

Hornellsville, New York Mill – aka J. Alley & Company

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In 1867, James Alley came to Whitehall and erected a saw mill known as the “New York Mill” which was owned by a stock company. It was located just below the Tannery. The plant was afterwards bought by J. Alley & Company, a firm comprised of James Alley, his son Charles Graves Alley and his son-in-law George M. Smith. Giving his full attention to the business, it proved to be successful from the start, making a handsome fortune for its owners.

James eventually left the management of the mill and the lumber interests to his son C. G. and his business partner R. P. VanKeuren. He quietly enjoyed his days at his New York home looking after the interests here with occasional visits to Whitehall. It was on one such visit that James Alley passed away.

He had left his home in New York on Friday morning, May 13, 1887, arriving at the Exchange Hotel in Detroit. He went to his room stating that he was not feeling well. By Saturday morning he was gone. A dispatch was sent on Saturday to C. G. Alley in town and he immediately went to Detroit to claim the body and take it home to New York.

Alley was born in Moravan, Cayuga, New York in 1810 and spend his early life on a farm. He became interested in the mercantile business and finally chose the lumber business as a field with a bright future. He built the Alley Mill in Hornellsville, New York with his younger brother George.

He married Julia Graves in 1836 and they had two children: a son Charles Graves and a daughter Rhoda. Julia died in 1877 and he married Mrs. Elizabeth Sweetland in 1878.

In 1888 the Alley-VanKeuren partnership was dissolved, and the mill was torn down. In 1911 the mill property was sold to the Tannery.