

Joseph Dorr



Joseph Dorr was born in Lynne, Connecticut on July 15, 1760. At age 18 he came to the Hoosick area and found employment in the mill of Stephen Kellogg, situated on the White Creek river. He soon established fulling and carding-works in connection with the mill. The dictionary defines full “to shrink and thicken cloth (especially of wool) with moisture, heat, and pressure” Card is defined as “a machine with rollers covered with wire teeth, used to brush, clean, and straighten (fibers of wool, cotton, etc.) In preparation for spinning”

Mr. Dorr became acquainted with Issac Bull, a farmer whose land was next to the mill. He fell in love with Sarah Bull and they were married in 1778. In 1784 they moved to Hoosick Falls where he leased a farm of 280 acres from Barnardus Bratt, the Patroon of Hoosick. This land included all the water power on the north side of the river. He immediately established an extensive carding, fulling and cloth dressing works. A sawmill, flax-mill and distillery soon followed. Under his leadership Hoosick Falls soon became a place of considerable business importance.

Hoosick Falls in 1784 had only three or four families. He built a log cabin which stood near where Mechanic Street crosses the Troy & Boston track today. He left this dwelling for a comfortable frame house at the west end of the Wood foundry. In 1813, he built a brick house on the north bank of the river, above the falls. It was the first brick house in the village.

Joseph Dorr in the following years was so well respected that he held nearly every civil office in the town, and was appointed by the Governor, a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Rensselaer County. He was elected Colonel of the regiment which was called up to protect the northern frontier from the British during the War of 1812. The victory at Plattsburg reached the troops in Whitehall and the regiment returned home.

Joseph Dorr was for many years the principal business-man in the village, employing a large number of workmen. He had great rapport with his workers since he treated them with respect and friendship. He was very successful and used his wealth to help education and the church. He was the largest contributor to the erection and support of the first, and for thirty years the only meeting house in the village. He took an interest in the concerns of the village and supported the needy and destitute. In 1832, some strangers with cholera were prevented from entering the village due to fear of the disease. Col. Dorr put them up on his farm outside the village until they became better. He looked after the health, safety, and morals of the juveniles of the village. Many called him “Pappa Dorr.”

Colonel Dorr died suddenly in 1833 and is buried in the old church yard. Charles Dorr was the earliest businessman of Hoosick Falls and started the growth of this area.

The Dorr's had four children, three boys and a girl. Josephus, his youngest boy, born in 1799, married Marcia Ball of Wilmington, Vermont. They lived in the homestead and he ran the manufacturing and farms of the family until 1854, when they moved to Rockford, Ill. to spend the later part of their -life with a daughter. Milton, his second son, died in 1830. His son Seneca lived in the village and die at age 86. His daughter Hannah died young.