

Elial Todd **Foote** (1796 – 1877)
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2014

Elial **Foote** (E.T. **Foote**) was born in Gill MA on 1 May 1796 to Samuel Foote (1770 – 1848) and Eliza (**Doolittle**) **Foote**. In 1798 the family relocated to Sherburne NY, where Elial grew up. After his early education Elial studied medicine and was licensed by the Chenango County medical society, later receiving his MD degree. In 1815 he moved to Jamestown NY and established his medical practice, although after a few years ill health caused him to abandon it. Elial was elected to the State Legislature in 1819 and again in 1826 and 1827.

He was an Associate Judge from 1818 to 1823, and then he became a “first judge” of Chautauqua County, a position he held for 20 years. The “First Judges” of the Common Pleas were appointed by the governor and the state senate until 1846. In 1811, Zattu **Cushing** was appointed the first “First Judge” of Chautauqua County, then Elial T. **Foote** in 1824, and then Thomas A. **Osborne** in 1843. Elial T. **Foote** was especially active in anti-slavery efforts in Chautauqua County in 1843 and supported the Liberty ticket in 1844. He removed to new Haven CT in 1845, and there resumed his medical practice for some 20 years.

Elial T. **Foote**'s antislavery efforts are well documented in papers that he collected himself. He had begun gathering historical material as early as the 1820s, amassing a large collection of newspapers, reminiscences, letters, and memoranda. It all went with him when he moved to Connecticut, where he planned to write a history of Chautauqua County. Among those papers, now preserved by the Chautauqua County Historical Society in Westfield NY, there is a segment devoted to **Foote**'s anti-slavery involvement. Those papers may be found in Vol. 9 at the following: http://www.mcclurgmuseum.org/collection/archives/elial_t_foote_papers/elial_t_foote_papers.html.

Elial's brother Samuel **Foote**, Jr. (1798 – 1856), was also involved in the abolition movement, and was cited as an attendee at the county anti-slavery meeting of 25 September 1839 in Fredonia. The minutes of that meeting are on file at the D. R. **Barker** Museum in Fredonia. Among the other persons listed in the minutes were, Dr. James **Pettit** (president and chair), Rev. A. P. **Hawley**, Rev. E. **Parmlee**, R.P. **Johnson**, H. C. **Frisbee**, N. **Gray**, Nathaniel **West**, Rev. Mr. **Orton** of Ripley, C. O. **Matthews**, John **Crane**, Thomas **Danforth**, Havens B. **Brigham**, Wm. R. **Rogers**, F. A. **Redington**, John H. **Walker**, A. F. **Taylor**, A. **Hazeltine**, Rufus **Jones**, Wm. **Breed**, G. C. **Delamatter**, and P. **Palmiter**, Jr.

Yet, Elial never did write the history of Chautauqua County. Instead, Elial's collection of historical papers was passed along to his anti-slavery colleague Andrew W. **Young**, who did write a definitive history of the county. The papers had been passed from **Foote** to **Young** in June 1873, during an Old Settlers Reunion, which was held at Fredonia, NY. The *Jamestown Evening Journal* of 11 June 1873 noted, "Judge E.T. **Foote** has arrived, and brought with him his collection of historical items, consisting of scrap books, etc. amounting to thirty-two volumes, and expects for weeks to assist Hon. A.W. **Young** in the preparation of his history of Chautauqua County."

In another *Journal* issue **Foote** was quoted as referring to his "twenty-four large" volumes, and the *Censor* of 18 June 1873 noted, "Here he pointed to 26 large folio volumes of historic scrap books on the stage as an evidence of his labor." Whatever the precise number of volumes, the collection was enormous, and it was given to **Young** for his use.