

LEMAN HARMON PITCHER.

COMPILED BY LEMAM BAKER PITCHER.

Leman H. Pitcher was born in Rutland, Vermont, November 26th, 1781; he was the son of Reuben, the son of Ebenezer, the son of Samuel, Jr., the son of Samuel, Sr., the son of Andrew, who came of Somerset County, England, in 1633, and settled in Dorchester, Mass., where he died in 1660.

Leman H. Pitcher went to school about six months before he was eight years old, and about three more between the age of twelve and thirteen. From eight to twelve he lived with his uncle Harmon, who was too poor to send him to school, yet rich enough to send his own son of like age, summer and winter. At one time he asked his uncle if he might go to school, and the reply was "that it cost money," and "that it was not expected that everybody would go." This caused him to cry, for which he was called a "booby," and ordered off to bed. In later years, he has often told his children, that this circumstance caused him to form a resolution, "that he would know something if he had to steal it." While young Oliver, his cousin, played and slept, Leman H., as opportunities offered, read his books, and at twelve he was the better scholar. The next year he lived with his mother, and the two succeeding years worked out for \$50 and \$65 per year. In 1796, he and the family moved to Pompey, and settled where Addison H. Clapp now resides. In the winter of 1797 or 1798, he and John Sprague studied arithmetic during the evenings with an old surveyor, who lived near Watervale, to whom they gave a bushel of oats, then of the value of fifteen cents, for each evening.

In November, 1798, his right foot was nearly severed just below the ankle joint. When climbing a well post to assist in adjusting the well sweep, his step-father Starkweather, attempted to strike the axe in the post, to assist him in climbing, but his foot slipping just as the axe fell, received the full force of the blow, and his foot was held only by the skin of the heel. A council of Doctors was held, and all advised amputation; one said, "it might possibly get well;" to this he replied, "I am without education, trade or money, and I had rather go to the grave with my foot, than to live a poor cripple all my life;" "do the best you can, I am resolved to live or die with my foot." During the following year while the wound was healing, he studied hard to prepare himself for teaching school and for business. In 1800 he taught his first school in a school house that stood near the corners about a mile north-westerly from the Hill towards Jamesville. In 1801 and afterwards he taught on the Hill as related by Mrs. Miller in her paper, June 29, 1871. He continued to teach five or six years, winters, and sometimes summers. Between 1801 and 1808 he was constable and deputy sheriff, and about this time he became a free mason. In the Spring of 1808 he married Hannah Baker, aunt of Dea. Samuel Baker, of Pompey Hill, and moved to Camillus, N. Y.

Leman B. Pitcher was in Camillus January 30th, 1809. Mr. Pitcher was engaged in the fall of 1810, and the winter and summer following in preparing and rafting hewn timber for the Montreal market. Going down the Oswego river he ventured too near the falls and was carried over with a broken raft with two other men one of whom was drowned. All he had (about \$4,000) and something more, was embarked in the business. After some loss of timbers and many delays he sailed from Oswego with his re-collected raft and was again damaged in running

the rapids of the St. Lawrence river, and finally when about fifty miles above Montreal the news of the declaration of war reached him. This news was unexpected. Two days later his timber in Montreal was worth only half price, and the next only a third and no cash at that, and to make bad worse he was notified to take the oath of allegiance or leave in three days. If he left his timber, it would be confiscated. He therefore sold it for dry goods, being the best he could do, and as non-intercourse was declared, his only chance was to smuggle the goods home. This he attempted, but when near Ogdensburg, his goods were seized and he arrested. His excuse was that the circumstances compelled him to do as he had done, and through the influence of his Masonic brothers he was allowed or enabled to escape. He reached Oswego with sixteen cents and a roll of coarse cloth. All else was gone. When he left home he expected to return in five or six weeks with \$6,000 or \$7,000. He was gone from June to January, and came back with almost nothing.

In the Spring of 1812, he took a farm on the ridge road two miles east of Lewiston on the Niagara frontier, where he raised vegetables which he sold to the soldiers stationed at Lewiston. He also bought of others and sold. In this way he accumulated over \$2,000, before the 19th of December, 1813. Then the British and Indians who had crossed the river about three miles below the night previous, surrounded his house and took him and his family prisoners, plundered them of every thing they thought worth carrying away, and burned the remainder with the buildings. Mr. Pitcher was taken by one party who had charge of the men prisoners destined for Halifax. On the road half way to the river, this party was attacked by the Tuscarora friendly Indians, and while the skirmish was going on he escaped. The mother and her three children, Leman B., Sally and Nancy were stripped of every garment that could tempt the cupidity of a savage. The last garment was an old red cloak. This an Indian demanded and an officer told him he "must not have it," for which the Indian shot him.

The snow was about six inches deep, and Mrs. Pitcher with a babe in her arms, a sick boy on her back, and a little girl walking by her side, half naked with other prisoners was driven on by a drunken and uncontrollable rabble of Indians and a few British soldiers. On the road they saw one child tomahawked, another gun-clubbed, and still another impaled upon the stake of a fence. The number of women and children prisoners from Mr. Pitcher's neighborhood, was nineteen. They had rations for three days, and after that they were turned adrift to live and sleep in the woods near Queenstown, without fire, food or clothing.

For nearly three weeks they lived on what the soldiers and Indians threw away, and slept close together to keep warm in a rude cabin made of poles and brush. They were put over the river and set at liberty at Lewiston, without food, the snow nearly 10 inches deep. They followed the ridge road east by the ruins of their home, and coming to an old house they covered the blood-stained floor with straw, and nestled down to rest. About 11 o'clock at night, they were startled by the cry of "who comes there," and "I have a flag of truce." It was Mr. Pitcher who had that day been to Forts Niagara and George, and up to Queenstown, where he learned that his wife, children and others had been set at liberty. When he found them he was returning to get horses to go to Buffalo that night. The sleigh he procured was soon filled with nineteen happy souls, women and children, while he, his brother James and a friend, ran by their side, thirteen miles, when they all found food and rest. A few days after, in the early part of January, 1814, Mr. Pitcher and his family arrived safely in Pompey. Thus twice was Mr. Pitcher ruined by the war.

In the following fall he commenced keeping a hotel five miles east of Buffalo, where in sixteen months he cleared \$1,800.00, with which in the Spring of 1816, he moved into Chautauqua (CHAUTAUQUA) county on a branch of the Allegany river. The cold seasons of 1816, 17 and 18, were unproductive, and in 1821 he moved poor and discouraged to the Cattaraugus creek, and ever after only tried to "bring the year about." Here he acted as Justice of the Peace for thirty-six years, noted as a peace-maker, and no judicial decision of his was ever reversed. In 1826, while traveling on a journey in Genesee county, a heavy shower coming up he stopped and finally remained over night with a farmer, and there found "The old family Bible," which was taken in 1813, carried to Canada, retaken by the U.S. soldiers, brought back and sold at Black Rock for whiskey, and afterwards bought by the farmer for half a bushel of potatoes.

The last eight years of his life Mr. Pitcher spent with his son Leman B. Pitcher, and he died April 14, 1867. His brother James P. Pitcher will be remembered by the early residents of Pompey as a successful school teacher from 1805 to 1810. He married Anna Brewer, and went with his brother to Buffalo and Chautauque County, and about forty years ago, to Oakland County, Michigan, where he and his wife died in 1868, respected by all who knew them.

Source:

Re-Union of the Sons And Daughters of the Old Town of Pompey

Held at Pompey Hill, June 29, 1871

Proceedings of the Meeting, Speeches, Toasts and Other Incidents of the Occasion also,
A History of the Town, Reminiscences And Biographical Sketches of its Early Inhabitants

Publication Committee: Wm. W. Van Brocklin, Le Roy Morgan, Richard F. Stevens, Ebenezer Butler, Homer D. L. Sweet

Pompey: Published by Direction of the Re-Union Meeting, 1875, p. 337-341