THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE GRIFFITH FAMILY IN ELLERY
(WRITTEN BY CATHERINE GRIFFITH CHENEY)

Jeremiah Griffith was born in Norwich, Conn., July 22nd 1756. In early life he removed to Rensselaer County, N.Y. Here he married Mary Crapsey. In 1800 they moved to Madison County, where they lived five years.

In February 1806 with his wife and 6 children and all their family possessions stowed away upon a large wood sled drawn by oxen, the boys following behind with a few cows and sheep, he took up his line of March in search of a home in the great wilderness of the West.

He had no special location in view, but did intend to go as far as the State of Ohio.

Arriving at Batavia his attention was called to Chautauqua Lake which was then as now was noted for its clear waters, beautiful shores and excellent fish.

From Batavia he proceeded to Buffalo then along the shores of Lake Erie to Cattaraugus Creek, where only one white family resided, the next white family was at Silver Creek, and the next at Fredonia, one between there and Westfield and two at Mayville.

Here Mr. Griffith left his family until a location could be found.

It was now late in March. William Bemus had made a settlement at what is now Bemus Point, and by his advice and aid, Griffith was conducted down the lake on the ice about five miles, to an old Indian Camp which he considered next to his own to be most desirable.

He said he had learned to his satisfaction that the Indians made no mistakes in locating their homes. Mr. Griffith was immediately captivated by the beauty of the place and the improvements by the Indians, induced him to make this his home.

He returned to Mayville and started his family down the Lake on the ice, while he and the two older boys followed a trail along the beach of the lake with the oxen and other stock.

Hand sleds had been provided upon which the mother with her six months old baby and other small children might ride. A furious blinding snow storm set in, hiding the land from their view; however they reached the shore at Long Point just at dark. They collected dry wood, bark and leaves from hollow trees, and with the aid of their gun and some punk, struck up a fire beside a fallen log. They made a shelter with poles and hemlock boughs, wherewith they passed the night without supper.

The father and the boys with the stock arrived safely in good time at the Bemus home, but were greatly alarmed when the mother and small children did not arrive, fearing they had perished on the ice. At dawn a search was started and were greatly relieved to find them at Long Point, none the worse for their night's outing, for they had passed many such nights in their journey through the wilderness.

Upon their arrival at the Bemus home they were given a hot breakfast and the mother was urged to stay with the small children until a log house could be built, but she refused saying she had gone so far with her family she would go on.

Mr. Bemus and members of his family went with them, reaching their destination Saturday night March 29th 1806, where a temporary shelter of poles bark and boughs was soon erected and a bed of hemlock boughs was made.

(Since this paper was written there has been a marker placed near the highway. It was placed there in 1916 with a bronze marker. It is a few rods above the Greenhurst bridge).
In this shelter, prepared in an evening, they spent their first night at what is known as Griffiths Point.

The next day being the Sabbath, a part of the family were eager to start the building of a log house; but the Mother entered her protest and the day was spent in reverence. Whom did she fear? Surely not the ear of man, for the sound of those axes might have echoed thro that mighty forest upon the Sabbath day and sent no discordant notes to the ear of any human being. It was He who had sustained, guided and protected them through that long and wearisome journey.

A Log house was commenced on Monday, and by the aid of Mr. Bemus was finished on Wednesday.

John Griffith, the oldest son and his father started back to Westfield for supplies. Here they procured a quantity of rye flour (56 pounds), which John shouldered and started for home following the Lake Shore. A howling wolf lurked in his footsteps, inviting his companions to a feast. He arrived home late at night, and some of this rye flour mixed with cold water, spread upon a slab of wood and baked before the fire constituted his supper.

These were times when fish from the lake was their food for whole days, telling of one day that they consumed eighteen bass.

By the middle of May six acres had been cleared and planted to corn, potatoes and oats.

Their struggles had been hard through these Spring months. Their money was exhausted. The father made a trade with someone in the beach woods near Sugar Grove, for fifty pounds of Maple Sugar. He had learned from men navigating the waters between Mayville and Pittsburg, that there was a grist mill at Franklin, Pa., sixty miles below Warren. He decided to go there and trade his sugar for corn. Accordingly a large pine tree was felled, and 25 foot log was fashioned into a canoe. In this crude boat propelled by a simple pole, with his son Samuel, they floated down the streams of Chautauqua Outlet, Conewango Creek and Alleghany River. At this time Jamestown was an unbroken wilderness. They arrived safely at Franklin and traded four pounds of the Maple sugar for one busnel of corn, had it ground at the mill and with light hearts turned their faces homeward. The return was not so easy going up stream, and they often had to wade in the water and draw their boat by the prow, reaching home fourteen days from the time they started.

The family had lived as best they could on what the wilderness afforded. Let us who are reaping the benefits of their labor, look back to that Mother, with hungry children at her knee, inquiring "Can we starve if we have all the milk we can drink?"

Jeremiah Griffith, the second settler of Ellery, was 48 years of age when he located at what is now known as Griffith Point (and now later as Point Stockholm and Sheldon Hall.)

With sturdy independence, courage and activity, he was but a type of that heroic age who had left the advantages of civilized society, friends and kindred, to build up new homes for himself and
How well they succeeded is shown by the vast amount of business which surrounds us on every side and which is forever progressing. Their great need had stimulated them to feats of strength and endurance beyond which they had never dreamed. After their first year peace and plenty crowned their efforts, for seed time and harvest never failed them.

In early life Mr. Griffith was in the Revolutionary War. After residing in Chautauqua County a number of years he rode to Washington on horse-back to solicit a pension. He succeeded in having his name entered on the pension roll as a Continental Soldier and was pensioned as such, at the rate of $20.00 a year, and after his death, by a subsequent Act of Congress this amount was transferred to Mary, his wife who lived to the ripe old age of ninety years.

The sons grew to manhood, honored and respected citizens, and all by the hand of Providence were spared until the evening of late years.

(Written by Catherine Griffin Cheney sometime in the 1890's)

Mrs. Cheney was the daughter of John the eldest son of Jeremiah Griffith and Tryphena Bemus Griffith one of 12 children.

Her husband Asa Cheney was the grandson of Johnathan Cheney who settled on the road from the Jeremiah Griffith's claim in 1800, on what is now called Colburn's parts of which are still owned by his Descendants.

Read by Mrs. John C. Cheney at a meeting of the Chautauqua County Historical Society held at the Hotel Lenhart in Bemus Point, on practically the sight where William Bemus built his first Log House.
It is my purpose today to give you some of the historical information on some of the first settlers in the Town of Ellery, especially here at Bemus Point, and down the East Lake Road, taken from the writings of Mrs. Catherine Griffith Cheney, that she prepared and presented at different times at public meetings.

Catherine Griffith was born in 1826 at what we know as "Martha's Vineyard", Bellerive and passed away in April 1924 making her 97 and one-half years of age. She was married to Asa Cheney in 1850, and went to live on a farm about 1 1/2 miles up the road. To them were born 11 children, 8 of them reaching maturity. Only one of which still survives at the present time (The youngest, John C. Cheney)

Mrs. Cheney took a keen interest in the welfare and development of the community in which she lived, and was a pioneer in the "Woman's Enfranchisement of Women", believing that women should share equal with the men in the development of the community, and have a voice via the vote in its government.