

Charles Hartshorn: The Father of Ellenville

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Village elections are held in March every year, dating back to 1856, when the Village of Ellenville was incorporated. For those with a curiosity about the past, this is the time when we reflect on those citizens who have headed our village government through the years.

The first President of the Village of Ellenville was Charles Hartshorn, a strong and respected leader of the community, who had come here in 1823 to try a case in the Hoornbeek Tavern. At that time, the settlement, consisting of a cluster of small houses and the tavern, was called "Fairchild City" or, more commonly, "The City." Hartshorn saw a future in the community, a need for a general store (the nearest one was in Wawarsing) and he liked the people he met.

Charles Hartshorn was a born leader who spent his life working for his community. Within months of establishing himself as a storekeeper (in the log cabin reputed to have been the first building erected here, on the Southwest corner of today's **Canal and Market Streets**), he began working toward the establishment of a post office. This required more than just "The City" for a name, and there was extensive deliberation and consideration of possible names. The men of the settlement invited the ladies' participation and the decision was quick when Mrs. Hoornbeek's sister, Ellen Snyder, prettily offered her own name. Thus was Ellenville named.

The federal government on December 27, 1823 established the *Ellenville Post Office*, and Charles Hartshorn was named the first Postmaster. The office was, naturally, in his store.

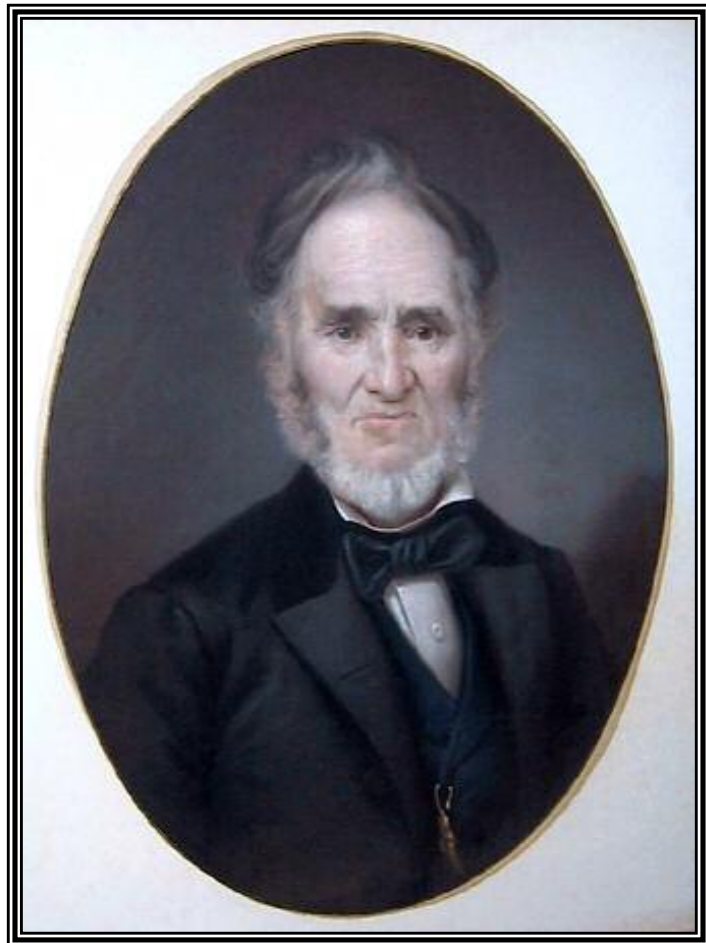
Hartshorn's involvement in community service continued, as he served as Justice of the Peace for fifteen years from 1830, as well as one term as Supervisor of the Town of Wawarsing in 1838.

On April 5, 1856, at the first regular meeting of the Trustees of the newly incorporated Village of Ellenville, the other Trustees paid him the high honor of choosing him to be the first President of the Village. (The title of Mayor was not used until the 1920s.)

Charles Hartshorn died in 1869 at the age of 79.

If any of the early community leaders deserves to be called "Father of the Village," Charles Hartshorn certainly earned that honor. In addition to the public positions he held, Hartshorn was well respected by village residents, who affectionately called him "The Squire." He owned a large amount of land in today's business district, constructing and remodeling many buildings. He gave land near **Buttermilk Falls** to the Village for a reservoir. In turn, a tablet was placed at the site which read "Hartshorn Reservoir 1870."

Hartshorn's daughter and son-in-law inherited his beautiful home in the center of the Village and gave the Village a large section of the front yard for the creation of the Square and the maintenance of a fountain (see the "Boy with the



Boot" article and photo in our December 2002 premiere issue for details). Years later, his granddaughters, Rose Hartshorn Eaton and Anne Hartshorn Saxon, left that same house so that the site could be used for the construction of the **Woman's Christian Temperance Building** (later the **Hunt Memorial Building** and, still later, the **Friend Center**).

Hartshorn's assumed portrait hung over the fireplace in the reception room of Hunt Memorial (better known as the Children's Room of the *Ellenville Public Library*) for years, until it was moved to the "new" **Village of Ellenville Municipal Building** in the late 1960s. The unnamed, untitled portrait now hangs in the Village Office in commemoration of a true public servant's dedication more than one hundred years ago (see photo above).

If there are any doubts about the accuracy of the identification, Katharine T. Terwilliger used it in her first *Before Today's Headlines* back in 1969, so I'm sure that it is Hartshorn. Given his dates, and the fact that none of his descendants remain (according to KT), the odds are rather remote of any other picture/portrait/sketch in existence. The only other place I can think of is the mural in the post office... Louis Boucher painted the mural that depicts Charles Hartshorn's general store, with people greeting him on his arrival with approval for the post office. (I wonder how many people actually look at the mural and know what it is? Now you know!)

For more information, consult the first *Before Today's Headlines* column by Katharine T. Terwilliger in the *Ellenville Journal*, January 23, 1969, and KT's book, *Wawarsing; Where the Streams Wind*, both available at the **Ellenville Public Library & Museum, 40 Center St.** ❄️