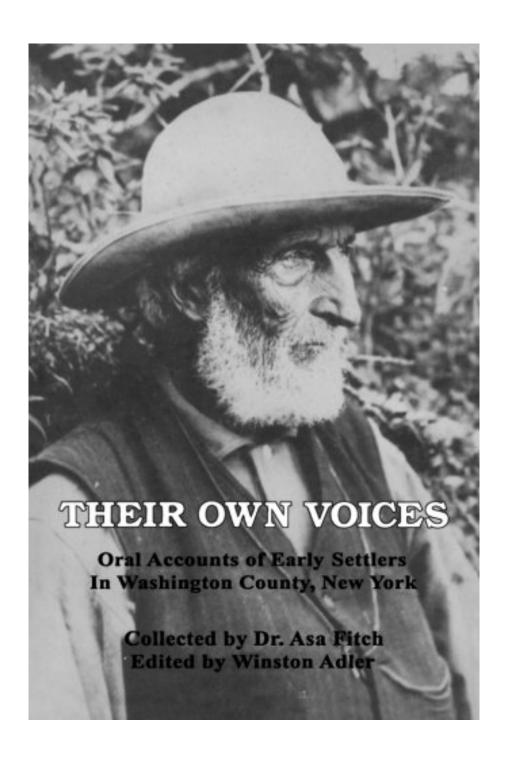


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Beginning in the 1840s and continuing until his death, Dr. Asa Fitch (1809-1878) of Salem, NY, interviewed elderly neighbors, questioning them about the time of first European settlement, the Revolutionary War, and the first decades of the 19th century. Fitch was more than just a medical doctor. By the 1850s, he ranked as a world-famed entomologist, with important discoveries about insect life to his credit. He turned his precise, scientific mindset to good account in his oral history work. He seems to have functioned almost like a human tape recorder, transcribing and preserving vivid, colloquial statements from a wide range of individuals--most not fully literate people (that is, people who could read their Bible and sign their names but not write fluent accounts of the incidents of their lives.) Jeanne Winston Adler's excerpts from Fitch's manuscript ("Notes for a History of Washington County, NY," NY Genealogical & Biographical Soc., NYC; and elsewhere on microfilm) present the liveliest "voices" collected by the 19th-century scholar. Some portions of Adler's "Their Own Voices" (first published in 1983) were re-published in her "In the Path of War: Children of the American Revolution Tell Their Stories" (Cobblestone Publishing, 1998). A facsimile reprint of the 1983 book, containing all material originally excerpted from Fitch, is now offered here.

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