

## Samuel Gregory Boyd

6/15/1843 – 6/20/1934

Plot 7 Lot 21

Samuel Gregory Boyd was born in North Bolton on what is now called Federal Hill. His father was Rufus Boyd, the son of Sergeant Samuel Boyd a minuteman in the Revolutionary War and one of the first settlers of Bolton. His mother was Eliza Catlin Goodman who was the daughter of Eleazer Goodman and his wife Betsy who came to Bolton from Hadley, Mass in 1800.

When Samuel was four years old his father traded his farm in Bolton for a six room brick house near Peck and Elm Streets in Glens Falls which was located near the home of James Morgan. Rufus Boyd opened a slaughter house and meat market away from the dwelling houses on upper Glen Street.

Samuel lived at home until he was 23 years old when he married Catherine Maria TenEyck from Coxsackie, New York who was the daughter of Peter TenEyck and Catherine Hurnino. Samuel and Catherine ended up living with his parents at 148 Glen Street until they purchased seven acres of land and a home on Chester Street where they pastured cows and had an “inner city” farm. Sam opened a stationery store called S. G. Boyd Bookseller and Stationer in the Glens Falls Opera House building at 13 Warren Street. With his mother as clerk they specialized in wallpaper, window shades and school books.

Harlan, Samuel’s brother went to fight in the War Between the States and was wounded in the first Battle of Bull Run resulting in his being captured by the confederates. Harlan died as a result of his wounds while in captivity. Samuel and Catherine named their son who was born in 1869 after Harlan. Harlan only lived until 1900 when he died from Typhoid Fever and Pneumonia at age 31.

### Harlan Boyd’s Grave stone

Samuel worked as a painter, paperhanger, Post Office Clerk, Accountant and by 1880 he was an overseer at a shirt factory. Catherine and Samuel lived a happy life in their Chester Street home until Catherine died on March 21, 1914 at the age of 70. By this time Samuel was retired so he decided to write his memories for



his children and grandchildren to enjoy. The end result of his writing was a booklet entitled "In the Days of Old Glens Falls - As I Remember It" that was published by the Glens Falls Zonta Club.



The booklet has been enjoyed by all who have read it ever since. Also Samuel wrote a column for the Glens Falls newspapers until his death on June 20, 1934 at the age of 81.

Some of Samuel's stories will follow including his favorite which is about the Underground Railroad in Glens Falls.

#### **Samuel Boyd's grave stone**

#### **Glens Falls and Slavery**

Lincoln was elected and soon the Civil war was on. Before this the fugitive slave law was in force, compelling anyone called on by an officer to aid in capturing a runaway slave. Many in Glens Falls did not like that and the Village became a station on the so-called Underground Railroad, which aided any fugitive slave to reach the Canadian border and freedom. Many of our prominent citizens knew all the ropes and helped pull them. A personal item here will explain something of the system. I went out one winter morning to feed our cow. When I went up to the hay loft I saw pushed out from under the hay a big pair of shoes and heard a powerful snore. To say I was frightened is stating it mildly. I rushed into the house and told Mother what I had seen and heard. I was straightaway set in a chair, with the admonition not to say a word about it, and not leave the room all day. Twice during the day I saw father take out food in a pail to the barn, and as evening darkened he drove into the yard with a long sleigh loaded with bags, opened the barn door and drove in. Soon he came out, the load apparently the same. He was gone until the third day at night, when he came home. Meantime, I was told all about it, and was so impressed that I never mentioned it until slavery was no more. Father had two slaves in that load, whom he delivered to a Quaker in Swanton, Vt., and the next trip landed them over the boarder in Canada.

Another incident: There was a colored barber, John VanPelt, himself a free man. His wife was a fugitive slave. She had been a fugitive away from her slave home for fifteen years and she confidently thought all traces of her were lost. There were three children, which according to the law were slaves because the mother was. Then came a rumor in town that her former master had learned where she was. One morning Add Stoddard, whom some of you may remember, and I were skating on the sidewalk. A man with a

heavy fur coat got off the stage at the corner of Park Street and came up to me. "My son" he said, "can you tell me where John VanPelt lives?" "Oh yes," I said, and started to show him, when Add roughly brushed me aside, and said, "He don't know where he lives. I will show you." It was a facer to me, and by the time I had recovered Add had the man back to the corner and was directing him to Jay Street, Where a colored family lived. VanPelt lived on School Street. The man left for Jay Street and Add left for home and father. He had heard the rumor talked of at home, and Dr. Stoddard was one of the underground railroad agents. In less than one hour the VanPelt mother and children were in a closed borough and on the way to safety. VanPelt sold his shop and rejoined his family in Prescott, Canada. There were other incidents, but these two show the extreme state of the feelings against slavery at that time. Those underground railroad agents and helpers were just as great lawbreakers as the bootleggers are now, but with different motives and justification.

### **Glimpses of a Boy's Life**

The boys of Glens Falls were of the regular boy type. Any newcomers were put through their paces before being accepted as "regular fellers." Two English lads, brothers, direct from Old England, furnished a large amount of fun for us. One particular stunt they did was to go down to the canal, at the old roll-way swimming place, and take a plunge. We used to join in and did it every morning until it got to cold for us, but they continued and when the latter part of November came, just before the canal level was drawn, when the water was cold, with ice beginning to form along the shore, they went down as usual. Ben was ready first and plunged in. As he came up, tom on the bank says, "How is it?" "B-b-balmy," say Ben.

Cooper's Cave at the flat rock was a great point of interest for the boys. It was also of interest to the tourist and the boys earned a dime acting as guides.

Sherman's Grove, where Grove Avenue now is, was a favorite meeting place for us. Picnics, political speeches and Fourth of July celebrations were held there. There was a fine stand of pine trees. A little brook ran through its edge and crossed Glen Street at Marion Avenue. I have caught trout from it many times. It now runs underground through pipes and emerges north of Thomson Avenue.

### **Water Supply**

Our water supply for fire purposes was very poor – wells and private cisterns – so large cisterns were built, one in Bank Square under where the Silent Policeman stands, one in front of the Presbyterian Church and one in front of the Baptist Church. They were filled from the church roofs and the hotel roof. That was our water supply until the present waterworks were installed.

There was a stiff fight to get the money voted to build the system. Many contended that the water would never reach the village and have any force. One man said he could drink all that would come through a two-inch pipe in front of his place. He kept a hotel at the Canal Bridge. His name was Bitely. It chanced that the first fire after the work was done was a small store over the canal bridge. The firemen were ignorant of the vast power of the stream, and when the hose was laid the hydrant man turned on the water rapidly. The hydrants were fully opened with I think, 21 turns of the handle. Before he had that many done, the hose was writhing like a huge snake, and you could not get men enough to hold it. The stream on the building tore out the windows, sash and all, drove a door in the gable off its hinges into the room. Some man hollered above the noise and invited Mr. Bitely to come and have a drink.

### **Visit of the Circus**

The annual visit of the circus to Glens Falls was a great event, especially to the boys. The circuses always traveled by horse power, and always came to Glens Falls from Saratoga. It was a great time for the boys, for often the elephants which belonged to the circus would not trust the bridge. They would step on it and test it. They would make it creak and shake, and then they would refuse to cross. They then had to go up above the dam and swim the river. The cool bath, after the hot dusty tramp from Saratoga would so entice them that it was hard for the keepers to get them to cross. They preferred to play, which the boys enjoyed. Often for an hour they would roll and play, throwing water over each other, the keepers and anyone within reach, before they could be persuaded to cross over.

These are just a few of Samuel G. Boyd's memories from his book "In the Days of Old Glens Falls"

Prepared Wayne Wright, GF City Historian, from a theatrical script written by William Woodward for the Chapman Historical Museums fall Glens Falls Cemetery tour in 2010 and from information found in the Goodman and Boyd scrapbook loaned to the City Historian by Shirley Goodman of Fort Ann for copying.

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