

Our friend was born in the town of Hamburg (now Evans), Erie county, New York, on the fourth of September, 1815. Five generations back, his ancestors were Puritans in Roxbury, Massachusetts. His paternal grandfather was a Revolutionary soldier, and his maternal grandfather fell in the defense of Buffalo against the British in 1813; while his father, Luke, was twice captured by the English during the latter war. When Lyman was three years of age, the family removed to Lockport, on the Erie Canal.

Luke Draper was by turns grocer, tavern-keeper, and farmer, and as soon as his son Lyman could be of use about the house, the store, or the land, he was obliged to perform his full share of family labor. Until fifteen years of age, the boy's experiences were those of the average village lad of the period—the almost continuous performance of miscellaneous duties, including family shoe repairing, the gathering and selling of wild berries, and occasional jobs for the neighbors. One summer was spent in acting as a hod-carrier for a builder in the village, at the wage of twelve-and-a-half cents a day. From his fifteenth year to his eighteenth, he served as clerk in various village shops. During this time, having gained all the education possible from the village school, he added to its meager curriculum the reading of what few books were obtainable by purchase or loan in the then frontier settlement, and established a local reputation as a youth of letters.

Even at that early age the lad's taste for Revolutionary lore was well developed. He came naturally by it. At Luke Draper's fireside, the deeds of Revolutionary heroes always formed the chief topic of conversation. There were yet living many veterans of the Continental Army, who were always welcome to the hospitality of the Draper household, while the War of 1812-15 was an event of but a few years previous. The boy was early steeped in knowledge of the facts and traditions of Anglo-American fights and Western border forays, so that in after years it was impossible for him to remember when he first became inspired with the passion for obtaining information as to the events in which his ancestors took part.