removals of bodies then resting in the old were made to new grounds, and new interments commenced in that far-off cemetery. It will be seen that some of the old stones bear the dates of 1816-18, and I know that many were removed there whose identity as well as that of their friends has been a long time lost.

During the first eight years of the street, little was done of permanency, and few followed the Cemetery to settle near it, and few purchased upon it for investment.

In the fall of 1824, a stranger was found by a citizen near midnight, solitary on Buffalo street. He had halted near a small and rude built cottage, within which was heard in earnest and solemn pleading, a man in prayer. At the close of the voice from within, the citizen asked the stranger, why he was there? and he replied, that the street ran into the woods, and that it was a place congenial to a lover of solitude. And so it was. But our other numbers will show how that solitude was broken; what broke it, and what it cost to break it.

Yours, A. S.