

TODAY'S TOWN OF EVANS: BUILT ON THE TOWN OF YESTERDAY

Evans pioneer Joseph Bennett tells us what that yesterday was like

After leaving Cold Springs and arriving at the top of the hill, I had a full view of Buffalo and Lake Erie. I just thought I never saw anything so beautiful. The village nestling at the foot of Main and two or three parallel streets. The broad and beautiful lake, a topsail schooner sailing up the bay. Weather fine, everything seemed combined to make it enchanting to me. – Joseph Bennett on his first sight of Buffalo in 1820

Joseph Bennett, who once farmed the property now known as Bennett Beach and later ran a summer resort there, was 16 years old when he arrived in WNY from Vermont, via central New York, with his parents and siblings. He would live nearly a century, witnessing the development of today's Town of Evans from wilderness to orderly agricultural villages and towns. Serving six terms as Town of Evans supervisor and one term in the state legislature, he would not be a passive observer of this development, but an enthusiastic and effective participant. Outside of WNY he was not well known, but he did something that many better-known people did not do—he kept a journal, a treasure that provides us today with an invaluable glimpse into his times. This journal is filled with details of life in the Buffalo area and beyond: transportation, commerce, farming, shipwreck, murder, birth, death—details of the process, going on throughout America, of turning wilderness into farms, villages, and cities.

Fortunately we don't have to read Bennett's journal to enjoy this look backward because local author Kevin H. Siepel has gone through it and has retold Bennett's story by integrating into it the high points only. This story extends from Bennett's days as an Erie Canal construction worker in Lockport through his adventures sailing on a stormy Lake Erie with soon-to-be-murdered John Love. It runs through his years as a Pennsylvania canal-builder, and culminates in his Town of Evans career as a businessman, public servant, farmer, builder, family man, and deacon of the First Baptist Church of Evans.

What's been said about *Joseph Bennett of Evans*:

A fascinating and highly readable portrait of our area. – Artvoice

A most enjoyable armchair tour through New York's pioneer roots. – Midwest Book Review

A thoroughly engaging story. – Western New York Heritage magazine

Eminently readable. Gives us a graphic, realistic view of the 1800s in our state. – Lockport Union-Sun and Journal

Copies of *Joseph Bennett of Evans* will be widely available for purchase through the duration of our town's Bicentennial Celebration.

Kevin Siepel, long ago an elementary school graduate of Lake Shore Central, is also the author of *Rebel: The Life and Times of John Singleton Mosby* and the Amazon bestseller *Conquistador Voices*.

