

## Forward, into the Past

### The Taylor Family and The Ellenville Journal

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Driving south on **Rte. 209 (Main Street)** in the Village of Ellenville (*lower photo at right,*), longtime residents of the area may be reminded occasionally of the beautiful *Ellenville Journal* building which had graced the southeast corner of **Main & Center Streets** for 119 years (*upper photo at right; the columned building on the left, now the site of the vacant lot in the lower picture*). Even in its decline, the building, with its pillars and unique balcony, was a treasured landmark.

John H. Eltinge purchased the property from Elias B. Watrous in Feb. 1850 and erected a building to house his cabinet making and undertaking business, as well as his family. According to Mr. Eltinge's 1851 ad announcing his move to that location, he identified his business as being across from *A. Freer's Hotel* (later known as the *Mitchell House*), according to the custom of locating businesses by a more important one in the neighborhood.

In December 1919, the *Ellenville Journal Printing Company, Inc.*, a new corporation, purchased the building from Thomas Thornton. Charles Goldsmith, a local carpenter of note, and his workmen made alterations. The *Journal* offices had been located diagonally across the intersection, on the Northwest corner (currently a parking lot, but the site of the well-known *Shamrock Hotel* for many years).

The *Ellenville Journal Printing Company* may have been a new corporation, but *The Ellenville Journal*, as a newspaper, had been in publication for nearly sixty years.

It all began in 1849, when Robert Denton came to Ellenville and arranged to publish a newspaper. He had negotiated with Dr. J. D. Friend of Middletown for Friend to take the editorship, but when he got ready to print, neither Friend nor any "copy" appeared. Fortunately, *Richard Baxter Taylor* came into the office with a manuscript. Taylor had moved to the area from Buckland, Massachusetts, at the urging of a close personal friend, Samuel Townsley of Bloomingburg. According to Taylor's



Editor Sylvester "S.M." Taylor, at his desk in the *Journal* office, July 10, 1906, nearly 50 years after first serving in that post.



obituary, "He now entered upon a decidedly successful career as a District School Teacher. Possessing an unusual gift as a singer, he soon began teaching vocal music, and acquired a wide reputation in that line. His singing schools were strung along the Valley from Port Jervis to Napanoch." He decided to study law when he moved to Ellenville, "reading" chiefly under the direction of Judge Brodhead. "Meantime he taught at the District School... and when he was neither teaching nor reading, he was singing." By the time he was ready to apply for his law license, he had decided against making the law his career.

Taylor's manuscript was the first article written for *The Journal*, and Denton prevailed upon him to become editor. The first issue appeared in June 1849. Taylor soon became part owner and, within two years, in order to protect his investment, he had to buy Denton's half, "at an exorbitant price." His editorial in the February 28, 1851, paper, in the flowery and lengthy prose of the period, included a pledge that "no effort will be spared on my part, to make the Ellenville Journal what it has thus far, on all hands, been allowed to be – a useful and interesting family newspaper. It will also be my endeavor, so far as possible, to improve the paper in every way which experience may suggest, and the means afforded by an enlarged circulation will allow."

He goes on to urge, "I expect every friend I have in this town and elsewhere (and their name is legion) if they are not already subscribers, immediately to become so, and to take hold in earnest, and not look back, till each one has obtained several more." He goes on to talk about the advantages of having a printing press in town, the benefits of a local newspaper for local business, and the need to both subscribe and advertise. When he eventually concludes, it is with another impassioned statement, "Talk this matter up. Get up an excitement. Let us see some of the same feeling which was exhibited when the paper was first started, and there will be no difficulty in raising three or four hundred new subscribers in a very short time."

Baxter's enthusiasm was not limited to *The Journal* alone; indeed, it was surpassed by "Kansas fever" and, in 1858, he relocated to Wyandotte, Kansas, having left the paper in the young but capable hands of his twenty-five ➤