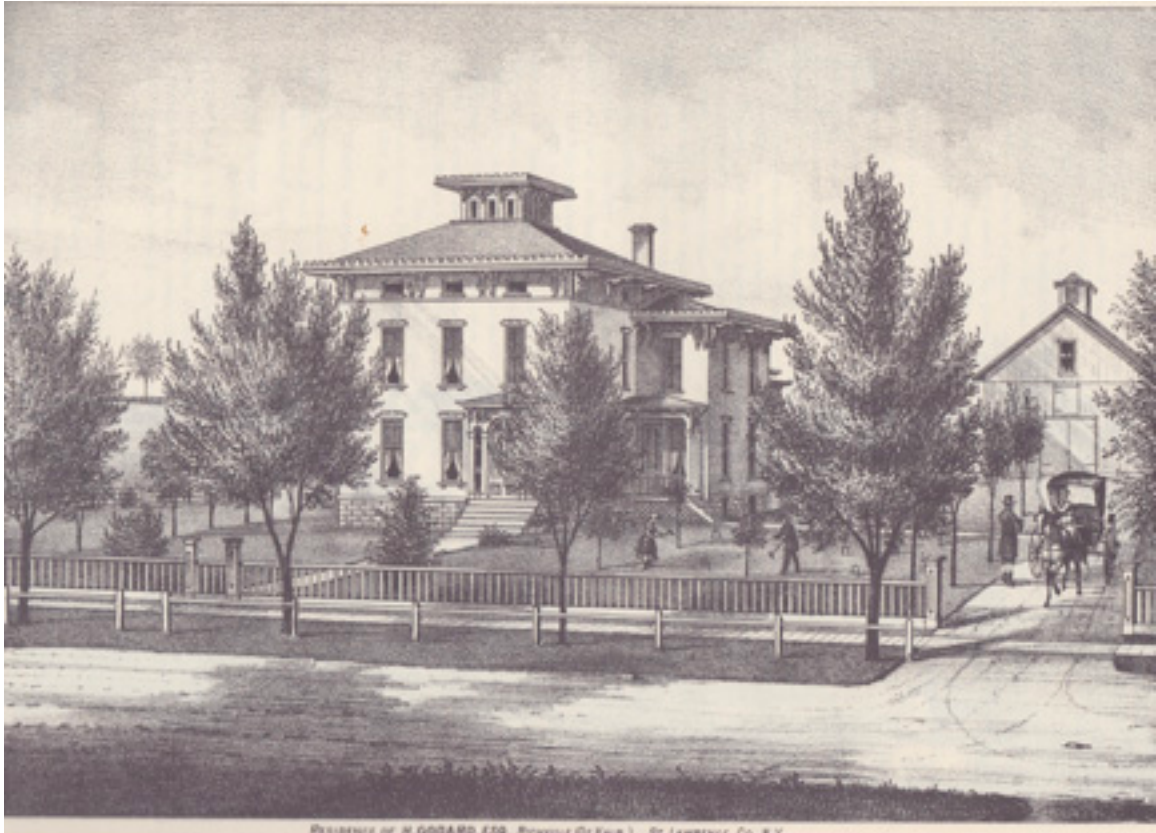


New York State Legislators from the Town of De Kalb
by Bryan Thompson



*Godard House in the Village of Richville
From LH Evert's A History of St Lawrence County 1878*

We don't think of small towns like De Kalb as home to important political figures. However in the nineteenth century the Town of De Kalb was home to no less than five New York State legislators.

The first was Asa Sprague Jr.. Asa was born in Spencer, Massachusetts, December 5, 1789. He was the son of Asa Sprague and Martha Wilson. The family moved to Otsego County when he was a boy. Two of his sisters, Ruth and Olive, were part of Judge Cooper's original settlement expedition to De Kalb in

1803. Over the next few years several other of his siblings moved to De Kalb. By 1811 he and his parents settled in De Kalb.

Asa Sprague set up a dry goods store in partnership with William Cleghorn that year. (Located where the Manley Griffith garage later stood.) They were responsible for supplying goods to the St Lawrence County militia when they camped at De Kalb at the opening of the War of 1812.

According to his pension application, Asa went to the garrison in Ogdensburgh to volunteer for the Militia in late summer 1812. He contracted some type of lung disease while he was stationed there. Two of his sisters went to Ogdensburgh to nurse him. They were there caring for him when the British invaded on February 22, 1813. The two women escaped the conflict, pulling their brother Asa, on a sled, as he was too sick to walk.

After the war, Asa returned to De Kalb Village and his store, which he soon took full ownership of. Although he never fully recovered from his lung disease, he prospered in business and started a potash business in partnership with Jonathan Rounds.

Asa soon married his first wife whose name is unknown. She died in 1817 and Asa married Rhoda Whipple Nov 15, 1818, daughter of Esek and Meribah Sprague Whipple. Rhoda Whipple's father was also part of the first settlement party of De Kalb. Rhoda died Dec 23, 1837. Asa next married Maria Wicker.

The Governor's Council of Appointments in 1818 appointed Asa Sprague Justice of the Peace for the Town of De Kalb. He served as a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas from 1823 to 1828. In 1829 he served as a County Court Judge. From this service Asa Sprague was known as Judge Sprague for the rest of his life.

Asa Sprague was elected Pound Master in 1820. He served as Supervisor of the Town of De Kalb, 1821 to 1828, 1832 to 1835 and 1843 to 1845. He was chair of the St. Lawrence County Board of Supervisors 1843 to 1845. He served on the

first board of Superintendents for the county poorhouse in 1825. He was also a member of the commission to select a new county seat in 1827, and postmaster of the (Old) De Kalb Village post office from 1832 to 1841. He served in the New York State Assembly 1830-1831 and 1839-1840.

Asa Sprague was involved in many other community activities. In March 1833 he was appointed Director of a group organized to form a St. Lawrence County Lyceum. He was involved in organizing the St. Lawrence County Mutual Insurance Company and served as their De Kalb agent from 1839 to 1846.

Between 1837 and 1843 Asa experienced the death of his second wife and four young adult children from lung disease. His health began to decline as his old lung condition returned. In 1846 he applied for a disability pension for his War of 1812 service. Among the local citizens who submitted written support of his claim were Nathaniel Holt, Darius Clark, John Spencer, John Borland, Curtis Spaulding, Elijah Farr, James Mott and Rebecca Sprague Farr Smith Slosson Phelps.

The Frontier Sentinel, the Whig newspaper from Ogdensburgh, launched a massive smear campaign against Judge Sprague for applying for a pension. The St Lawrence Republican, a Democratic Republican paper, printed a detailed rebuttal of the Sentinel's charges. Disgusted with the controversy, Asa Sprague sold his property in De Kalb and moved to the Town of Phelps in Ontario County, New York. He resided there until his death in 1874.



Harlow Godard

Harlow Godard, the son of Lewis Godard and Mindwell Thrall, was born in Lyden, Lewis County New York, April 22, 1804. His father, a lieutenant, was taken prisoner at the battle of Ogdensburgh during the War of 1812. Lewis Godard was held prisoner at Halifax for two years. This caused his family great economic hardship.

Following Lewis Godard's release, it was decided to send 12 year old Harlow Godard to live with his prosperous Uncle, Ralph Thrall, of Rich's Settlement. Ralph Thrall ran a successful sawmill in Richville and was partners with Peter Thatcher in a chair factory at (Old) De Kalb Village. While working for his uncle, Harlow was allowed to finish his commons school education. His uncle then financed his attendance at the St. Lawrence Academy (today SUNY Potsdam) where he completed a course of study.

For a few years he taught in the common schools of Gouverneur and De Kalb. On January 1, 1828. he married Mary Ann Rich. the daughter of Salmon Rich and the first female child born in the town of De Kalb. For six years they cleared and developed a farm near Richville.

Harlow Godard had an eye for business and left the farm and started a timber forwarding business and store in the Village of Richville. He would buy timber from the newly cleared land in De Kalb and surrounding towns during the winter months. During the spring floods the logs were floated down the Oswegatchie to Ogdensburgh. Harlow then shipped the logs to Quebec City dealers.

Harlow Godard invested his profits from the lumber business in local real estate. By the time the local forests were all used up he was able to live comfortably on his real estate investments. At the time of the 1860 US census he was able to list his profession as "Gentleman".

Harlow Godard was first elected to public office in 1827, at the age of 23, when he was elected School Inspector. He served as an Overseer of Highways, Assessor, and Town Supervisor for 4 years. He was most noted for serving as Justice of the Peace from 1834 to 1882. As Justice of the Peace he audited the town books for 48 years.

Harlow Godard was a dedicated social reformer through out his lifetime. He was a charter member of the Richville Chapter of the temperance group the Washingtonians. Harlow Godard was first a Democrat Republican. He and many others from the Richville Baptist church were active abolitionists. When the Democratic Party split over the issue of slavery in 1848. he sided with the abolitionist Free Soil Democrats. He ran as their candidate for the New York State Assembly that year. He was one of only a few members of the Free Soil party that won election. He served one term as a Free Soil Democrat. He was Postmaster at Richville 1854-1855.

When the Republican Party was formed, most of the Free Soil Democrats joined, including Godard. He was elected Justice of Sessions on their plank in 1857, 1858, 1861 and 1866. He was again elected to the New York State Assembly as a Republican in 1857.

Harlow Godard died at his home in Richville in 1886 at the age of 82. He is buried in Richville's Wayside Cemetery.



Elias Paige Townsley

Elias Paige Townsley, the son of Elvira Paige and Gideon Townsley. was born in De Kalb Village (Old De Kalb) November 8, 1813, and named for his maternal uncle. His father had immigrated to De Kalb in 1809 to operate the village tannery. Gideon Townsley soon became a land agent for many of the proprietors of the town.

E. P. Townsley was educated in the common schools of De Kalb. He learned the trade of tanning from his father and took over his father's tanning business. He married Lora B. Hammond Griffin, the adopted daughter of Captain Elisha Griffin on May 14, 1840. That same year he went into a farming partnership with his father-in-law at East De Kalb. He soon rented out the farm and returned to De Kalb Village where he served as postmaster from 1842 to 1844. Following the death of his father, he took over his land agency in 1846.

As early as 1844 E. P. Townsley was very active in Whig politics and was often one of the town's representatives at the county Whig convention. He served as an overseer of highways for De Kalb in 1845 and 1848. His first wife, Lora, died in 1850 and he

became a land surveyor that same year. E. P. Townsley originally surveyed many of the town's current highways.

E. P. Townsley was first elected Justice of the Peace in 1852, an office he held continually until his death 38 years later. He married for a second time, April 7, 1853, Louisa Ellen Thompson of Richville. He served as Supervisor of the Town from 1857 to 1860. He was elected to the NYS Assembly as a Republican in 1862 and 1863.

Following the Civil War he purchased the estate of John I. DE Graff with D. C. Judson. He soon bought out Judson's interest in the De Kalb lands and added the lands of the Daubenny, Waddell and Wm. Averill families. Through his real estate investments he became quite prosperous.

He was associated with the Presbyterian Church at De Kalb Village and donated the Union Church to them. His daughter Helen married J.E. Knox of the famous dry goods family. His son Clarence P. Townsley was a graduate of West Point and Clinton Townsley was a decorated hero of the Civil War rising to the rank of Major.

E. P. Townsley died at his home in De Kalb Village May 6, 1890. He is buried in the Old De Kalb cemetery



Abel Godard

Abel Godard, son of Harlow Godard and Mary Ann Rich, was born in the Town of De Kalb, June 26, 1835. He attended the common schools of De Kalb and the Gouverneur Wesleyan Seminary. He graduated from the University of Rochester after 3 years study in 1858 and immediately took up a course of study at the Albany School of Law. Upon graduation in 1861 he qualified for the bar. Abel Godard married Helen Herring of Gouverneur.

With the outbreak of the Civil War Abel Godard organized the enlistment of Company K of the 60th New York State Volunteers in the spring of 1862. He enlisted as a captain. By September of 1862 he was advanced to the rank of Major and on December 30th

that same year he attained the rank of Colonel. He served with distinction showing outstanding service at the Battles of Lookout Mountain and Ringgold, GA. He was discharged due to illness September 13, 1864. He afterwards recovered his health and returned to service until the end of the war.

Returning to Richville after the war Abel Godard was immediately called into public service. He was elected Town Supervisor of De Kalb at the annual town meeting in February 1866. Soon after he was nominated as the Republican candidate for the 17th New York State senatorial district. He won the election handily and served two years.

Arriving in Albany as a war hero he was immediately put on many influential committees. One of these was the Canal Commission. At the close of his term, an ethics probe was launched into 50/50 bribes that private canal companies had paid members of the commission and the many forged receipts in their files. Another war hero, General Edwin A. Merritt, questioned Abel Godard, as to where the money had gone. Godard was unable to explain himself in the situation. Merritt refused to endorse Godard. Godard lost his reelection bid for the New York State senate.

Abel Godard came home and opened a lucrative law practice in Gouverneur. In 1874 with partner Hiram Herring, he opened a bank known as A. Godard and Co.. It would eventually become the First National Bank of Gouverneur. Abel Godard was successful in his banking venture and was very active in the local community. He was the annual representative from the Town of De Kalb to the County Republican convention for many years.

Abel Godard served as election inspector for the Richville polling station 1872, 1888-1891. He was elected Commissioner of Highways in 1873 and 1874. He served as Town Supervisor in 1879, 1880 and 1881. In 1882 Abel Godard was nominated to run for the New York State Assembly. The New York Tribune ran a scathing editorial listing Godard and a few other nominees as unfit for office. Nevertheless the Abel easily won election to the assembly. He served two one-year terms in the body.

Abel Godard died unexpectedly on July 25, 1891 at the age of 56. The Ogdensburg Journal reported that his funeral was the largest ever held in the Town of De Kalb with hundreds of his former military comrades in attendance as he was laid to rest in Richville's Wayside Cemetery.



Darius Alonzo Moore

Darius Alonzo Moore, the son of John W. Moore and Almira Farr, was born in the town of Canton, April 13, 1833. He was the maternal great nephew of Asa Sprague Jr. , the first citizen of De Kalb to be elected to the New York State legislature from De Kalb.

About 1835 he moved with his parents to Defiance, Ohio where his father was a storekeeper. His father, died in Defiance in 1842. Darius and his mother moved to Richville to live with his maternal grandmother, Rebecca Sprague Farr Slosson Phelps in 1842. D. A. Moore completed his common school education in Richville. One of his schoolmates was Abel Godard. He attended the Gouverneur Wesleyan Seminary for two years.

At the age of sixteen D. A. Moore struck out on his own working as a clerk for his Uncle Stephen Slosson in his store at De Kalb Village (Old De Kalb). He continued in this work for seven years. In 1856 Moore married Emily Beebe and set up his own store in De Kalb Village. Moore was an active Congregationalist and largely financed the erection of the De Kalb Congregational church in 1879.

In 1856 Moore performed his first governmental duty serving on a road jury. In 1858 he was elected De Kalb Town Clerk. D. A. Moore served as clerk from 1858 to 1867. One of his legacies from this service is the meticulously created 1867 De Kalb roster of those who served in the Civil War. He filled out each question about each individual in detail, something many other Town Clerks slacked on. In 1868 he became De Kalb Town Supervisor serving in this office from 1868 to 1875. Moore was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1872 and 1873. He was elected to the New York State Senate in 1875. He remained active in the St. Lawrence County Republican Party as long as he lived in the county.

D. A. Moore lived in his home in De Kalb Village at the intersection of County Route 17 and NYS 812 with his five children into the early 1880's. He used his position as a local merchant to acquire quite a bit of local real estate.

In 1882, his two oldest sons married. He arranged for Frank W. Moore to buy the store of A. E. Morgan in Potsdam. He set up a partnership with his son Ara J. Moore in the families De Kalb Village store. In 1884 he bought the former G. W. Swan Door, Sash and Blind factory in Potsdam and set it up a partnership with his youngest son ,William A. Moore. His children married into several prominent Potsdam families including the Crane, Watkins, Baldwin and Clarkson families.

In 1886 D.A. and his wife Emily moved to Potsdam after spending the winter in Georgia and Florida. D. A. Moore invested heavily in the Potsdam Knitting Company. They continued to visit De Kalb regularly. In 1898 the Moore's decided to move to San Pedro, California for the climate. D. A. Moore became an insurance salesman there.

In June 1905 D. A. Moore came east to visit his family. While he was at his daughter's home in Albany, NY, he suffered a stroke and died. He was buried in Bayside Cemetery in Potsdam.

Sources:

Durant, Samuel W. (1878) A History of St. Lawrence County New York, Philadelphia: L. H. Everts & Co.

Town of De Kalb Clerk (nd.) Meeting Book One 1806-1845 De Kalb Town Clerks office.

Town of De Kalb Clerk (nd.) Meeting Book Two 1845-1866 De Kalb Town Clerks office.

Town of De Kalb Clerk (nd.) Meeting Book Three 1867-1905 De Kalb Town Clerks office.

Town of De Kalb Historian De Kalb Scrapbook 1864-1912 Historian's office.

NYS Historic Newspapers Various <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org>.