

**History of Belmont, New York**  
FROM: HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF FRANKLIN COUNTY  
AND ITS SEVERAL TOWNS  
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**CHAPTER VI**  
**BELLMONT**

The town of Belmont was erected from Chateaugay March 25, 1833, and then included all of the territory now comprising the town of Franklin. In 1838 its boundaries were extended by annexation of a strip a mile wide extending across the north end of the town, which was detached from Chateaugay. The town was named for William Bell, of the city of New York, who had been an employee of William Constable in the latter's shipping enterprises, and afterward was himself a merchant. At about the close of the eighteenth century Mr. Bell had acquired, with others, title to practically all of the lands in the northern part of the town, Mr. Bell's portion comprising about eight thousand acres, and twenty-odd years later he was accustomed to spend his summers on the property. He must have been a man of considerable means for that day, because by his will there were specific legacies of money amounting to nearly twenty thousand dollars, while the residue of the estate, other than realty, was bequeathed to a relative who supposedly would be richly remembered. Mr. Bell died in 1841.

The town was of slow development, and even yet is mostly wilderness, though largely denuded. Generally the soil is neither rich nor deep, and its surface, rocky and mountainous, does not lend itself to profitable agriculture. Even the lumbering and other industrial enterprises that have been prosecuted did not tend particularly to populate the town permanently, nor to enrich it. Miles upon miles of its forest area were destroyed for conversion into charcoal, and though, first and last, it has had many sawmills, most of them were small, and much of the timber cut within its borders went to mills elsewhere for manufacture. Neither have its many waters been utilized extensively, as in other localities, for summer resort business, except that Lower Chateaugay Lake has not been altogether neglected, and except also that in the western part of the town in comparatively recent years Indian Lake and Mountain View have had

many camps built upon their shores. Mountain View (formerly known as State Dam, a dam having been built upon the river there by the State in 1855 or 1856) was once one of the most prolific trout waters in the Adirondacks, and Indian Lake (Round Pond) was a famous hunting resort. One of the old guides used to tell that he once counted twenty-seven carcasses of deer piled at a single point on its shores, stripped of their hides, and the meat left to rot. Mountain View and Indian Lake are in close proximity, and together have perhaps a hundred cottages. In addition, there are at the former place an all-the-year-around population of forty to fifty, with a school house, a Roman Catholic church, a Protestant church, two hotels, two stores, and a number of boarding houses. An unofficial enumeration of the people in cottages and camps, including permanent residents, on one day in July, 1915, listed eight hundred and ten. Lower Chateaugay Lake, a fine sheet of water, and easily reached from Chateaugay, formerly had two small hotels, and now has one, the Banner House, formerly conducted by J. S. Kirby and now by F. H. Adams, which attracts a considerable number of guests, and has a deserved popularity. A few cottages have been built there recently. But Ragged Lake, Ingraham Pond and other waters in the town have only one or two summer camps each. Ragged Lake formerly had a small hotel, kept by J. W. Pond. The Banner House was formerly the Bellows House, which originally was a mere shack. Jonathan Bellows located in Constable more than a hundred years ago, and laid out a trapper's line from there to Chateaugay Lake. In place of the shack which he first occupied at the latter point he built a comfortable house, which his son, Lewis, subsequently enlarged and conducted as a hotel for a good many years. Guests from Montreal began to visit the place in appreciable numbers in 1837 or 1838, and after the railroad from Rouses Point to Ogdensburg was built the business increased notably. The locality was then known colloquially as the "Shategee Woods," and, except for the Saranacs, was about the only Adirondack point that outsiders sought in Franklin county. The Bellows property was sold in 1891, renovated and enlarged, and has since been known as the Banner House. A son of Lewis Bellows (Millard F.) still lives in Bellmont, and a daughter is Mrs. N. Monroe Marshall of Malone.

So far as I know, Bellmont is the only town in Franklin county for which the Legislature made special provision to induce settlement. In 1822 an act was passed which provided for granting one lot in township number ten, Old Military Tract (now in Franklin), to each and every person who within five years should clear and fence fifteen acres of such lot, erect thereon a habitable dwelling, and he there settled with his family; and also three lots to each and every person who within four years should erect and put in operation one good and sufficient grist mill within said township, and one lot to each and every person who should erect and put in operation one good and sufficient sawmill.

Among the early settlers in the eastern part of the town were Samuel C. Drew, Enoch and Paul Merrill, John Sanborn, John B. and Joseph H. Jackson, Jacob and John Otis, Jonathan Bellows, John D. Miles, Joseph, Jonathan and Noah Estabrooks and Roswell A. Weed — all locating at or near the site of the present hamlet of Chateaugay Lake. Mr. Drew was probably the first of these, in 1816, though Mr. Sanborn claimed to have preceded him, and sought to have the town called Sanborntown on this account. Some of Mr. Drew's descendants are now located in New York city, where they have made a business of moving large buildings, and have accumulated handsome fortunes. Mr. Drew came from New Hampshire, as also did several others of those named, including the Merrills. W. H. J. Drew, who became the close friend of Mr. Bell, was the first white male child born in the town. He was at one time school commissioner, and his grave is on the old homestead on the west side of Chateaugay Lake. The Merrills, or their descendants, conducted a small hotel at the foot of Lower Chateaugay Lake, and were famous fishermen with nets, and but for their operations and the use of dynamite afterward by miners at Lyon Mountain the waters thereabout would undoubtedly contain a more abundant supply of trout and whitefish. Of these latter, which are one of the finest of panfish, Mr. Merrill used to bring wagon loads to Malone something over forty years ago, and mixed with them a considerable proportion of lake trout. Mr. Merrill himself was honestly persuaded that net fishing really bettered the supply of trout, as it removed from the lake the large fish which prey upon the small fry and eat the spawn.

Gates Hoit, of Chateaugay, representing nonresident landowners, built the first sawmill in the town in 1822 or earlier, and it was soon afterward sold to John B. Jackson (afterward wood agent for the O. & L. C. R. R. for many years), who, a little later, himself built a grist mill nearby, the stones for which were cut from native boulders by John P. Miles. Mr. Miles was one of the most estimable citizens that Bellmont ever had. He acquired an interest in the Jackson mills. A grandson still resides in the town. Mr. Weed took over the Jackson and Miles mills and acquired other properties in considerable amounts, opening a hotel and enlarging the mills. A considerable part of the product of the sawmill was hauled forty miles to Champlain for Meigs & Weed of Malone. Mr. Weed. was prominent in all of the town's affairs until 1854, when he sold the mills to a Mr. Hughes of Vergennes, Vt., and removed to Plattshurgh. He was the father of Hon. Smith M. Weed, of Plattsburgh, who joined with others almost half a century afterward to establish at the place of his birth the greatest industry that the town ever possessed, if not the largest ever operated in the county. Another son was William B. Weed, who was a cavalry captain under Kilpatrick in the civil war, and then went to Australia, where he is supposed to have been murdered. Mr. Hughes did an extensive business for a time, but failed, when the mill was acquired by Erastus Meade and George W. Palmer, of Plattsburgh. Mr. Palmer withdrawing after a year or two, Samuel F. Vilas took over his

interest, and in 1869 or 1870 Gilbert L. Havens leased the mill and ran it for a year or two. Joseph Clark built and operated a sawmill in the same vicinity in 1848.

Even earlier than 1810 William Bailey, then residing at Chateaugay, dug iron ore near Chateaugay Lake until the deposit was exhausted, and manufactured it at High Falls on the Chateaugay river. In 1826 Jonathan Stearns, of Malone, leased and worked mineral lands in the same vicinity until the supply failed, and about 1875 Lewis H. Bellows and Edgar Keeler, of Chateaugay, located and worked an iron mine near the Bellows House, drawing the ore to Irona. This mine was subsequently worked by other parties also, and two separators were built in the vicinity for handling the ore.

The first store at Chateaugay Lake was built by John B. Jackson and Dr. Hiram Paddock, of Chateaugay, the business of which was managed by Elias Beman, of Chateaugay, who operated an ashery also. Other early merchants here were Charles Backus and Nahum Whipple, the latter of Malone. In 1869 Meade & Vilas erected a large store building, and conducted a mercantile business in connection with their lumbering operations.

Settlement at Brainardsville, a mile down the river, was later, and in a paper read by Mr. O. F. Chase before the Historical Society a few years ago it was stated that even as late as 1843 bear, lynx, wolves and panthers were abundant in the neighborhood. The first sawmill here was built by a man named Chamberlain, and was sold to Abel H. Miller, then of Malone; then to Fisk & Van Allen of Albany, for whom James Coates looked after the operating; then, in 1854, to Lawrence Brainard of St. Albans, Vt., who enlarged it, and also built a grist mill and a number of houses. Gilbert L. Havens was his resident manager, and in 1861 bought the properties and operated them extensively until he failed a dozen years later, when he removed to Colorado. He was a hustling, affable gentleman, and loomed large in the politics of the town. Upon his failure Mr. Brainard came again into possession, and resumed operations. In 1882, the mills having been destroyed, the sites and water powers were sold to John Hoy, who built and operated a grist mill, afterward adding to it a sawmill. The latter is still operated by the Hoy family, but on a smaller scale than of old. In 1850 Alanson Roberts of Chateaugay built an ashery, and employed a man named Cromp to run it. The place thus came to be called Crompyule, but five years later, when the first post-office was established and called Brainardsville, the hamlet assumed that name also. Smith Payne was the first postmaster. At about this time Edwin Smith built and ran, a starch factory here, which was afterward run by William S. Douglas of Chateaugay, and then by others until within a few years. There was also a sawmill on the brook, built by George Miller.

Brainardsville's first school was located to the east of the present

hamlet, on the farm of John Kenison, now owned by Robert Arnold, a half mile from the Clinton county line. Miss Eliza Merrill, daughter of Paul, was its first teacher, and Miss Olive Miles (afterward Mrs. Wm. P. Cantwell of Malone) the second. But the population began to center farther west, and this school was abandoned. A new school house was built at Brainardsville in 1854. S. F. Storrs, who was reputed to have taught school for sixty terms, was one of the first teachers there.

Early merchants were Lawrence Brainard, Matt. J. Reynolds, G. L. Havens, Oliver Young and O. F. Chase & Co. J. S. Kirby succeeded Mr. Reynolds, and was himself succeeded by Bennett & English. Jacob Taubenheimer and F. M. Hoy were also once in trade at this point.

Brainardsville consists at present of a small group of dwelling houses, a store or two, a sawmill, a creamery, a wheelwright shop, owned by W. W. Lamberton, that does considerable business, and a Methodist church. It has a gravity system of water works, established by private enterprise in 1904, which has as takers nearly all of the inhabitants.

Other early settlers, mostly in the north central part of the town, were: John and Alva Orcutt, John Richey, James Barry, George Winkley, Smith Bunker, Marcus, Elijah and Charles E. Heading, Earl Howe, James Smith, Joseph, John and William Williamson. The last named was accidentally shot and killed by a child in a hotel in Malone in 1825. Mr. Howe died in 1884, and he used to tell that at the time he located, about 1830, there were only four or five residences, hardly more than huts, between Malone and Chateaugay Lake, and that it was a twenty hours' trip to Malone and return. Alva Orcutt and sons, William C. and Harry P., operated a starch factory (which had been built by Meigs & Wead of Malone) and a sawmill near their farm, five miles from Malone village, and Mr. Barry, who remained in the town only a short time, removed to Malone, and located on the South Bangor road. He was the father of Mrs. F. P. Kilburn and Mrs. Thomas Cantwell of Malone. Mr. Winkley became probably the most important farmer in Bellmont. and was a pioneer breeder in this county of fineblooded cattle and Norman horses. The Headings were extensive farmers, sturdy men, and leaders in town affairs. Sherman J. Heading, son of Elijah, still lives in Bellmont and is one of its foremost citizens. Bunker Hifi, which one who has climbed it does not readily forget, was named after Smith Bunker, whose farm was located on it. Descendants of Mr. Thurber, Mr. Smith and the Williamsons are yet living in the town, and are factors in its affairs. A mile or so above the Orcutt mills on Trout river Charles Ring and John Monk built a sawmill, which they sold in 1854 to Samuel Voorhis from Elmira, and which was run later by Shepard & Jackson of Malone, O. W. Moody and David F. Field, Wallace H. Jones and Henry Bassett, John Yhipps, and finally by Buel L. Foote; and a mile still farther up the stream Daniel Buell had a mill — afterward owned by Elisha Hare, then by Miles N. Dawson and Orville Moore of Malone, and still later