

Benjamin Franklin Goodrich 1841-1888

Young Benjamin's heritage rested on firm foundations. Sixth in descent from Connecticut colonist William Goodrich, the family had put down roots in America before 1648. Before emigrating from Saratoga County to Ripley, Benjamin's Grandfather, Col. Gideon Goodrich, is listed as having served in the State Assembly. After the purchase of tracts of land directly from the Holland Land Company, and upon arrival in Ripley in 1815, Gideon and his sons assumed the responsibilities of clearing the land and participating in the affairs of town.

Benjamin's father died when he was seven, while his mother passes away when he was nine. This ultimately led to the decision to send him to his Aunt Harriet who had married Dr. Silas Spencer of Westfield, New York. Until the age of 15 Benjamin attended a school that was held in his Uncle Silas' house, and later the more formal academies of Westfield and Fredonia. In 1858, at the age of 17 he commenced a one-year study of medicine while working at the Westfield Memorial Hospital. In 1861 he graduated from a three-year course at Cleveland Medical College as a full-fledged physician.

When the Civil War broke out, Dr. Goodrich enlisted as a private in the Union Army. He served in a medical capacity throughout the conflict, earning several promotions leading to his discharge, after the war, as Assistant Surgeon.

From this point he established a medical practice in Jamestown, New York. This practice lasted a little over a year. He then quit the practice never to perform medicinal studies again.

He then moved to New York City and formed a partnership with a lawyer friend named John P. Morris. Together they went into the real estate business and gained control of the Hudson River Rubber Company at Hastings-on-the-Hudson.

Dr. Goodrich, in the capacity of President of the newly organized company, took complete charge of the operation, learning as he went along and becoming more and more enthusiastic about the future of rubber.

Money troubles forced Dr. Goodrich to start a new company. His first desired location for this company was in Jamestown, but the residents there wanted nothing to do with "a smelly rubber factory." Unsuccessful in inspiring the necessary interest for the creation of a factory in Jamestown, Dr. Goodrich focused his attention on Akron, Ohio. He did so because of a newspaper advertisement by the Akron, Ohio Board of Trade, inviting the establishment of new industry in that town.

His new plant began its business with rubber fire hose, rubber tubing for breweries, and flat belting. New technologies were invented, new items were made, and the plant prospered into what is still there today.

In 1941 a granite block standing six and one-half feet high was placed in Ripley honoring the life and achievements of Dr. Goodrich. The inscription on the block reads:

"Ripley, New York. Birthplace of Dr. Benjamin Franklin Goodrich, 1841-1888.
A great son of this State. Founder of the B.F. Goodrich Company, Akron, OH, 1870.
This memorial sponsored by the New York State Historical Association on the
Centennial of his birth, Nov. 4, 1941"