

*The following interesting local history was written many years ago by James Mix, son of the pioneer Joel, and is taken from a diary now in the possession of one of his descendants. It contains many interesting incidents pertaining to the early settlers at West Carthage :*

"In 1798 Joel Mix, from Connecticut, came to the High Falls and assisted in surveying there. He came down Black River, explored Champion, and returned to Connecticut in the fall. Encouraged by General Henry Champion and Colonel Lemuel Storrs, who then owned the land in Champion, in the winter of 1799 he moved to High Falls. Nathaniel Merriam moved him.

He then had four children. He left the children with Hannah Merriam, his wife's sister, and with his wife came down the river (then the only highway) with a 'one-horse pung,' to West Long Falls, where Daniel and David Miller, two young men who came with him from Connecticut as workmen, and Auer Terrel had been building a shanty on the bank of the river. On the 13th day of April he went up the river on the ice to High Falls, 42 miles, on foot, stayed the 14th, and on the 15th the ice in the river was broken up, and on the 16th he set out for the Long Falls with a scow loaded with some of his household goods, with his wife's sister, Hannah Merriam, and his four children, Sylvester, James, Electa, and Sally, and two hired men.

They set out in the morning behind the ice (there was no dam, but rapid falls). As night was coming on the scow went more rapidly than they were aware of, and they soon found the scow changing ends and being drawn rapidly in towards the falls. The two hired men were so terrified that their strength deserted them and they were of no use to help manage the boat. But Joel Mix was not the one to shrink from duty in the hour of danger, and while the boat was darting rapidly down toward the foaming falls he caught the chain of the boat in one hand, and as the boat swung around he saw the top of a tree which hung over the river some feet from the boat. With a great effort he sprang from the boat and caught with one hand the limb of the tree, and with the other held fast to the chain, his body dangling between the boat and the tree. About the same time that they saw their danger, Hannah Merriam

called at the top of her voice for help, and was heard on the bank by Mrs. Mix, who was at the shanty, where were also Daniel and David Miller and Auer Terrel, who ran to the river, but could not assist as there was no boat on that side of the river. But they had heard the cry on the other side of the river, where one or two French families had settled, among whom was Joanna Ward and husband and Peter Belmont, and one or two others. All except Ward came speedily across the river and rescued Mr. Mix from his perilous position, where he had hung partly in the ice and water until he was nearly exhausted. They succeeded in landing the boat about nine o'clock that night, about 15 rods below Lake Creek, at the head of the falls.

After all had safely arrived at the shanty, it being dark and the ice running in the river, those who came over to the rescue thought it not prudent to return that night, and they all stayed in the shanty."

Excerpted from "Gazetteer of Jefferson County, N.Y. 1685-1890 "  
by Hamilton Child, published in 1890.