

Edited by Maureen Hubbard Barros, Brian W. Gorman, and Robert A. Uhlig



# STONE HOUSES

*of Jefferson County*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD MARGOLIS



# STONE HOUSES

*of Jefferson County*

Jefferson County, New York, has one of the richest concentrations of stone houses in America. As many as 500 stone houses, churches, and commercial buildings were built there before 1860. Some of the buildings are beautiful mansions built by early entrepreneurs; others are small vernacular farmhouses. Some are clustered together; others dot the countryside near stone outcroppings. Embedded in the fabric of each building are the stories of its location, its maker, and its inhabitants over time.

Lavishly illustrated with almost 300 photographs, this volume highlights eighty-five stone houses in the region. The editors explore both the beauty and permanence of the stonework and the courage and ambition of the early dwellers. They detail the ways in which skilled masons utilized local limestone and sandstone, crafting double-faced stone walls to protect against fire and harsh winters. The book includes discussions of the geology of the region, the stone buildings that have been lost, and the preservation and care of existing structures. *Stone Houses of Jefferson County* provides a fascinating look at the intrinsic beauty of these buildings and the historical links they provide to our early settlement.

# Stone Houses of Jefferson County

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*Edited by*

Maureen Hubbard Barros, Brian W. Gorman,  
*and* Robert A. Uhlig

*Photographs by* Richard Margolis



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*Manufactured in the United States of America*

*To Teresa Mitchell (1954–2012),  
Executive Director of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail,  
passionate promoter of local history, founding member of  
the Stone Building Society of Northern New York,  
friend, and catalyst for this book.*





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# FOREWORD

Across Jefferson County, memorable stone houses have fascinated generations of residents and visitors. A drive along many country highways exposes a passerby to large and small, simple and elaborate stone houses. Many are still homes; others have become museums or government facilities. Most are bathed in the shade of trees planted many years ago to protect the house from the hot sun of summer and expose it to the warmth of the sun in winter.

The heritage of these houses, whether in Cape Vincent or Brownville or Chaumont or LeRay, ties our communities to the geology and geography we revere and to our French past. The first significant effort to write a history of the stone houses of Jefferson County was part of the life's work of the late David F. Lane, a reporter for the *Watertown Daily Times* for 52 years. He spent thousands of hours examining property records at the county clerk's

office and reading archived newspaper accounts to document each house. His work resulted in a meticulous series of photographs and thumbnail house-by-house histories, which appeared in the *Times* in the 1930s and 1940s.

Now a consortium of new historians and today's new stewards of these wonderful houses have updated and expanded the history of many of these buildings. This book will ensure that the legacy of the homes built from limestone quarried across the county by our original settlers will live on.

The scholarship of each author in this work gives new life to these old houses, their owners, and their builders by perpetuating the past. This fine book will stand the test of time, as have these historic limestone houses.

John B. Johnson Jr.  
Editor, *Watertown Daily Times*,  
Watertown, New York



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A grassroots project like this book naturally depends on the generosity of many people. We would like to express our gratitude to those who helped with the research, particularly the town and local historians who participated by writing or providing information on their locales. Regrettably, Town of Hounsfield and Village of Sackets Harbor Co-Historian, Robert E. Brennan, died in 2013, before release of this book. The project would not have been possible without the collaboration of stone house owners, the stewards of these properties who gave permission to photograph and told stories about their homes. Members of the Stone Building Society of Northern New York have also contributed financially toward publication.

Others who assisted with research were: Terry Mandigo, genealogy coordinator Flower Memorial Library, Watertown, New York; Melissa Woodrick, Educator and Curator, Jefferson County Historical Society; Lisa M. Carr, Librarian, *Watertown Daily Times*; Julia Gosier and volunteers at the Lyme Heritage Center, Three Mile Bay, New York; Jim Ranger, Jefferson County Historian; Kent A. Bolke, Curator, 10th Mountain Division & Fort Drum Museum, Fort Drum, New York; Constance B. Barone, Site Manager, Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site, Sackets Harbor, New York; and Cynthia Howk of the Landmark Society of Western New York.

We were initially encouraged in this project by John B. Johnson Jr., of the *Watertown Daily Times*.

All David F. Lane photographs are reprinted with permission of the *Watertown Daily Times*. Other good people who reacted to early drafts of the book were Janet Maher, Candace Rhea, Maxine Bell, Dave and Jackie LaMora, Alex Barros, Claire Bonney, PhD, and Robert Daly, MD.

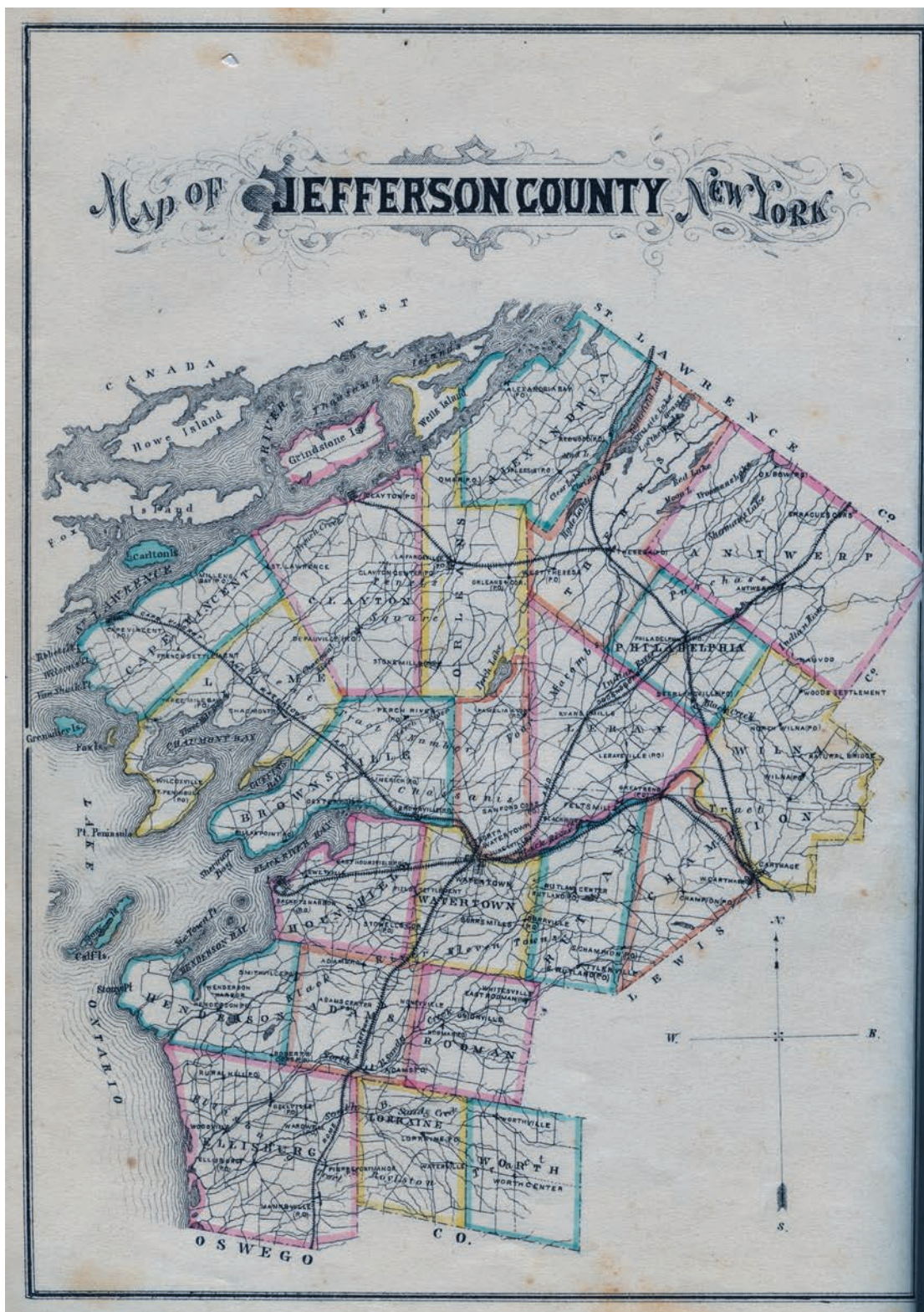
Special thanks go to Kenneth A. Schwarz, geologist, and Jerome E. Zaykoski, CPQ, Supervising Mined Land Specialist for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, who generously helped us identify limestone and sandstone in the county; Nicholas Potovszky for his plan drawings; Andrew Barros, PhD, for his translations; Ginny Kutzleb for logistical assistance; Ruth Uhlig for continuous support; and Matthew Kudelka for his careful editing of the manuscript.

We thank our photographer, Richard Margolis, who donated his time and expertise to help us realize our goal of seeing the stone houses through the eyes of a new generation. Much of this book is about riding the roads of Jefferson County and documenting its stone house heritage through Margolis's lens.

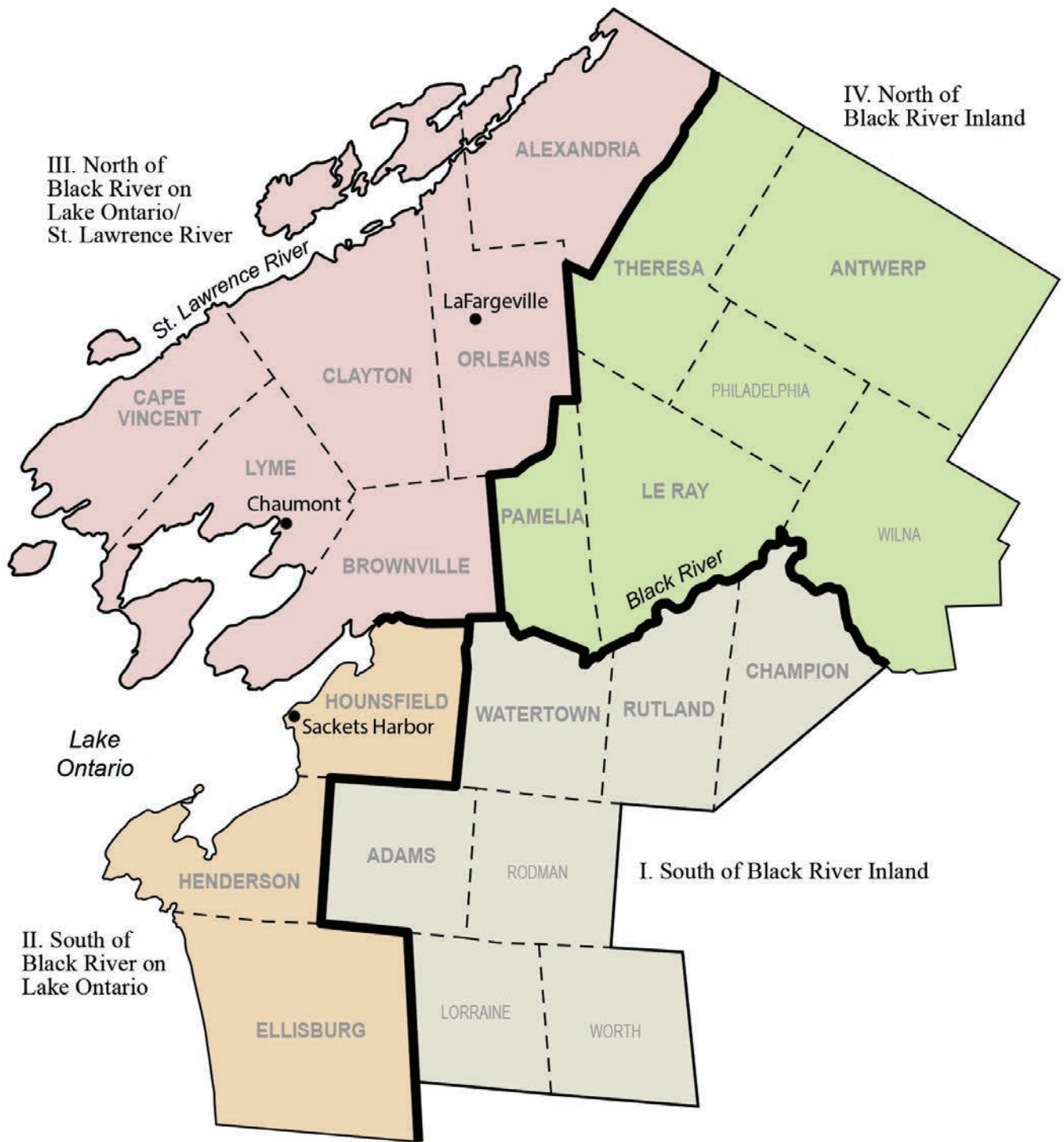
Finally, it is understood that we take responsibility for the views expressed.

Maureen Hubbard Barros  
Brian W. Gorman  
Robert A. Uhlig





1. Map of Jefferson County, New York, from L. H. Everts & Co., *History of Jefferson County, New York, 1797-1878*.



2. Map of Jefferson County, New York, with townships divided into regions north and south of the Black River. Courtesy of Syracuse University Cartography Laboratory.



# Stone Houses of Jefferson County





# INTRODUCTION

maureen hubbard barros,  
brian w. gorman, and robert a. uhlig

*When buildings are of durable materials [stone and brick] every new edifice is an actual and permanent acquisition to the State, adding to its value as well as to its ornament.*

—Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Around 1806, an unknown stonemason cut blocks of limestone from the shoreline of Lake Ontario to begin building one of the first stone houses in Jefferson County, New York. The house was constructed at the direction of James LeRay de Chaumont, a Frenchman by birth, friend of Benjamin Franklin, and owner of more than a quarter of a million acres to the north of the Black River. The house was intended as a land office for selling allotments to early settlers, and it became a resting place between LeRay's home near Watertown and that of his son in Cape Vincent on the St. Lawrence River.

This prominent early settler would direct the building of three stone houses: the Chaumont House, the Stone House in Cape Vincent, and the second LeRay Mansion in LeRaysville. Perhaps his choice of stone was influenced by memories of his family chateau in Chaumont-sur-Loire, France. Or perhaps it was the easy availability of stone, or his need for security from fire for his land office, or the desire to impress potential purchasers, who would emerge from the wilderness and see a permanent

civilized presence. Whatever his reason, the sense of endurance and the natural beauty of the stone in these and other buildings in the county continue to hold a special attraction.

Soon after building began, however, LeRay returned to France for ten years. The War of 1812 interfered with work on the house, and it was not completed until 1818.

The years immediately after the War of 1812 were prosperous ones for LeRay and for Jefferson County. Federal money was flowing into Sackets Harbor, where barracks were being constructed, and throughout the county, farmers and villagers had accumulated enough wealth from wartime commerce that they were able to display their affluence, and their confidence.

In an area of upstate New York known for its harsh winters, the high risk of fire from open hearths, lanterns, and candles made stone a popular construction material, especially for public buildings. There was plenty of fine timber nearby, but wooden frame buildings were more likely to burn down, and stone was easy to find in creek

I.1. Stylistically, each of the LeRay family houses is very different from the others, but together they express an enthusiasm for building in stone that marks the period from 1815 to 1860. Chaumont House, 1806–18, was the first house that LeRay ordered built.



banks or exposed outcroppings. Many early settlers, though, used stone because of its durability and status; it linked them to historic building traditions in other parts of the world and it reflected their desire for permanence in a county that was still being settled.

The New York State census for 1855 indicates a boom in the construction of stone buildings in twenty of the county's twenty-two townships. It lists 429 stone dwellings (houses, hotels, garrisons, hospitals, asylums, jails) as well as sixty stone schoolhouses. Had other structures such as mills and churches been counted, the total number of stone buildings would have been far higher. Stone dwellings outnumbered brick by two to one and represented about four percent of all shelters built—brick, frame, and log—for a population of about 66,000. The average stone house was valued at around \$1,000. Only the more established counties around New York City exceeded Jefferson in the number of stone dwellings. But by the mid-twentieth century, their number had been reduced by almost one half.

Today, most of us who live near these buildings give little thought to their origins. Sometimes we point appreciatively to the beauty of a stone

farmhouse in the countryside or to the strength and age of the stonework of a church in town. If we happen to live in one of these houses, the skills of the unknown builders command our respect, for they knew how to situate a house, how to plumb a wall, and how to provide functioning chimneys, ovens, cisterns, and gutters. For the owners, style was also important, and they vied with their neighbors for the most elegant entrances and windows. These stone houses gave their first owners a sense of safety and a feeling of pride, and that has not changed. Later generations would often record “going to the stone house” with a sense of its uniqueness. Today's owners add the obligation of stewardship both for the structure of the house and for its history.

This book describes eighty-eight stone structures built in Jefferson County during the early days of settlement, mainly before 1860. It is largely the work of local historians and an architectural historian. The contributors have consulted land records, family archives, and published histories, and have conducted interviews with the buildings' owners. Richard Margolis, a photographer who specializes in architecture, has provided photographs of the buildings as they exist today. These have been



I.2. The more elegant and detailed Stone House in Cape Vincent (1815) was built for Vincent LeRay on the St. Lawrence River.



I.3. LeRay's first mansion burned and was replaced by this grand stone one in 1825–27.



augmented by period photographs, many of them from the David F. Lane archive of the *Watertown Daily Times*. The project owes much to Lane's documentary series from the 1930s and 1940s on old mansions and houses. Excerpts and drawings from Jacques Milbert's *Picturesque Itinerary of the Hudson River and the Peripheral Parts of North America* (1828) have been included because Milbert was a keen observer of the county's landscape and people in the early 1820s. He also ate and slept in Chaumont House when it was a tavern.

For most of the houses, we have little information about their early owners, but we were fortunate to locate some accounts in diaries and private papers. For example, Ulysses S. Grant's wife, Julia Dent Grant, describes for us a cold winter in the officers' quarters at Sackets Harbor. Parnelle Hubbard's diary records the buildings in Champion and her father's preference for stone. Vincent LeRay discusses General Jacob Brown's experiments with grapevines on his Brownville estate, and three generations of the Amos E. Wood family

document in amazing detail life on their farm in Woodville.

The stone buildings shown and described in this book are some of the most notable in Jefferson County and have left a permanent imprint here. They represent a local tradition of skilled masons and carpenters that lasted for decades, adapting all the while to changing styles in public buildings and domestic spaces. Stone can be both the most prestigious of materials and also the most humble. After putting up a large church, workers were often allowed to take gleanings from their work for their own homes. As such, the buildings offer insight into an American story about successful frontier settlement on many levels—the land office, the mill site, the farm, the bank, the church, the school, the quarry.

Although there are many similarities, no two of the county's stone buildings are alike. The building forms reflect their functions and the mood of their time. Some are strikingly well preserved after almost two hundred years of use, while others are languishing. As the chapter on lost houses shows, many have vanished. Poverty and progress have been both the savior of historical detail and the cause of its loss.

Although we draw attention to architecture, this is not strictly an architectural study, nor is it a scholarly history of the period. Our goal is to entice the reader to look more closely at Jefferson County's remarkable collection of local stone buildings—at their sitings in the landscape, their proportions, their functions, their variations, their architectural details, even their mortar. We hope that increased awareness of this unrecognized concentration of stone buildings will lead to greater appreciation of them as well as to their preservation. We need them not only for their intrinsic beauty but also for the historical links they provide to our early settlement. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, stone buildings add value and ornament to a region. Let us recognize the value and ornament of our stone heritage in this county named in honor of Jefferson.

**LANDS FOR SALE,**

Situatd on the *Black-River, Pleasant River, Pearl-River and the Oswegatchie-River.*

**T**HIS is a large and very excellent tract of LAND. It is well watered, well situated, and well timbered. The title is indisputable. It is now offered for sale at a low price, and upon an extensive credit—the greater part for the first year without interest. A better opportunity is certainly not afforded in any part of the state to all good settlers desirous of purchasing first-rate Farms.

The settlements on this tract have for some time past proceeded with unprecedented rapidity. Sales have been made to a great amount to respectable settlers from various parts of this and the eastern states. To *Friends or Quakers*, principally from Pennsylvania and New-Jersey, within the last six months, to the amount of sixty thousand dollars; and there is good cause to believe that nearly the whole of this extensive tract will be taken up in the course of the next season by these best of citizens. They pay for the land they purchase, and are rich in cash to make improvements. Roads are already opened, and more will be opened this season—one of which will run from the great bend of the *Black-River* in the town of *Champion thro' the centre of the tract to the St. Lawrence*—mills are already built and more are building—also bridges across the *Black-River* for the convenience, ease and benefit of the settlers, and every exertion shall be made by the subscribers to promote the interests of all those who may become purchasers of these lands.—The subscribers intend to clear two hundred acres of land between this and the 1st day of September next. Any person or persons wishing to contract to do this business, will find themselves accommodated by applying in the course of the next month.

**BROWN, HOW & Co.**  
duly authorised for  
*James D. Le Ray de Chaumont.*  
Brownville, March 26, 1803. [57]

I.4. Advertisement in the *Utica Patriot*, April 16, 1804.

history and settlement of the county

Located north of the Mohawk Valley, between the Adirondack Mountains and the Lake Ontario–St. Lawrence River waterway, Jefferson County is roughly 1,800 square miles of an enormous tract



that was deeded by the Oneida people to New York State in 1788 and opened to settlement as part of the Macomb Purchase in 1791.

The Black River bisects the county, flowing northwest from the Adirondacks for about thirty-four miles before entering Lake Ontario. Its banks are mostly limestone, and it drops around 480 feet in a series of falls. The Indian and Perch rivers and their lake systems dominate the northern part of the county, Stony and Sandy creeks the southern.

The Oneida people were no longer a significant presence when settlers began to arrive. They had used Jefferson County as a hunting ground, and there were traces of their habitations near Talcott's Falls, Sanford Corners, and along Black River Bay. Evidence of even earlier Woodland Indian settlements has been found in Ellisburg, on Pillar Point, and elsewhere in the county.

The new government of the United States wanted the area settled as a buffer against the British in Canada. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, most of the settlers came from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania, but a significant number of French émigrés were attracted to the area. The low cost of land also lured immigrants from Germany and the British Isles.

There were two distinct eras of French settlement. The first, in Castorland in 1793, was unsuccessful, but after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, refugees—including Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon—moved into the county at the encouragement of James LeRay. These nobles were unprepared for the harsh climate and the isolation, and most of them returned to France or moved to cities, leaving their names and houses behind. This chapter of early settlement is visible today in the Napoleonic room at the beautiful Flower Memorial Library in Watertown.

In the 1830s, LeRay convinced a group of French immigrants (probably fewer than twenty families) to settle on farmland in the Rosiere area of Cape Vincent. Some of their descendants still live in the county. Similarly, LeRay and Jacob

Brown reached out to Quakers from Pennsylvania, who were attracted to the area near LeRaysville, where they established a new Philadelphia.

Slavery was legal in New York State until 1827. However, in 1799 a law was passed that freed children born in slavery, which doomed the practice. The 1814 census had listed twenty-nine slaves in Jefferson County; by 1820 there were only five, along with seventy-nine free “colored” males and sixty-three free “colored” females. The LeRay family's slave and nursemaid, Rachel, is buried on what was their property, now part of Fort Drum. The county bordered on Canada, and several Underground Railroad routes are known to have passed through it.

The county's rivers and creeks were prime locations for mills because their water flow was usually manageable. Blessed with these and rich lumber resources, the population was soon growing quickly. Eventually the county was subdivided into twenty-two townships, with Watertown being awarded the county seat.

The War of 1812 was the defining historical event of this period, for it stimulated the local economy, especially in agriculture and shipbuilding. Sackets Harbor became a focal point for the defense of what was then the country's northwest frontier. Local militias were formed, and many veterans of both the War of 1812 and the Revolutionary War, including one British deserter, built stone houses in the area after 1815.

The two earliest industries in the county were lumbering and farming. Immediately on purchasing a piece of land, the new owner was required to clear a section of its forest—a task usually carried out with an axe. The trees were then burned and the ashes sold for about three dollars a barrel, roughly the cost of one acre of land in 1820. Local asheries then reduced the potash to pearl ash, which was shipped to Montreal and then to England, where it was used to make soap and in the woolen industry.

As soon as the first shelter, usually a log cabin, was built, planting began. The early crops were

grains, hay, and vegetables. Local grist mills and sawmills were established to grind flour and saw lumber. A seed industry developed in beans and peas in Cape Vincent and Lyme. Livestock usually included oxen for hauling, as well as cows, pigs, and chickens. Sheep were introduced for their wool. Women and girls spun and wove cloth both for their own families and for sale. *Spafford's Gazetteer* reported that in 1820, exactly 407,862 yards of cloth were made "in a household way." By then, the county's population was around 33,000.

Other industries—fishing, shipbuilding, quarrying, tanning, distilling, and ice harvesting—grew alongside the mills. Cotton, woolen, and paper mills were established along the Black River. The southern part of the county, especially around Ellisburg, had the best soil. Virgin soil in other areas, if left unfertilized, usually did not last longer than a decade. With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, access to cheaper and better farmland in Ohio and western New York encouraged some farmers to leave the area. Those who stayed turned toward dairying and market gardening to supply the industrial villages along the river.

Settlers' diaries from the time indicate that in winter, people often traveled by sled. Usually, though, they walked. Walking ten miles to the nearest grist mill or store might include crossing the Black River on a rickety bridge.

The Black River and other streams were partly navigable, but road building was still important for settlement. The state developed roads, which were improved by turnpikes with toll charges. The 1840s saw the introduction of plank roads (dirt roads covered by wooden boards). Within fifty years the wilderness had been transformed into a patchwork of farmlands crossed by roads. By the 1850s, railroads had come, beginning with the Watertown, Rome, and Cape Vincent line; it was followed by the Sackets Harbor and Ellisburg line, which linked with the Watertown–Rome line. Another line went from Watertown to Potsdam.

Early on, each settlement formed religious societies, which held services in meeting houses.

Prominent landowners often donated land for churches, and building funds were established to raise them. In the case of the Reformed Church of the Thousand Isles, parishes in other parts of the state contributed toward building costs. Architecturally, these churches varied widely, from the Christ Episcopal Church in Sackets Harbor with its classical columned portico to the Catholic Church of St. Vincent of Paul in Cape Vincent with its engaged tower.

The citizenry arranged for the building of schools and the hiring of teachers. In 1841, Walter Bickers Camp of Sackets Harbor offered fifty dollars to any school district in the county that was prepared to erect a stone schoolhouse. The State Census of 1855 indicates that by that year, there were sixty stone schoolhouses in Jefferson County; only one other county in the state had more stone schools than that. In Watertown, the county seat, a courthouse, jail, bank, opera house, and arsenal were all built of brick and stone. These structures reflected the resourcefulness, strong will, and public-spiritedness of the early-nineteenth-century settlers in Jefferson County. The jail was for the occasional horse thief and malcontent.

We have three excellent records of daily life in a stone farmhouse in Jefferson County. They are handwritten personal journals belonging to three generations of the Wood family and cover the years 1846–49, 1856, and 1861. Amos, the father, a village elder, drew up agreements and lent and collected money in dollars and shillings; he also made shoes, drilled wells, stacked washwood, hoed corn, attended meetings, and went to church on Sunday. His wife Hannah wove cloth and was paid cash for it (one dollar was enough to buy cloth for two boys' frock coats). Amos's 37-year-old daughter Elvira Wood Finn cooked, baked, cleaned, and washed; she also spun wool, gathered walnut bark in the woods to dye cloth, made rugs from old rags, assisted at births, sewed shrouds after sitting up all night with the deceased, pared apples by the bushel, made tallow and candles, planted heliotrope and rose roots in her garden, read magazines,

and wrote letters to relatives. Grandson George, aged sixteen, hauled wood and manure, helped with bridge repair, slaughtered calves, hunted and fished, sometimes went to school and to singing nights, and for his birthday boiled down molasses to make candy. These journals record the thermometer reading morning, noon, and night. The seasons are well marked: snowy roads are broken by a team of horses; asparagus and then peas are eaten; meadow hay is cut in the summer; school resumes in December. It is sometimes difficult to imagine the closeness and noise of spinning wheels, a loom, and so many people living in the Wood House together. Yet the journals give the impression not of isolation but of busy engagement with community and extended family.

### buildings surveyed

The buildings we discuss in this book were mostly chosen by local historians, who obviously know their areas best. For our purposes, we have divided the county into four geographic areas north and south of the Black River. Each house has been assigned the name of its original owner if known or, in a few cases, the name traditionally given to it. Appendix A lists all of the stone structures surveyed; those open to the public have been starred. It also gives information on house style, original floor plan, and first owner.

Whether it is the rubble stone house of a farmer on the road to town, or the cut stone mansion of a wealthy industrialist along the Black River, each building offers insights into those who built it and lived there. The stone houses range from small one-and-a-half-story vernacular farmhouses to elegant mansions in the Federal and Greek Revival styles. Most of them reflect English building traditions, though there is evidence of French influence from both Quebec and France.

Clusters of stone houses still stand in Cape Vincent, Brownville, Champion, Pamela, LaFargeville, and Hounsfield. But most of the stone houses of Jefferson County are in its rolling countryside,

along streams or on the road to town. They are farmhouses, usually built by settlers who had farmed in other places.

Regrettably, for the most part, we do not know the architect's name. It is believed that the hospital in Sackets Harbor was designed by Martin Euclid Thompson and the Sterling Mansion in Watertown by an unknown English architect. That said, most of the houses we discuss reflect the English tradition, with square or rectangular rooms. For example, the roots of a New England Cape Cod center chimney are found in the Wood House, which was built by a Connecticut family. By contrast, the casement windows in the Peugnet House and the stucco on the LeRay Mansion reflect the French taste of their original owners. When we know it, we give the first owner's ethnicity or place of origin. Usually, the first owner was not the actual builder.

We know the names of some of the stonemasons: Asa Eggleston, Ignatius Wiley, Hial Cook. Those men and the master builder David Granger, the designer William Smith, and countless quarrymen are unsung heroes of our stone house legacy.

It is said that a large number of stonemasons were looking for work after the Erie Canal was completed in 1825. Milbert recorded that Canadians sought work as masons and carpenters along the St. Lawrence River. According to Bessie Walldroff, historian of the Town of Orleans in 1981, the master mason for the LaFarge Mansion was paid \$1,200 for his work between 1833 and 1835. Other masons worked a twelve-hour day for eighty-eight cents. Common laborers were paid twenty-five to thirty cents per day. In the 1830s, a perch of stone (sixteen and a half feet long by eighteen feet high by twelve inches thick) cost between sixty-five cents and two dollars.

Except for the Wood House in Ellisburg, all of the buildings presented in this book have double-faced walls. At basement level, some of these walls are as thick as thirty inches. In many houses, like the Calvin Britton House in Brownville, they are so thick that the window wells were beveled to

maximize the interior light. A number of houses still have a bake oven in the kitchen fireplace; even more still have a basement cistern. The changes most commonly made have been to windows, doors, stairways, and sanitation (the first houses had only outhouses). Also, some buildings have wood frame additions. There is often evidence that over time stones have settled, such as a voussoir slipping or a lintel cracking, but most of the houses that have been lived in and cared for have held true and square for almost two hundred years.

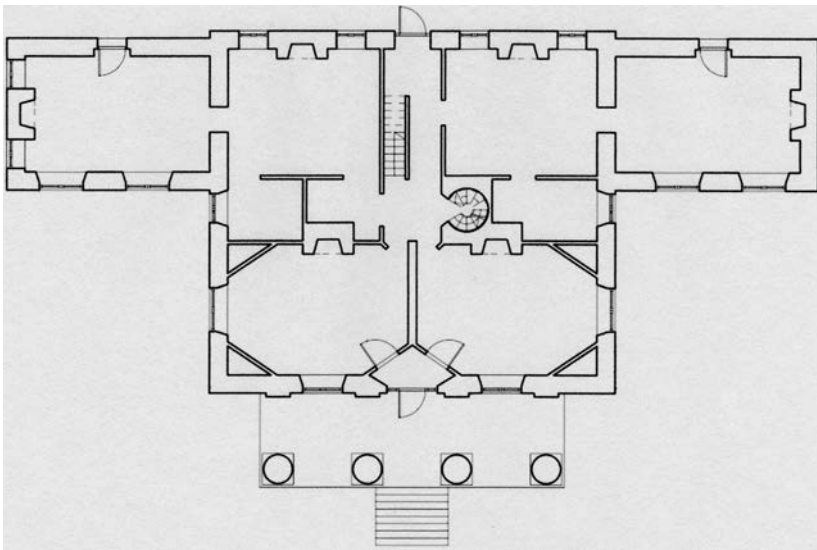
Every town in Jefferson County had its leading personality—LeRay, Brown, Hubbard, Sterling, Hungerford, LaFarge. All of them chose to live in stone houses. Affluent developers like LeRay and John LaFarge, and successful businessmen like Orville Hungerford and John Felt, demanded refinement in their large, center hall mansions. Architectural details were important to them.

Lintels and quoins were cut and dressed, doorways were crowned with elliptical arches and fan lights, roofs were finished with balustrades, and interiors featured pine, cedar, and oak from the local forests. Also valued was a grand, park-like setting, which impressed visitors and potential land purchasers.

Sometimes an entire family—for example, Jacob Brown's from Pennsylvania—came to make a new start together, clearing land along the Black River. In other cases, a young couple, like the Parrishes, lived in a log cabin for a dozen years before building in stone.

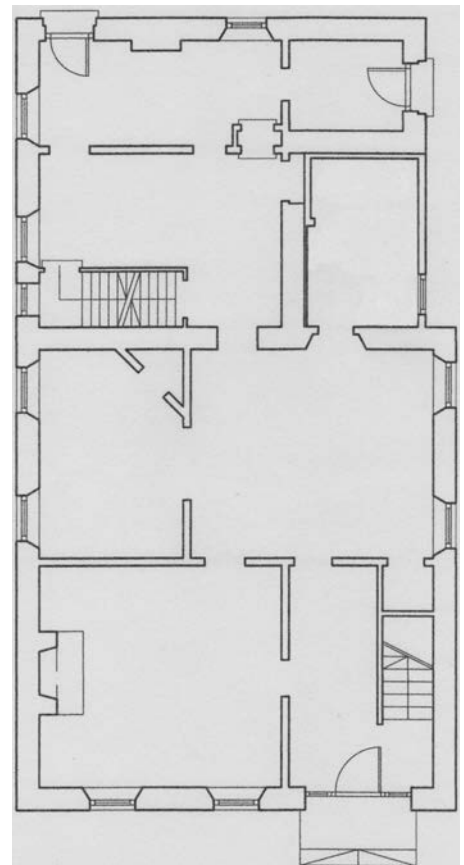
For farmers, using local stone was a practical matter. It reduced the risk of fire, provided a cool area for milk products, and was close at hand. It also signaled their success in cutting down trees, burning them for ash, and tilling their land.

Noadiah Hubbard's two houses in Champion and Henry Brown's house in Brownville exemplify



I.5. Plan of the LeRay Mansion, 1825–27, LeRaysville. A large center hall block is flanked by side wings. A two-story columned portico overlooks a garden. Plan by Nicholas Potovszky.

I.6. Plan of Hiram Hubbard House, 1820, Champion. This large house has a side hall plan with elegant fireplaces on the main floor and a cooking fireplace in the cellar. Drawing by Nicholas Potovszky.





the large house in a village or farm setting. Hubbard used the best local limestone, included name and date stones, and added perhaps the only existing stone gutter in the county. Both men's houses functioned as part of a farm, which meant that a dependable water source was crucial. Brown had a springhouse nearby for holding milk; his ell (a smaller addition to the main house) provided extra room for the hired help.

The smallest houses, one and a half stories high and thirty to thirty-eight feet in length, fall into the vernacular tradition. Usually two rooms deep with a center stairway and gable end chimneys, the form was common in wood or stone. The rubble stone model reflected the owner's limited means. More prosperous homeowners chose cut stone for the front façade with tooled quoins and lintels. Ells were added for summer kitchens and mudrooms.

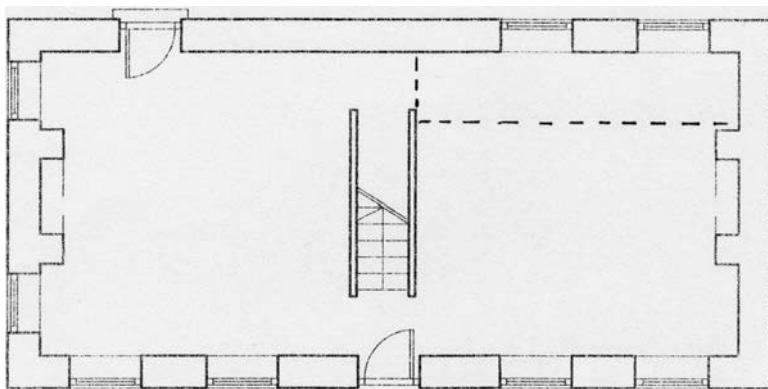
Two atypical houses surveyed in this book are the Evans, Gaige, Dillenback House in Chaumont and the Knap Mansion in Brownville. These are sophisticated townhouses, one with roof dormers and the other with a stepped gable roof. Each has a side hall entrance that looks out over the main street and the original owner's business.

Some of the stone houses in Jefferson County have a variety of different types of stone patched together. Generally, though, the settlers built aesthetically pleasing structures, perhaps copying other houses or following the designs in pattern books. The stonework varied with the stone's source, the mason's skill, and the owner's wishes.

Later mortaring has often obscured the house's original appearance.

Public and commercial buildings are another category and are equally diverse. Outstanding for their fine stonework and detail are the Union Hotel, the officers' Stone Row, and the military hospital in Sackets Harbor. The Old Stone Shop in Three Mile Bay is an unusual example of a space designed for two blacksmiths. In Cape Vincent, the Fisheries Building, once a grist mill, is impressive in size and reminiscent of the many mills built during the nineteenth century. Stone schoolhouses, like the one on Allen Road in Brownville, and churches, like the Reformed Church of the Thousand Isles in Alexandria Bay, reflect the assumption that stone buildings, being safer from fire, were especially suitable for children and public gathering places.

Stone walls (or as some say, fences) often enclosed both the house and the fields. In 1830, the View Committee of the Jefferson County Agricultural Society remarked on the impressive stone wall of a local 200-acre farm. The wall extended for 500 rods (one and a half miles) and was three feet thick at the base, gradually tapering as it rose to five feet in height. Unfortunately, many of these stone walls were taken down when the roads were covered with macadam, and the stones were used as road base. Later these roadbeds were raised, causing the nearby houses, like the Hiram Hubbard House in Champion, to appear sunken in a landscape they once dominated.



I.7. Plan of a typical vernacular farmhouse (Ackerman House, 1835, Town of Brownville) with side gables and a central entrance. A wood frame ell typically would have extended from the rear of the main house. Drawing by Nicholas Potovszky.



I.8. Abandoned one-and-a-half-story wood frame farmhouse with center hall front door, gable end chimneys, and common layout of four rooms on the main floor with an ell extending at the rear. Near Omar, Orleans Township.

This style was frequently copied in stone, as with the Alexander Bessau House [Figure I.9].



I.9. Vernacular stone dwelling of Alexander Bessau, Cape Vincent, 1830s. David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times*.



### stone types and stonework

Generally, the townships are somewhat distinct from one another in terms of the stone used and various architectural details. Stone was usually quarried near the building site, so the houses reflect the coloring and fossil content of those sources; one could say they are a continuum of the rock on which they stand.

Much of Jefferson County is underlain with Ordovician limestone, the remains of an ancient

seabed of tiny marine creatures. Although generically called limestone, this sedimentary rock has various compositions ranging from the Trenton Group with its numerous fossil inclusions to the Black River Group with its fine, dense texture and blue-grey color. These calcium deposits give way to sandstone in the northern townships. Created from particles of rocks and sand, sandstone has a wider spectrum of earth colors.

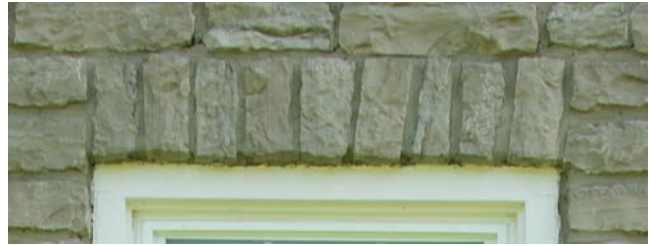
Colors in limestone range from very bright light greys to very dark blue greys. Houses built of

sandstone, even though of the same architectural forms, present a warmer, sunnier palette. At least one farmhouse (the Ira Hinsdale House) combines sandstone and limestone.

Because the cost of shipping stone was higher than the cost of quarrying it, houses were usually built of stone drawn by oxen from a nearby quarry or outcropping. In some instances we have been able to determine the source for a building's stone. For example, in Pamela, stone for the Harger Mansion was quarried one hundred feet away. Unused cut blocks could still be seen in 2007 in a small quarry behind the Goodrich House in the Town of LeRay. The New York State Geological Map, which indicates 120 small quarries in Jefferson County, was a valuable tool for the geologists who assisted us.

Quarried limestone of the highest quality became the chief industry in Chaumont, which shipped stone to Oswego for its port. We have included many close-up photographs of the varieties of stone used in the houses, as well as a chapter on local geology and quarrying.

Comparing stonework across the county is a pleasant challenge. For example, many of the Cape Vincent houses have voussoirs capping their doors and windows, while those in nearby Brownville and Pamela have lintels. One can speculate that lintels demanded larger stones and more tooling, and thus were more expensive. On the other hand, skill was required to shape and fit voussoirs. Ignatius Wiley, a German-trained stonemason, used voussoirs for the buildings he is known to have worked on. Asa Eggleston, working in Champion, used lintel stones. The occasional banding of stone across the face of a building may be the signature of an individual mason. The fine Flemish bond work found in LaFargeville is a remnant of another craftsman. There is evidence that there were more stepped gables on buildings, but they have been lost to weathering. The front façade of a building usually reveals the finest treatment of the stone. It is usually cut and dressed, in contrast to the rubble of the sides and back. The best work often sets up



I.10. Voussoirs topping a window of the Dezenngremel House, Cape Vincent. The mason was Ignatius Wiley.



I.11. Lintel on a window of the Charles Wilson House, Three Mile Bay, Lyme Township.

a play of smooth and textured stone or presents a smooth ashlar face with additional fine details.

In this book we will be describing lintels, voussoirs, courses, rubble, and other masonry details and architectural concepts. We have provided a glossary of architectural terms.

A good pointing job is said to last a hundred years, and in many houses today, there are traces of the original soft mortar. The owners of old stone buildings are warned not to point their houses with hard Portland cement. We provide a chapter on stone construction and preservation to help homeowners understand and preserve their buildings. It includes recipes for soft mortar mixes.

## future and preservation

A fortuitous confluence of geology and history has bequeathed to Jefferson County an astonishing gift of early stone buildings. From our survey of one-third of the 250 or so buildings remaining in the

county, it is evident that the area's architecture, commerce, and history are richer for this legacy. Some good steps have been taken to protect this inheritance for the future. Claire Bonney, PhD, through her writing and efforts with the Jefferson County Historical Society and the Earthwatch Foundation, has worked to draw attention to the French stone houses. Since 2000, the Stone Building Society of Northern New York has addressed the need to recognize and preserve stone structures through a program of house tours and workshops. Some individual townships have moved to have their historic buildings placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The 4 River Valleys Historical Society and town historian Lynn Thornton are restoring the Hiram Hubbard House as a research and educational center. Architect Darrel Rippeteau plans to turn the Irwin Brothers Store in Stone Mills into an arts center.

Other buildings, however, are begging for help. Too many have succumbed to the wrecker's ball, including the Massey House on Arsenal Street in Watertown, which was demolished in the late twentieth century. A database dedicated to the repair and maintenance of stone houses would be an asset for owners and contractors. Recognition that the stone houses of northern New York are of historic and architectural interest would raise their profile immeasurably and draw tourists.

Architect Witold Rybezynski suggests that old buildings remind us of who we once were—in our case, hardworking settlers in the forests of northern New York. The stone houses our ancestors built are still of their time, but also of ours. What will we do to ensure the continued presence of these houses for future generations?

## *Part One*

### Towns South of the Black River, Inland

1. Town of Champion
2. Town of Rutland
3. Town of Watertown
4. Town of Adams







1.2. Hiram Hubbard House. Built in 1820 for Noadiah Hubbard, this was one of the first of a cluster of stone houses in the Town of Champion. It became known as the Hiram Hubbard House when it was passed to Noadiah's son, and remained in the family until its donation to the 4 River Valleys Historical Society in 2005.



land he intended to settle—some of the best limestone in the state. On one trip, he and his men were forced to lower fifteen head of cattle down a steep gorge, then haul them up the other side.

#### h i r a m h u b b a r d h o m e s t e a d

Noadiah built log cabins in 1797 and 1799 and then a wood frame house in 1800, but as daughter Parnelle recorded in her journal, stone was his preferred material. The local “blue stone” was quarried about three miles from Champion on the way to Carthage. Asa Eggleston is mentioned as the stonemason in charge of constructing many of Noadiah's stone buildings. Noadiah and his family built a least six stone buildings in the little community, three of which are still occupied. According to Parnelle (and others), her father also built a cider mill, a potashery, a meeting house, a distillery, a schoolhouse, and several homes and barns, all of stone.

The oldest stone house, circa 1810, was possibly at one time the distillery. It remained in the Hubbard family until 1975 and has the rounded front steps found on other Hubbard homes. His



1.3. Hiram Hubbard House. Corner of Hiram Hubbard house showing the dressed stone of the front and the coursed stone of the side.





1.4. Hiram Hubbard House. Detail of beading on the keystone over the doorway.



1.5. Hiram Hubbard House. The side window is etched with family names: Georgie Hubbard, Fanny Mott, Carrie Knowles, Eva Coughlin, August 1888, 1892.

stone store was built in 1815 and stood for many years at the village crossroads.

Then in 1820, Noadiah built a stone house across the road from his frame house. Today, this ten-room homestead sits in the center of this crossroads community, on a six-acre lot just east of the intersection about thirty feet from New York State Route 126. It is a stately Federal style home of two stories. The stones on the front are dressed; those on the sides and back are of coursed rubble. There is a water table on three sides of the house.

The charming Federal style doorway has both a fan light and side lights with the original decorative trim. Larger stones above the front windows are inscribed: the first reads “Sept. 25th”, the second, “1820.” All the windows have deep limestone sills and flat limestone lintels with tooled surfaces. The gabled roof suggests that at one time this was a stepped gable home. There are visible interruptions in the stonework along the gable ends. In the attic there are purlin extensions to support a gable overhang. The cellar has the remains of a fireplace where the tasks of soap making and laundry might have been carried out. There is also a channeled stream in the cellar, most likely for cooling food products. There are two more fireplaces in the home and evidence of two others. The graceful stairway and banister are original and of a design seen in other Hubbard homes. Much of the original hardware is found throughout the house. Later, when Noadiah built a larger home nearby, the 1820 home passed to his eldest son, Hiram, after which it never left the family. It passed through many relatives before being donated to the 4 River Valleys Historical Society. In 2009, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is now undergoing substantial restoration.



1.6. Noadiah Hubbard House, 1831, with its center door and symmetrical façade, was Noadiah's third residence.

#### noadiah hubbard house

Construction of Noadiah's third residence began in 1831, a few hundred feet from his original frame house. This is the most imposing of all his homes, near the top of a long, gentle slope that leads to the entrance. There is a story that Noadiah wanted his home to be larger and more elaborate than the William Dorwin House, about a mile away toward Carthage. The ceilings throughout this house are ten feet high. The center hall has a beautiful

stairway with a full 180-degree turn. There are five bedrooms as well as servants' quarters on the second floor. The full attic has a high clearance, and bats. The original fan lights are intact at both ends of the attic, and the original limestone gutters are in place. There are several trapdoors leading to the cellar—one in the front hall, where hinges are visible against the staircase, and one in the kitchen, which has its original beehive oven. Wide limestone thresholds are found throughout the house. The deeply inset windows and wide sills show the



1.7. Interior of the brick beehive oven in the Noadiah Hubbard House.



1.8. The limestone gutter of the Noadiah Hubbard House is held in place with iron pins.





1.9. The Asa Gates House, 1828, is set into the hillside near a “spring of finest water.”

depth of the stone walls. The doorways indicate that there are two courses of stonework separated by an air space. The owners have found a number of items of glass and metal in a kitchen midden, just outside the back door.

#### asa gates house

Several other stone houses were built in and near Champion during the same period as the Hubbard houses. In 1828, after acquiring the land from Noadiah, Asa Gates built a charming stone house into the hillside opposite Hubbard’s first stone house. He built the home for his wife Mira, who would live there for forty years. Engraved in the lintel over the front door is “A.G. 1828.” The general architecture of the house is simple and attractive.

Entering the Gates House by the ground level door, you find yourself in what would have been the original kitchen, complete with a cooking hearth, a crane, and a bake oven. To the left is the entrance to the cellar, which sits on bedrock. Water is channeled along the wall and exits into the hillside. The stream clatters over shelves of limestone on its way to the stone house across the road. From the beginning, every property deed for this house



1.10. Front of the Asa Gates House showing rubble stone construction.



1.11. Asa Gates House. Engraved initials of Asa Gates over the front door.





1.12. Asa Gates House. Kitchen fireplace, with a beehive oven on the right.



1.14. Original 12/8 window in the kitchen of the Asa Gates House.



1.13. Asa Gates House. Exterior view of the brick beehive oven.

has transferred the right to use the “spring of finest water.”

The 12/8 windows of the Gates House have the characteristic deep sills, and all have their original glass. Here also we see the same simple railing that we find in most of the other homes in the Village of Champion. The floors have their original boards, which have been painted over the years and slope slightly toward the center. Most of the hardware is original. Because the house was built into the hillside, the second floor opens directly onto the backyard.

The current owner says that she always wanted rhubarb like her grandmother grew; the presence of an old patch in the back let her know she was “home.” There is an ancient black walnut tree there; it feeds the local squirrels, which sometimes find their way into the attic.

In 1833, a stone schoolhouse was built in Champion by the Masons, of which Noadiah was an officer. The lower story was for classrooms; the upper had meeting rooms for the Masonic Lodge. The school was later torn down and the stone used to build St. John’s Episcopal Church, which still stands in the village.





1.15. Stone barn near the Asa Gates House.

william dorwin house

About a mile down the road toward Carthage is a beautiful Georgian mansion on a hill well back from the road near a large grove of maple trees. It was built for William Dorwin in 1823. After his death it passed to his grandnephew, William Pierce Freeman; thus it was known as the “Freeman place” after 1878. William studied mathematics and political economy at Yale and then law in the office of John Clark of Watertown. When the Civil War broke out, he enlisted in the 10th New York Heavy Artillery. Freeman farmed 336 acres and

established numerous labor-saving devices on his land, including several windmills for grinding feed and other purposes. His son, Silas Augustine Freeman, is credited with planting the grove of maple trees, of which more than a hundred still survive. There is only one fireplace left in this remarkable home, which has been remodeled repeatedly over the years, erasing many of the details that supposedly aroused the envy of Noadiah Hubbard.

peck and pennock houses

There are other notable stone houses in the countryside. For example, the Peck Homestead was built by Joseph Peck, a native of New Haven, Connecticut, member of the Governor’s Foot Guards, Revolutionary War soldier, and artillery artificer of four years’ service who fought at the Battle of Lexington. He settled in Champion in 1803. His stone house, a short distance from Great Bend, was erected about 1827 from stone quarried from a ledge on the nearby farm of the parents of Frank W. Woolworth, the chain store magnate. This fine old farmstead has remained in the Peck family.

Nearby, in 1825, Reverend Wilson Pennock built another limestone house with his own hands.



1.16. The William Dorwin House was built in 1823 in the Georgian style. It sits on a hill well back from the road in a grove of maple trees.

1.17. The Jefferson Hotel,  
Great Bend, 1842, as  
photographed by David  
F. Lane for the *Water-  
town Daily Times* in the  
mid-twentieth century.



This is notable because the owner was not usually the actual builder. The Pennock and Peck houses are of similar construction and remind us that Champion was settled because of its good conditions for farming.

jeff erson hotel

The largest stone structure in the township is the Jefferson Hotel in Great Bend. Built in 1842 by

Jewett Clarke, a contractor on the Black River Canal, it stands three stories high and is not far from the river. It was once a stagecoach stop and is now divided into apartments.

Noadiah Hubbard was still building plank roads in his mid-eighties when he recorded his memories of the settling of Champion. He died in 1859, leaving behind a thriving family and a farming community with many proud limestone buildings.

# 2

## Town of RUTLAND

brian w. gorman

Among the earliest settled towns, Rutland was formed on April 1, 1802. Most of the first settlers were New England Yankees, drawn to the township by its agricultural potential. The town's name was suggested by settlers who had come from Rutland, VT. Rutland lies on the south bank of the Black River, and much of its early development was connected to that river and to the rich soils found on its central plateau inland. There are four main villages in the town: Black River, Tylerville, Rutland Center, and Felts Mills.

In 1800, David Coffeen built the first grist mill in the county on the Black River at the mouth of Mill Creek in the Town of Rutland. The mill, in operation by 1801, attracted business from a great distance. In the same year, a sawmill was established nearby to process the plentiful supply of maple, beech, bass, ash, butternut, elm, and hemlock. Although the first industry in the county was established in Rutland, its economy was soon eclipsed by the growth of other towns and the Village of Watertown. The population of Rutland was 1,712 in 1810 and had grown only to 1,796 by 1880. Rutland's industries on the Black River are now all gone, and it remains a primarily rural area to this day.

John Felt, originally from Somers, Connecticut, with his wife, Polly Ackley of Haddam, Connecticut,



2.1. Taggart's Paper Company, Mill, and dam on the Black River at Felts Mills, early twentieth century. Photograph courtesy of the Gorman family.

arrived at Great Bend in 1811. Felt had not been in the area for a full year when war commenced with England. He enlisted as a private and fought at the battle of Sackets Harbor. Two years after arriving at Great Bend, he purchased 350 acres of land that included almost all of what is now the Village of Felts Mills, including the two mills then operating there. In 1814, he opened a distillery, which operated continuously until 1834. Whiskey was an



accepted method of payment at the time, and this augmented his lumbering, milling, and farming operations.

The Black River's current can be so strong that millwrights in the early nineteenth century were afraid to dam it. Felt needed more water power than the creek could provide and he thought that if the river were dammed as far as an island in the middle, it could be harnessed. In 1821, he purchased the island from Vincent LeRay and began construction. Haddock's *History of Jefferson County* gives us a colorful anecdote illuminating the character of this man: ". . . He gave this work his personal attention; but he was forced to lose one day from the job, caused by nearly severing a great toe with an adz [sic]. This day was employed in hollowing out and fitting a wooden shoe for the injured foot. The next morning found him in the water with his helpers as before."

The dam was completed by 1822, at which time he erected a stone grist mill, whose remnants can be seen to this day. In 1823 and 1824, he completed a substantial sawmill on the island. At one point Felt's mills were producing three million feet of choice pine per year for the Albany and Troy markets. Felt's mills supplied the Norway Pine bed



2.2. Black River, remains of the mill and dam near Felts Mills, 2010.

rails for the construction of the State's first railroad, from Albany to Schenectady. (Haddock)

felt mansion

Tucked away a short drive from New York State Route 3 in Felts Mills, near the Black River, is perhaps the best-kept secret of all the stone architectural treasures in Jefferson County. The John Felt House, built in 1827, sits on a peaceful, tastefully gardened lot facing east—the direction that when

2.3. The Felt Mansion, 1827, has an east-facing façade of the most pleasing proportions. A broad central pediment has an elliptical fan that repeats the fan above the front door.

A stone ell with a porch extends from the north side of the house.



the house was built would have afforded Mr. Felt a view of his industrial domain, which by then included lumber mills, grist mills, and the distillery.

The house is a beautifully proportioned Georgian form with features of other styles interwoven in a sympathetic and pleasing manner. It is built entirely of limestone: its east façade and north and south ends are of meticulously cut and perfectly matched ashlar blocks; its back, facing west, is of loosely coursed limestone rubble. The stone for the house is said to have been quarried from near the banks of the Black River just to the east, near Great Bend.

Its entrance is in the Federal style and has a broad, six-panel door, delicately articulated side lights, and an elliptical fan light. Its five-ranked façade is capped by a broad central pediment that extends across the three central windows. Centered within all this is an elliptical fan light in the attic that echoes the entrance below. The lintels and sills are in the Greek Revival style, of modestly carved white marble, said to have been mined in Gouverneur, where there was a thriving marble trade in the nineteenth century. The south end of the house is set in three ranks of windows with another elliptical fan light in the attic.

The floor plan is central-hall, two rooms deep, with fireplaces on the end walls upstairs and down



2.4. Felt Mansion entrance with carved marble lintels and sills. The steps are large blocks of limestone, gently curved at the edges.

in each of the rooms. Originally, these converged on four chimneys, two on each end of the main house. Apparently original is a summer kitchen to the north of the main house, which connected to a woodshed and carriage barn and then to large stone stables in the rear. In 1955, in a series published by the *Watertown Daily Times* entitled “Letters from the People,” Ernest H. Felt, the great grandson of John, noted that in cold weather, one could accomplish all of the daily chores without ever stepping outside.

Through the front door, one enters a spacious central hall leading to a broad staircase that rises round to the left and up to a similarly proportioned upstairs hall. First catching the eye is an unusual newel post with a carved lion’s foot terminating the handrail and resting atop it.

The house’s interior is markedly Greek Revival, with heavy baseboards and broad, bold moldings surrounding the doors, capped by corner blocks decorated with rosettes or round bosses. The fireplaces in the four main downstairs rooms have Greek Revival surrounds and are faced with polished marble. Plaster cornices set off the ceilings, and each main room has a large central ceiling medallion.

A beautiful feature of the hall and main downstairs rooms is the faux-grain-painted doors and trim. The entrance hall doors have tiger and bird’s-eye maple grain; the dining room doors, crotch



2.5. The front hallway of the Felt Mansion retains its original molding and woodwork.



mahogany; and the southern two sitting rooms, a strong figured blond wood, perhaps a fruit like apple or pear. In each case, the work is so skillfully done that close inspection is needed to detect the paint strokes. Aside from some fading of the dining room mahogany, this painting is in near perfect condition.

By most accounts, the Greek Revival style had overtaken the Federal and earlier styles by 1830. Leading architect's and builder's guidebooks—most notably, those by Asher Benjamin—were recommending Greek Revival by then. However, 1827 seems early for its appearance in the North Country. Perhaps it is testament to Mr. Felt's progressive thinking that it was part of the original plan, or perhaps the Greek Revival elements were added,



2.6. Felt Mansion: newel post with a lion's paw on acanthus leaves.



2.7. Felt Mansion: central ceiling medallion.

as was likely the case with the faux grain painting, later in the nineteenth century.

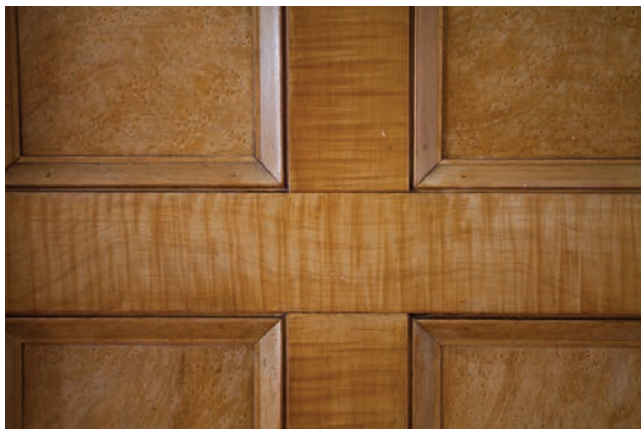
Upstairs, the floor plan generally mirrors the downstairs with the exception of a small room over the front entrance. Also, the space over the dining room is partitioned into smaller rooms and the attic stairs. However, the upstairs has been unused since 1958. While in need of cosmetic treatment, it reveals a fascinating image of the house in its original state. In some places, there appears to be no more than one or two thin coats of paint on the moldings and trim. The second floor extends to a few small rooms over the summer kitchen, where, according to Ernest G. Cook in "North Country Visits" (*Watertown Daily Times*, 1930), the hired help slept. At the north wall, adjacent to the summer kitchen's chimney, stands a small room lined with charred plaster. This was a smoke chamber.



2.8. Felt Mansion: interior painted faux-wood door.



2.10. Felt Mansion. A smoke chamber for curing meats is attached to the second floor ell chimney.



2.9. Felt Mansion: closeup of painted faux bird's eye and tiger maple finishes on the door.

Smoke from the kitchen fire below would enter the chamber through a small hole in the chimney and then exhaust into the chimney near the ceiling.

The attic is essentially a third floor. Here, one can see the massive queen post timber structure

that supports the roof. Trusses sit atop the beams, which divide the house into thirds lengthwise with the line of the roof, permitting a large open central space.

The Cook account tells us something about the operation of the house. There are large fireplaces and adjacent bake ovens in both the summer kitchen and the basement kitchen. The summer kitchen seems to have been more for the owners than the staff; the basement kitchen was the main one and had pantries and storage space. Meals were conveyed from the basement to the first-floor dining room by means of a dumb waiter. There were several rooms in the basement, which this account describes as a “dwelling” in itself. The same articles suggest that Mr. Felt, having fought the British so close to home in the War of 1812, built the house with features that would allow escape in the event





2.11. Queen post roof structure of the Felt Mansion



2.12. Felt stable, remains.

of danger. There was said to be a secret exit and a tunnel leading from the basement to the bank of the Black River.

The Felt House—really a high-style mansion—has largely escaped unfortunate renovation. It was left to John Felt’s two youngest daughters, Harriet and Maria, both spinsters, who willed it to the First Methodist Church of Felts Mills early in the twentieth century. From the 1920s until 1958, it was rented to one family. The church, unable to afford upkeep and taxes, then sold it to the

present owners. The Felt family apparently made few changes to the original house, and because of limited finances, the church, the tenants, and present owners changed very little, simply acting as good stewards of this beautiful house.

asa cl ark mansion

Set a mile back from the Black River on a ridge with a panoramic view of the Black River Valley is the mansion of Asa Clark. Not many people realize

2.13. Asa Clark Mansion, c. 1835. David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times*.



it is there, on a road branching from the Rutland Hollow Road. This outstanding Greek Revival house was built of blue limestone around 1835. The façade has an imposing two-story portico with fluted Ionic columns capped by a pediment with a central fan light. The house faces north and is part of a large farm.

Asa Clark first came to the Black River country in 1804, made a clearing, and built a simple log dwelling. Two years later, he and his wife, Betsey Dalrymple Clark, relocated from Halifax, Vermont and took up residence in Rutland. After

clearing land and establishing a level of prosperity, they replaced the cabin with a brick house. In 1835 Clark built the elegant stone mansion across the road and turned the brick house over to his son, Asa Jr. From the imposing scale of the mansion and the substantial acreage of the farm, it would appear that Asa Clark had become a very successful farmer in the thirty years after his arrival. Asa Jr. was active in politics, first a Whig, then a Republican, and served three terms as Rutland's supervisor. The senior Asa died in 1854 and is buried nearby in the Clark family's private cemetery.

# 3

## Town of WATERTOWN

maur een hubbard barros

*From the height of this plateau, I could distinguish the bluish horizontal line where the waters of Lake Ontario met the azure of the heavens, and closer to me, in the middle of a dark mass of trees, the town of Watertown, whose houses appeared as an assembly of different colored points.*

*Its position is well chosen on the banks of the Black River which rises in the mountains and flows over a limestone river bed that drops more than five hundred feet in a series of falls of 12, 18, 24, and even 60 feet to meet Lake Ontario.*

—J. Milbert

Obviously named for the abundant water from the Black River, which flows through it, Watertown was founded in 1800 in what was then Oneida County. When Jefferson County was formed in 1805, Watertown became the county seat, having won a competition with Champion and Brownville during which the Hubbards and the Browns, both early settlers, lobbied in favor of their own villages. In an enlightened move, Watertown's first landowners allotted space for a public square and for a broad street, Washington Street, running south from it. On that square, just a few years earlier, for lack of a nearby grist mill, a tree stump had stood as a mortar with a spring pole as a pestle for grinding wheat for flour.

In 1827, the Watertown census listed 1,098 males, 942 females, and three stone churches.

Stone houses and mills were built in the village: the Adriel Ely House, the Hart Massey House, the Knowlton House, and the Watertown Cotton and Woolen Manufacturing Company. By 1855, there were more than sixty-three stone dwellings and schoolhouses in the township. In his *Gazetteer*, Spafford noted that in the vicinity of the village there was a “quarry of good building limestone, and clay, and sand.” As Watertown became a manufacturing center by harnessing the power of the Black River, brick became the favored building material, especially after the fire of 1849.

hungerford mansion

An important early stone residence was the stone mansion built for Orville Hungerford. Born in



1790 in Bristol, Connecticut, Hungerford came to Watertown with his family in 1804. According to W. Hungerford Jr. and Andre James Hungerford, his education consisted of attending “winter schools” after the ground froze too hard to till. He started his business career as a young office boy for Jabez Foster in Burrville. During the War of 1812, he and Foster ran a profitable business supplying the military.

After the war, Hungerford started his own general store in Watertown; he then began his banking career at the Jefferson County Bank. In 1823, he had the financial resources to begin building his grand house. In 1825, he moved into 336 Washington Street with his wife, Elizabeth Porter Stanley, and their young family. Their limestone house was built by local masons and carpenters. With its two stories and ten fireplaces, it was the most imposing residence in Watertown at that time, though it

would soon be rivaled by Micah Sterling’s mansion a few blocks away.

Hungerford, known as a man of honesty and integrity, helped found the Jefferson County Agricultural Society and the Black River Woolen Company. He also acted as superintendent of the county poorhouse and president of the Jefferson County Bible Society, and was elected to the twenty-eighth US House of Representatives. He was offered the vice-presidential nomination in 1844 but turned it down, instead returning to Watertown to become president of the Watertown & Rome Railroad, a post he held until his death in 1851.

The house remained in the Hungerford family until 1956, when it was purchased by John R. Burns and saved from the wrecking ball. Burns had the house disassembled and each limestone block numbered. Except for the side wing, the house was totally reassembled on a nearby street. The stone



3.1. The Hungerford Mansion, 1826, as reassembled in 1960. With its tall stepped gables and rhythmic front façade, the mansion is quiet but imposing in its new location in Watertown.





3.2. Hungerford Mansion. The stone on the side of the mansion is a mixture of rough cut with smooth cut around the windows.



3.3. Hungerford Mansion. The elegant Federal style entrance has attached Ionic columns and delicate tracery in the fanlight and sidelights.

carriage house remains in its original position and functions as part of a hotel.

Because Burns was a stickler for detail, the mansion closely approximates the original. Its limestone blocks are especially well laid. The façade is of smooth-cut ashlar with lintels and a water table. The sides and back are of rough-cut limestone with smooth-cut details around the windows. Over the wide entrance is an elliptical segmented arch with a keystone. The doorway has Federal features with attached columns, a fan light, and side lights. The cornice is supported with scroll modillions. The stepped gables each bear two tall stone chimneys. Elliptical oculi in the gable end walls and rear dormer windows let light into the third floor. The interior retains the central hall plan. It is a jewel of a building, and the current owners enjoy its history and spaciousness.

#### sterling mansion

The other stone mansion built in Watertown in 1826 was for Micah Sterling. It was set in an expansive park extending from Parker Street to William Street, looking toward the Black River. Sterling was born in Lyme, Connecticut, in 1784 and graduated from Yale in 1804. There, he had been a classmate of John C. Calhoun and James Fenimore Cooper. After studying law in Litchfield, Connecticut, and with Judge Williams in Utica, he came to Adams and then to Watertown around 1811. There, he formed a partnership with Thomas Skinner and later with Isaac M. Bronson, whose sister, Elizabeth, he married. The firm flourished as local industry expanded. In 1821, he was elected to Congress as a Clintonian Democrat; in 1836, he was elected to the state senate. For many years he



3.4. Hungerford Mansion. The cornice features intricate scroll modillions.

was the land agent for James D. LeRay, and the Sterling mansion is somewhat similar in scale to the LeRay stone mansion, which was built at approximately the same time.

As appropriate for a leading citizen and affluent lawyer, plans for the Sterling Mansion were commissioned from an architect in England. As such, they reflect the status of its owner and the style of the period. Its two-story central block is forty-eight feet long and nearly as deep. Identical one-story wings with porches extend from the east and west sides for a total length of ninety-six feet. The low hipped roof originally was graced with a balustrade. The cornice is wide. The local limestone in the walls is conchoidal and contrasts with the fossilized quoins, lintels, sills, and water table. Large quoins form patterns around the windows and doors. Three stone chimneys remain in the main block, with a fourth in the west wing. The north-facing entrance has an elliptical segmented arch with a keystone, and the doorway has retained its original fan light and side lights. The windows on the main floor are exceptionally tall and have interior shutters.

The house was restored to its “colonial best” and enlarged after John Byron Taylor purchased



3.5. Sterling Mansion, by David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times*. In this early photograph, Sterling’s imposing stone building shows off its stonework and wooden balustrade.



3.6. The John Thompson House, 1823, sits back from the road near Talcott Falls. It once was the center of a large farm fed by many streams.



it from the Sterling family in 1910. The center-hall plan was left the same, but an extensive stone wing was added to include a conservatory. Also, the coach house was rebuilt in stone. An elegant columned portico was added to the rear of the house, where it looked onto an extensive garden designed by the Olmsted Brothers, who had also designed Thompson Park in Watertown and whose father, Frederick Law Olmsted, is considered the father of American landscape design. Much of the original limestone wall surrounding the garden remains; it is wonderful to see it cloaked in vines.

The Deneson Map of Watertown shows “Sterling Park” at the rear of the house. An early photograph features the grey-white residence in an autumnal setting with its circular drive and well-placed trees. Today the mansion functions as a primary school for Holy Family Church, and the desks and books of young children crowd the old library and parlor.

jo h n t h o m p s o n   h o u s e

Outside the city of Watertown, between Burrville, an important early settlement, and the Fields Settlement south of Watertown, there stand to this day



3.7. John Thompson House, with its date in the arch above the front door.





3.8. John Thompson House: a side wall of rubble stone with an 8/8 window over the smooth stone sill.

many stone farmhouses. One of these, on Route 11 between Watertown and Adams, was built for John Thompson around 1823. It is dramatically set, well back from the road across a wide expanse of lawn. Streams run on both sides of the house, which is near Talcott Falls. The two-story house measures forty-four feet by twenty-six feet. The five-bay façade has a central entrance with a semi-circular arch and keystone. Chiseled into the arch is the date 1823. The front of the house is rough coursed stone; the remainder, including the rear ell, is rubble.

ballard, denny house

Also near Talcott Falls, but facing east toward the Old Rome State Road, is the Ballard, Denny House. This one-and-a-half-story house was built around 1827, possibly by Samuel F. Ballard. In 1909, John W. Denny purchased the farm and it is locally known by that name. It sits on a knoll just above the road leading to the Talcott Tavern. Its five-bay façade measures thirty-seven feet across; a wooden ell extends on the north side. The limestone is rough coursed, with voussoirs above the windows and doors. The stone was quarried nearby and is

3.9. Ballard, Denny House, c. 1827, is a charming vernacular farmhouse just off the Old Rome State Road, an important early road leading to Brownville.







3.10. Ballard, Denny House, old photograph courtesy of the Green family. Two ladies in bonnets pose with floral bouquets behind a picket fence surrounding the front lawn.



3.12. The Ballard, Denny House has floorboards with some planks nineteen inches in width.



3.11. The Ballard, Denny House's enclosed interior stairway and panel door.

similar to that of the tavern. The main part of the house has a center-hall plan, two rooms deep with a central chimney. The steep stairway is enclosed. Part of the house has retained the original 12/12 pane windows. Some floorboards are over nineteen inches wide and are grooved to imitate tongue-and-groove flooring. The cellar is divided by a thick stone wall running front to back, with a floor that is partially covered with cobble stones. The current owners have maintained the warmth of this vernacular farmhouse with its old trees and stone smokehouse in the yard.

to see house

Dry Hill, the highest point in Watertown, was named for its lack of water or, ironically perhaps,



3.13. Ballard, Denny House. This original 12/12 pane window sits within its deep paneled well.

for its distillery. From its top, the Losee House looks west toward Lake Ontario. John Losee came to Watertown in 1801 from the Mohawk Valley with his wife Sarah. Born in Fishkill, New York, he was perhaps of French Huguenot ancestry and had fought for thirteen months in the Revolutionary War. According to David F. Lane of the *Watertown Daily Times*, Losee was a near-legendary figure who at the age of forty-seven bought 188 acres of land and started a new life on what became known as Losee Hill. His son, John Jr., purchased a further 318 acres. The family lived on the farm for seventy-eight years.

Around 1828, Losee built a large, two-story, five-bay Federal style house, which measures forty-two feet across the front. The entrance is especially beautiful, with its wide, elliptical arch and keystone. The recessed entry is wood paneled, with fluted pilasters. An eagle and rosettes decorate the fan light's lead mullions. Side lights allow additional light into the wide central hall. The stone is rough, but evenly coursed on the front and sides, with smooth-cut lintels, sills, and water table. Possibly, the stone was drawn from a quarry a little way down the Dry Hill Road.



3.14. The Losee House, 1823–1828, has the highest elevation of Jefferson County's stone houses and once was the center of a thriving farm.





3.15. Losee House. The wide front entrance features an eagle centered over the door.

Four brick chimneys rise from the gable ends. Originally, there were eight fireplaces to heat the house. The chimneys are built next to each other on the interior of the stone walls, so that the gable ends contain a great thickness of masonry.



3.16. Rough coursed stonework on the south side wall of the Losee House.

The interior has three rooms (originally four) around the center hall stairway. A more recent renovation installed a beehive oven in the dining room fireplace. The living room retains its beautiful Federal mantelpiece with detached fluted columns. The ceilings are nine and a half inches high on both the main floor and the second floor. In the deep, limed cellar are the remnants of a cistern and a portion of hollowed-out log that was used as piping for it. At one time, there was a deep root cellar near the woodshed. This spacious house was the focal point of an extensive dairy farm, and today's owners continue to maintain a garden and stable. Until the mid-twentieth century, the Losee family cemetery was across the road.



# 4

## Town of ADAMS

sue herse

### talcott tavern

Named for President John Adams, this township south of Watertown was founded in 1802. Daniel Talcott was an early settler. One of twelve children, he was born in 1771 in Windsor, Connecticut. His father was a farmer and horse and cattle trader. Talcott learned the trades of tanner and currier and eventually traveled as his father's agent to Montreal, Quebec City, New York, Philadelphia,

Albany, and New England. Intriguing stories about the Black River Valley encouraged him to bring his family north in 1804. He built a log cabin near the site of the current Talcott stone house on the early road from Rome to Brownville. Nearby were waterfalls and a bluff that at one time had been the site of a large Onondaga settlement, where Indian relics have since been excavated. According to family lore, the log cabin made for rough living, with only a blanket for a door. At one time, thirteen

4.1. The Talcott Tavern, 1824–25, sits near an early route into the county, the Old Rome State Road, and was noted as a stage coach stopping place until the arrival of the railroad. The focus of the property then changed to farming.



4.2. An early photograph of the Talcott tavern with its strongly defined corner quoins.  
Edward Greene family scrapbook.



Massasauga Indians from Canada spent the night by the fireplace. Other nights the cabin provided shelter for men who were building the nearby road.

Daniel Talcott's plans to clear land and build a farm were interrupted by his service in the War of 1812. He raised and equipped the first uniformed light infantry of the 55th Militia Regiment. As captain of his company, he served in Sackets Harbor; after the war, he was promoted to major. On his return, he built a sawmill and a grist mill at the falls that took his name. Later he built a small distillery.

During 1824 and 1825, Talcott built a two-story stone house with a twenty-five foot front gable facing north toward what is now Route 11. A one-story rear ell of stone with a secondary entrance faces the Old Rome State Road. Limestone underlies much of the area around Adams, and the house was probably built from stone quarried near the falls. There are chimneys in the gable ends; another chimney is attached to the ell. The corners of the house have regularly set quoins of smooth dressed limestone. The doors and windows are topped with voussoirs on the front and east sides; the windows on the west side have narrow lintels. Similarly, the stonework on the front and east is of coursed blocks, while the west side is coursed rubble. A brown whiskey bottle is visible in the stonework high in the front gable. Legend says that it was a sign for the distillery on the property, or perhaps referred to the house's use as a stagecoach stop.



4.3. Talcott Falls in the late nineteenth century, showing the surge of water that provided power. The dam for the sawmill extends across the base of the falls. Edward Greene family scrapbook.



4.4. Remains of the mill at Talcott Falls with its stone foundation and wooden upper portion. Edward Greene family scrapbook.

Daniel Talcott deeded the house and one hundred acres to his son Nathan in 1829. The house was a stagecoach stop with unheated guest rooms upstairs, an outhouse, and a dining area with a fireplace. Nathan and his wife Betsey ran the stagecoach stop and tavern. A wooden addition, now demolished, was used as a ballroom and bar for many years. In 1851, the railroad came to the area, and the line ran along the edge of the farm. With the railroad, the need for stagecoach travel declined, as did the need for hospitality.

Nathan was an excellent farmer who grew grapes and apples and raised horses and cattle. The farm also had a cheese factory. After his wife died in 1867, the house remained in the family for more than another century, until 1973. Over time, many old outbuildings—the hen house, tool shed, ice-house, and a large barn—have disappeared. One of the last surviving witnesses to this period is an old black walnut tree near the porch.

Water for the farm was piped through hollowed-out cedar logs from a spring in the cedar swamp one and a half miles off the Fuller Road to a trough on Route 11. It was enjoyed by residents until just recently. Folklore has it that when Franklin Roosevelt was Governor of New York State,



4.5. This bottle high in the gable end of the Talcott Tavern has been noted by passers-by for decades and may have referred to the hospitality of the tavern or to the nearby distillery.

from 1928 to 1932, he stopped to view the bottle set in the peak of the house. He saw the owner of the house at that time and bowed. A replacement bottle now sits neatly in the gable end. The Talcott house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

#### jesse smith house

Jesse Smith was an early settler who gave his name to the Smithville area of the Town of Adams. He was involved in milling, distilling, merchandising, and Great Lakes commerce, and is credited with the construction of several stone buildings. His first store was in a small frame house opposite the Brick Hotel in Smithville. In 1831, he erected a fine stone house on the south corner, but he moved to Ohio soon after, in 1838.



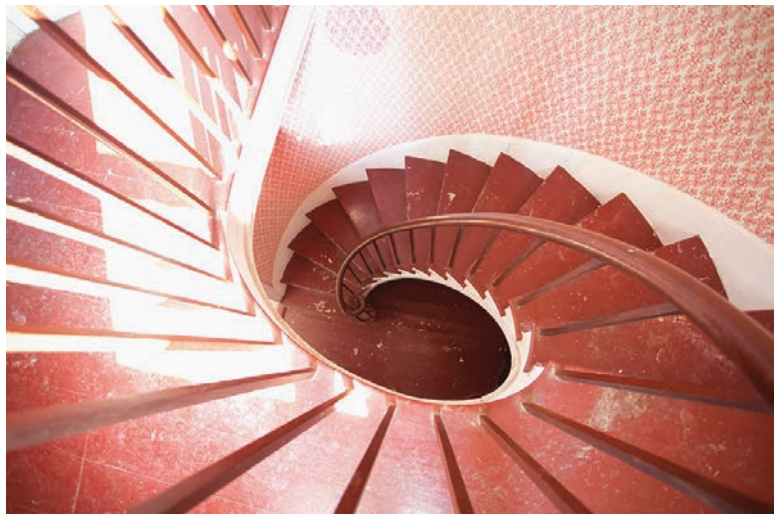


4.6. Jesse Smith House, 1831. This large front-gable house reflects the prominence and the business skills of its first owner in the village named for him.

Smith's fine house is two stories high with coursed blocks of limestone. The lintels, sills, and water table are smooth tooled. The front gable end measures twenty-nine feet across and looks west over Route 75. At its peak is a louvered horizontal fan set within voussoirs. The front entrance and the secondary side entrance both have elliptical arches with keystones. The front door is recessed with a transom, side lights, and attached columns. Just inside the front entrance is a remarkable spiral

stairway leading to the second floor. The interior wall follows the curve of the stair, which has narrow rectangular spindles and delicate molding on the stair ends. At the rear of the house, a wooden ell contains the kitchen fireplace and a bake oven. There are no fireplaces in the main house, but a central chimney starts at the attic floor. Jesse Smith may have installed a cast iron wood stove to heat the house; this would have reflected his merchandising knowledge in the early 1830s.

4.7. Jesse Smith House. The dramatic spiral stairway is unique in the stone houses of Jefferson County. Situated just inside the front door, its delicate railing and spindles curve upward to the second floor.





4.8. The Austin Robbins House, c. 1830, is another front gable stone house near Smithville with a wide stone chimney and an elliptical fan.

austin robbins house

Just south of the Smithville hill on Route 75 is the small Austin Robbins farmhouse, which may also have been built by Jesse Smith around 1830. What charms us today about this one-and-a-half-story gable end house is its remaining wide stone chimney, elliptical wood fan in the gable peak, and hemispherical arch with keystone over the front door. The fan light in the entryway has been covered with louvered wood. The lintels, sills, and water table are smooth cut. The stone is coursed

rubble with corner quoins. Its first known owner was Austin Robbins, a millwright and wagon maker from Marlboro, Massachusetts. He came to the Smithville area in 1807, where he farmed and possibly made wagons. The current owner purchased the property at a tax sale and continues the work of restoring it.

stone arch bridge

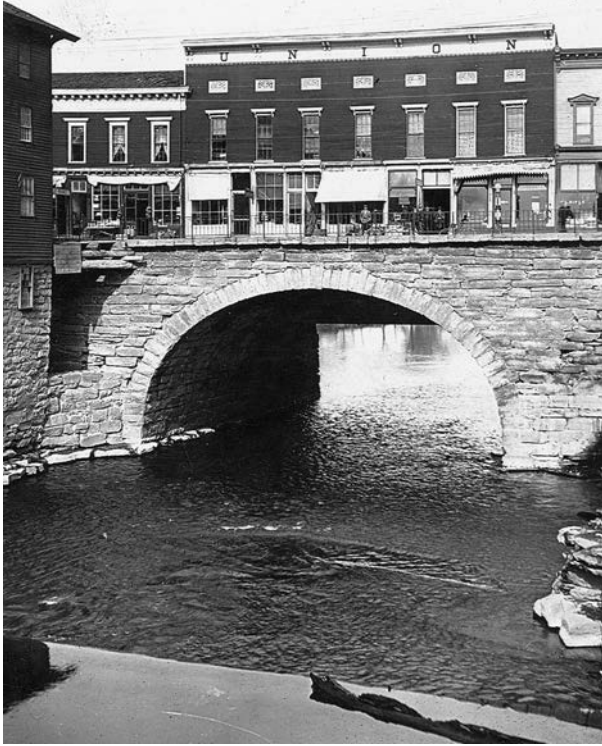
The Village of Adams is in the southern part of the township on the north branch of Sandy Creek. Beginning in 1802, several wooden bridges were built spanning the creek; they were routinely swept away when it flooded. Obviously, a more stable bridge would have to be constructed. Rebuilding destroyed bridges was the town's responsibility, and this was expensive. In 1839, a tax of \$500 was authorized for the purpose of constructing a more permanent bridge over Sandy Creek. There were several attempts to rebuild, but the forms were repeatedly washed away.

In 1860, another replacement bridge was undertaken at an estimated cost of \$6,000. The form work was washed away twice. By now, a local man was running a ferry across the creek, and in rough



4.9. A semicircular arch with keystone tops the front entrance of the Austin Robbins House.





4.10. The stone arch bridge over Sandy Creek in Adams, NY, was built in the late 1800s and is still in use today. There were commercial buildings on the bridge until 2008. The old Red Mill is on the bank to the left. Photo Collection of James Sinclair, Adams, NY.

water it was often a wet crossing. Overriding the engineers' recommendations, the town commissioners elected to build the bridge with a semicircular, barrel vault design. Work proceeded on a stone arch, using guy ropes to move the stones. Before the bridge was completed, the money ran out. The finished area was so narrow that a team of horses had trouble crossing.

Fortunately, the problem was solved when commercial buildings supported by iron girders were constructed across the creek adjacent to the west side of the bridge. T. S. Saunders was the owner of one of these buildings, and at his own expense, he built a twelve-foot-wide sidewalk in front of his block. This extended the width of the bridge decking and allowed for more traffic. There was no railing on the bridge until after a horse and buggy with two passengers almost tipped off into the water when the horse was frightened by a wheelbarrow. In 2006, the Adams Commercial Historic District included the bridge when it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 2008, the business blocks suspended over the creek were deemed unsafe and torn down. The bridge, however, continues to serve traffic today and has proved the commissioners right in their choice of the stone arch design.



## *Part Two*

Towns South of the Black River, Bordering Lake Ontario

5. Town of Ellisburg

7. Town of Hounsfield

6. Town of Henderson



# 5

## Town of ELLISBURG

maureen hubbard barros and john dewitt

*After traveling some miles, I had at last the gratification of seeing a settler here (in No. 10, or Sandy Creek). Three men were cutting and burning large piles of enormous trees. Ellis being one of them, we went and staid in their hut, which was about 12 feet square, built of logs; no chimney, and but very little furniture. . . . We dined on salt pork, with good bread, butter and chocolate, much to my satisfaction. We then left for Ellisburgh, 9 miles distant.*

—James Constable, diary entry, September 5, 1803

Lyman Ellis and his brother Marvel came from Troy, New York, in 1797 to settle in this southwest corner of Jefferson County. The first settlers survived the severe winter of 1798–99, when four feet of snow fell in late October and the snow cover did not melt until April. Early surveys mention that salmon were abundant in Sandy Creek, whose north and south branches traverse the town and drain into Lake Ontario. The wild, marshy areas and low sand hills near the lake were initially not as valued as the superior soils in the rest of the township. In the village of Ellisburg on the south branch of Sandy Creek, Ellis and others built a tannery and grist and saw mills and started a clothing business. In the long run, though, it was not manufacturing that dominated, but farming—the region would soon become one of the wealthiest agricultural sections of the county. At a meeting in Lyman’s home in February 1803, the Town of

Ellisburg came into being, carved out of the Town of Mexico.

### salisbury house

The area attracted Edward S. Salisbury and his wife Theodosia, who established a farm just north of Ellisburg. It is said that before settling in Adams, Salisbury’s father fought in both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. It is believed that Edward built the one-and-a-half-story house on Machold Road around 1833. The current owner was told that stone for the house was brought from nearby Sandy Creek at Woodville for ten cents a load. That stone is a darker shade of Cobourg limestone of the Trenton Group, rough cut in fairly large blocks and very evenly laid. The house measures forty-two feet across the front and just over twenty-six feet deep.



5.1. The Salisbury House, circa 1833, was built in the middle of rich farmland and is still surrounded by fields today.



5.2. At the entrance to the Salisbury House, a forged hook hangs above a side light.

The lintels, sills, and water table are smooth cut. The five-bay façade has a beautiful wide entrance with a leaded transom and side lights. Each gable end has an elliptical oculus with louvered shutters set within voussoirs. A wooden ell is attached to the south side of the house. The interior retains its center hall plan and has its original stairway. In the yard is a stone smoke house. One giant maple tree remains of a row that once protected the house from the road. The house looks eastward across the road toward fields and the morning sunrise; in the evening, the sun sets over the ridge at the back. The house seems a peaceful reminder of the challenges and rewards of settlement in this agricultural part of Jefferson County.

Maureen Hubbard Barros

#### amos east man wood house

Nestled in an old sugar bush just off Route 120 on the outskirts of Woodville is the Amos Eastman Wood House. Brothers Ebenezer, Jacob, and Ephraim (father of Amos) came to this area from Connecticut, bought a 754-acre parcel on the north branch of Sandy Creek for \$2,294.80, and founded Woodville on May 26, 1804.

It is not certain what year the Wood House was built. The earliest document found (an obituary of



5.3. Each gable end of the Salisbury House features an elliptical fan surrounded by stone voussoirs.



5.5. The stair railing of the Salisbury House with its plain spindles and straight run is similar to others seen in North Country houses.



5.4. The Salisbury House was built of Coburg limestone of the Trenton group brought by oxcart from nearby Sandy Creek. The similar-sized stones are very evenly laid.

Mrs. A. E. Wood, 1889) gives a date of 1829; another document says it was 1825; yet another, as early as 1819. This earliest date seems unlikely, for that was the year Amos Wood married Hannah Dean.

Amos Wood was a farmer, shoemaker, tanner, currier, and sawmill operator before the War of 1812, and a soldier during that war. For several years he was justice of the peace and at various times held other town offices. He was a staunch Democrat and a Mason.

Unusually, this one-and-a-half-story farmhouse is built of tooled limestone blocks twelve inches thick, seven to ten inches high, and up to eight feet long. Each course is exactly the same height on all four sides of the house. Beaded mortar was added



5.6. The Amos Eastman Wood House was built by one of the founders of Woodville in about 1825, and its layout may have been inspired by what he had known in Connecticut.



between the blocks as early as 1888. Instead of the usual double-faced-wall construction, the thick blocks form a single wall, which is covered with split lath and plaster on the interior. At the rear is a one-story limestone ell with a frame addition to the upper story. Though there is some bulging in the gable end walls, the unknown mason did his work well. It is said that the limestone was quarried from the “the flat rock hole” on the bank of Sandy Creek just behind the house.

The house retains many original features, including hand-forged iron rim latches and hardware, wood shutters, and stenciling (extremely rare today) in the front entryway. The first floor has kept its original three-room plan with a central chimney. The floors are made of tongue-and-groove planks, each six to ten inches wide by one and a quarter inches thick. In three rooms these are of oak. Upstairs, most of the floor planks are ten to twenty-two inches wide. Also still in place is a two-story wood house at the rear of the ell. Attached to it was an outhouse that was removed around 2004. An old maple sugar shack and the foundations of several unknown buildings remain near the house.

This unusual house reflects the character of Amos Eastman Wood, who apparently was an

unusual man. In his journals of 1846–49, he made note of a wood stove “peddler” who stopped by and replaced two of his old wood stoves with new ones over the course of several years. At the age of sixty, Amos had sold much of his property and was, according to his journals, helping one person or another with chores or doing small jobs around the house.

Amos’s journals give a wonderful picture of mid-nineteenth-century life. They tell us the prices



5.7. The Amos Eastman Wood House, showing the original shutters and hardware. The stone is laid in unusually long blocks to form a single wall, not the usual double-faced wall. Beveled pointing can be seen in some places.





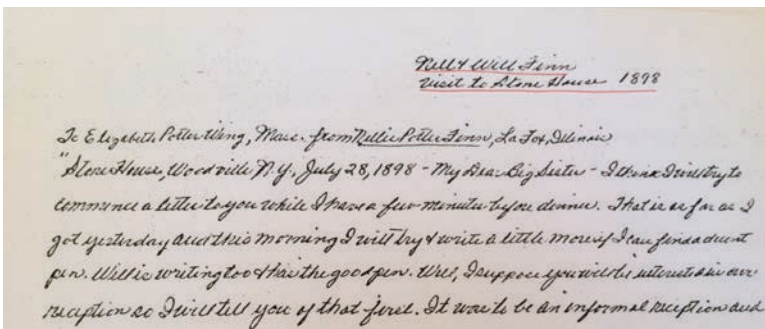
5.8. Amos Eastman Wood House. The entryway retains its original stenciling. Elvira O. Wood’s journal for 1856 mentions her sister Marion white washing the dining room. It is possible that the stencils were done by a family member.

of the goods, magazines, and newspapers he bought and read, the names of early settlers, the places he visited, and the money he lent. At one point the house was occupied by four generations of Woods, plus boarders, hired help, and other kin. Two other

journals survive: one by Amos’s daughter, Elvira Wood Finn, and the other by a grandson, George A. Finn. Elvira at age thirty-seven records dyeing rags for carpets, washing and spinning wool for her mother to weave, picking currants, doing two weeks of wash, baking eight pies and six loaves of bread in one day, and socializing with friends who “called at the gate.” George at age sixteen “drew wood,” boiled sap, and stopped at the store for candy. Sewing and making shoes for neighbors combined with bartering was important to the livelihood of this farm family. In 1856, the Wood family women produced four hundred pounds of butter.

The house was the center of family activity until the 1920s. In 1895, Ora Elizabeth Shaver took a diamond engagement ring given to her by Franklin Wood and carved “Xmas 95” in the glass of the side door. She enjoyed telling that story until her death in 1971, and the pane of glass remains in the door today. Some of the downstairs trim and doors have a groove worn into them from the points of the axle on Hannah Wood’s wheelchair. Her husband Amos Eastman died in 1863 at age seventy-six and she in 1889 at age ninety-nine after living in the stone house for nearly six decades.

John DeWitt



5.9. The beginning of a letter from Nellie Potter Finn, La Fox, Illinois, to Elizabeth Potter, Wing, Massachusetts, from Stone House, Woodville, NY, July 28, 1898. Copy transcribed by the Finns’ granddaughter, Beverly Ramsey, and given to the current owner of the Amos Eastman Wood House.

# 6

## Town of HENDERSON

elaine scott, ann maurer, and gary rhodes

On August 5, 1796, William Henderson of New York drew a lot for his share of several tracts of Black River land and won the township that bears his name. An early survey described the town as having a good harbor and “plenty of desirable timber in the interior.” Also mentioned was Stony Creek with its four-hundred-acre cranberry marsh. The town never rivaled Sackets Harbor as a military center; instead, it thrived mainly by shipping stock and grain from the fertile interior. The Village of Henderson was founded in the valley of Stony Creek, about three miles inland.

### weeks house

Reverend Holland Weeks, a Swedenborgian minister from Abington, Massachusetts, purchased property in Henderson. His son-in-law Edwin Burnham later wrote:

Mr. Hopkins was resident agent in the then newly settled town of Henderson, New York, a remote forest country on the border of Lake Ontario—a then *far-off*, border country, where wild lands were only one dollar per acre, and *slow* sale at that. My father-in-law always loved a *fine* horse—never could tolerate a *slow* one. At the time of Mr.

Hopkins’ [sic] visit he owned a beautiful one, which Mr. Hopkins so much admired and desired, that he offered Father Weeks a deed of one hundred and twenty acres of land, which he would *select* for him in Henderson, in exchange for his beautiful horse. Father Weeks said (afterwards), “I had the impression, at the time, that it might be a place for a home in the evening of my life. It proved so.”

The main section of Weeks’s limestone house was built about 1811; the ell with porch was added in 1825. The house overlooks the dam and waterfall on Big Stony Creek and is often reflected in the mill pond. This astounding view has captured the attention of all who have owned the house.

The main block of the house measures thirty-six feet by thirty feet and has a center-hall plan. The wide entranceway retains its top light over the door. Painted lintels and sills of smooth stone contrast with the coarse stone of the walls. A water table has been cut above the cellar, and brick chimneys remain in one gable end and in the stone ell. The interior has retained much of its original woodwork, including an entire tree incorporated into the foundation of the house. There is a stone cistern in the cellar. The property once included a stone structure used as a cheese factory, as well as



6.1. Weeks House, c. 1811, viewed from across the mill pond. The house is perfectly situated to overlook Big Stony Creek and its falls, which once provided power for a gristmill.



6.2. Painted lintels on the Weeks House accentuate the symmetry of the façade. A porch on the side ell provides a sheltered outdoor area in this early stone house.

a working grist mill. The latter was relocated in the late 1800s to the opposite side of the creek. At the rear of the property there was a lumberyard. This house is a home for the “evening of life,” because of its beautiful sunrises and sunsets, which reflect off the mill pond and the rising mists from the waterfall.

Elaine Scott

#### burn ham house

Just down the road from the Weeks House and built a few years later, around 1820, is the Burnham House, fondly named for the three generations

of Burnhams who lived there. The house may have been built by a pilgrim descendant, Nathan Burnham of Burnham Hollow, Middleton, Vermont. His son, Daniel Hudson Burnham, married Elizabeth Weeks, the daughter of Reverend Holland Weeks of the nearby Weeks House. Their son, Daniel Hudson Burnham, was born in the house and became one of America’s greatest architects and urban planners. But the story of the house extends back before the occupancy of the Burnhams.

Research by the present owners discloses that the house may actually have been built about 1818 by Chester Norton. It is possible that the limestone was quarried onsite, as geological maps note a



quarry on the property near a depression in the landscape that is now a spring-fed pond. The stone is rough cut but well laid in courses. The main house with its five bays measures forty-three feet by thirty-six feet and faces north across the road. Surrounding it are twenty-six acres of rolling countryside, including barns, ponds, a stream, fields, and woods.

Each gable end has a beautiful elliptical oculus with louvered shutters surrounded by stone voussoirs. Old photographs show five chimneys on the roofline. Today, two fireplaces remain on the western side of the house, one with the original iron cranes for rotating pots in and out of the fire. The fireplace in the front of the house is missing the original mantel shelf but retains its delicate reeded

columns. The windows, 6/6 downstairs and 12/12 upstairs, have smooth stone lintels and sills. Most of the exterior shutters, hardware, and windows are original to the house. The wide front entrance with its keystone arch outlines an open fan light and side lights.

To anyone entering the house, one of its most impressive features is the main staircase with its simple flowing rail and carved decorations on the stair ends. Under the stairs are a series of drawers reminiscent of those found on sailing ships, on which every bit of space is utilized. This detail has led the owners to wonder whether the carpenter who did the interior had been a ship's carpenter. Another intriguing hint of this is the hand-hewn mortise-and-tenon oak rafters in the attic. Their



6.3. The Burnham House, c. 1820, is a strong symmetrical presence on the road between the village of Henderson and Henderson Harbor. It is the birthplace of architect and city planner Daniel Hudson Burnham, who designed the Flatiron Building in New York City and Union Station in Washington, DC.



6.4. Each gable end of the Burnham House has a louvered oculus set within voussoirs.

convex appearance resembles that of the interior of an overturned boat. Many of the original interior walls, doors, moldings, and floors are intact. The high basement has hand-hewn logs with bark still intact, and one cistern remains of the original two. The masonry work in the basement interior walls is consistent with the exterior finish in coursing size and quality of the limestone. During renovations, it was discovered that the interior limestone walls had been parged and painted, with the interior plaster and lathe freestanding approximately three inches from the limestone surface to provide an early form of insulation.

The house was the childhood home of Daniel Hudson Burnham, a noted American architect who designed the Flatiron Building in New York City and has been called the father of the “skyscraper.” He also designed Union Station in Washington, DC, the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and the city plan of Manila, the Philippines, among many other notable achievements.

Today’s owners believe that the house was built for an average well-to-do family, and they enjoy the “robustness of a house made to last.”

Elaine Scott, with information supplied by Robert E. Aliasso Jr.



6.5. The Burnham House center stairway may have been built by a ship’s carpenter who applied carved detailing to the stair ends and a series of drawers to maximize the space underneath.





6.6. The Burnham House fireplace mantel retains its original decorative reeding.



6.7. The cellar beams of the Burnham House are hand hewn, with much bark still in place.

#### dobson house

The Dobson House, on County Route 123, the old Harbor Road, is a two-story limestone house built around 1820 by Thomas Dobson Jr., a farmer and stonemason born in the late 1700s in Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, Wales. His wife was Fanny Whittier, a cousin of famous American poet John Greenleaf Whittier. They came to Henderson in 1813, and in April 1816, Dobson purchased more than a hundred acres of land on Big Stony Creek from

6.8. The Dobson House was built around 1820 by a Welsh-born stonemason, on the old road leading to Henderson Harbor.





William Henderson. First a log cabin was built on the property. Then the main part of the stone house was built, probably from stone quarried just down the Harbor Road. A clapboard frame wing on the north, built with square nails, was probably erected before 1850. A glassed-in sun porch on the south was added later. The barn (possibly a victim of arson) and other outbuildings built to accommodate the farm no longer survive.

The house measures forty feet by thirty-two feet and has a center-hall plan. The rough-cut stonework has corner quoins. The rear is rubble constructed. The low cornice has a lovely dentil pattern that has been repeated in the wooden additions. The 6/6 windows have wood sashes with ribbed round molding. They are painted white and stand out prominently against the stonework. The attic has small, square windows in the gable ends. Bolts brace the front and rear walls. The fireplace, stair railing, interior woodwork, and floors are all original.



6.9. The cornice of the Dobson House has delicate dentil molding.



6.10. An old framed photograph of the Dobson House shows its extensive addition and barns.

The house, with its old walnut and maple trees in the yard, remained in the Dobson family until 1911. For several years it was operated as a bed and breakfast. Tracing the history of the house led the recent owners to Abergavenny, Wales, where it was confirmed for them that Thomas Dobson was indeed from that town.

Ann Maurer

#### h a r v e y   s m i t h   h o u s e

The Harvey Smith House, on Bishop Street in Henderson, is a one-and-a-half-story native limestone house. It was built around 1839 from stone quarried on the property. Measuring forty feet by twenty-six feet, the house has wide stone lintels and quoins. At the center of the five-bay façade, the doorway has a fan light set beneath a smooth stone elliptical arch. A hitching ring is imbedded in an exterior wall. There are new chimneys in the gable ends. The original stone house had seven rooms; the frame clapboard ell with two more rooms was added at a later date. This ell at one time housed a post office and general store.

Harvey Smith, the original owner of the house, was born to Asa and Elizabeth Smith in Galway, Saratoga County, New York, in 1797. In February 1805 the family settled in Henderson. Asa Smith



6.11. The Harvey Smith House, c. 1839, is a small vernacular house once part of a community living on Bishop Street.



6.12. The narrow entrance to the Harvey Smith House retains its rounded arch and keystone set in the coursed rubble wall.

became prominent in the town and was elected town supervisor for three terms. This farm property, with its several outbuildings, continued in the Smith family until 1923.

During the 1800s, the Harvey Smith home was part of a thriving community along Bishop Street consisting of a Methodist church, a sawmill, a blacksmith shop, and a railroad line running from Pierrepont Manor to Sackets Harbor. The street was also the birthplace of two future governors of other states, one of whom, George Peck, wrote *Peck's Bad Boy*. Today's owners cherish their historic home with its old maple tree in the yard.

Ann Maurer

#### oliver bates house

South of Henderson Harbor on New York State Route 3 is the Bates House. It was built around 1820 by Oliver Bates and his son Cyrus, who arrived in Henderson about 1807 after living variously in New York, Vermont, and Massachusetts. They bought the land from William Henderson in December 1824, the last such sale before Henderson's death. The house is built from limestone, said to have been quarried from the back fields where the bedrock breaks the surface. Wooden pegs are used for joining and huge native beams are header supports in the cellar. The house has one and a half stories, with a fan light and keystone arch over the main doorway. The walls are around two feet thick with wide, smooth-cut quoins, lintels, sills,





6.13. The Oliver Bates House, c. 1820, is known for its association with Mormon missionaries. Like other one-and-a-half-story houses in the area, it has a narrow entrance topped with a hemispherical arch and keystone.



6.14. The corner quoins of the Oliver Bates House are particularly well cut and placed in the evenly coursed walls.

and water table. The stone is evenly coursed, and the mortar has been beveled with care.

Mormon missionaries, including Orson Pratt, visited the home in 1835 and 1836. Orson Pratt's journals refer to the time Pratt was in Henderson and to his marriage to the daughter of Cyrus Bates in 1836. Truman O. Whitney purchased the property in 1846 from the heirs of Cyrus Bates. Sylvester Finney, father of Charles Finney, lived just up the road from the Bates house and settled there about the same year as the Bateses. The house is located at Alexander Corners, named for Jonathan S. Alexander, who also settled in the immediate area about the same time as Bates and Finney. All three men were veterans of the Revolutionary War. The house was placed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places in 2004.



# 7

## Town of HOUNSFIELD

robert e. brennan and jeannie i. brennan

*I stopped to consider for a few moments Sacket's Harbor with its European air, then I continued to mount the path and discovered the town's line of houses, the very tall church, the big tavern, the military garrison, and ship construction in the harbour. Seeing it all from this point of view struck me all the more because it offered a picture of civilization hidden in eternal forests.*

—J. Milbert

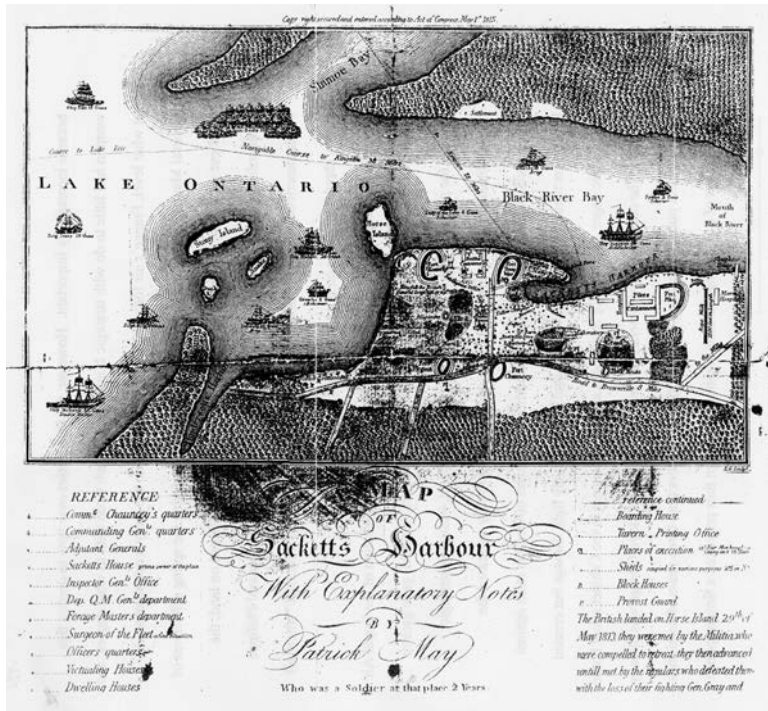
In 1801, at an auction in the Tontine Coffee House in New York City, lawyer and land speculator Augustus Sacket(t) purchased a tract of land near Lake Ontario. The extremely fertile land he purchased surrounded the natural harbor on Black River Bay that became known as Sacket's (now Sackets) Harbor. Sacket is said to have called for the township to be named for Ezra Houndsfield, an early settler and merchant from Sheffield, England. The "d" was later dropped from the name.

The War of 1812 put Sackets Harbor on the map. The nearby land and sea battles, and the ship-building and naval operations carried out there, brought prominence to this quiet little settlement. It became the North Country's most celebrated and prosperous village. Houses built before the war were generally of frame, often with limestone foundations. After the war, more than thirty buildings were constructed of limestone in the township. Some are similar in their use of stone—for example,

the Union Hotel and the Tisdale House—and may have been built by the same mason.

### union hotel

Among the first and most impressive buildings was the Union Hotel, built for Frederick White of Utica. Situated on the corner of West Main and Ray Streets, its front faces Market Square Park, the village's historic, civic, and commercial center. Its long northeast side overlooks the port. An imposing structure of three stories, the hotel is among the finest examples of Federal architecture in New York State. Originally, it had stepped gables with fan lights, which lent it a more urban appearance. Construction of the hotel began in April 1817; it opened in the spring of 1818. It is said that the Scottish stonemasons who migrated from Canada after the War of 1812 used local limestone transported by barge.



7.1. This 1814 map of Sackett's Harbor shows its perfect anchorage location where Black River Bay flows into Lake Ontario. Sheltered by the hook of Navy Point, the harbor was ideally suited for shipbuilding. The high cliffs facing west over Lake Ontario were a deterrent to invasion.



7.2. Union Hotel, 1817–18. The original roofline featured stepped gables, similar to those on the Officers' Row of Madison Barracks. The hotel overlooks both the port and Market Square. It is also near Augustus Sacket's wood frame house.





7.3. Union Hotel: coursed stonework with ashlar quoins at the corners and around the windows, and a belt course above the first floor windows.

The building reflects Federal architecture with its symmetrical arrangement of openings, central transverse hall and doorway, and elliptical transom and side lights. Four delicately carved pilasters embellish the main entrance. Squared stone quoins reinforce and accentuate the corners, window openings, and doors.

With its large rooms and elaborately carved woodwork, the hotel's interior highlights the boldness of local carpentry. There are oval sunbursts on the mantelpieces and a beautiful spiral on the stair newel post. The first floor originally contained a barroom, numerous parlors, a dining room with long tables, a kitchen, and a pantry. One large room on the second floor was used as a ballroom. The upper floors held guest rooms; the servants' quarters were in the attic.

When the Masonic Order of the Athol Lodge was formed in 1818, it held its meetings in the



7.4. Union Hotel: the southwest wall of rubble with an ashlar belt course and a splayed lintel over the window. Many of these stones are weather-smoothed and are probably from a nearby shore.

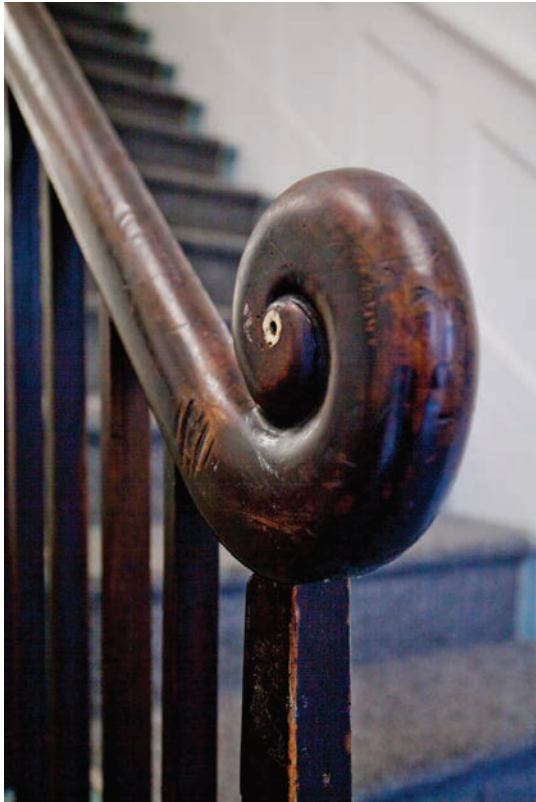
attic of the hotel. Later, the order rebuilt the roof, removing the stepped gables, and installed a new meeting room, whose stained glass window can be seen today.

In 1973, the State of New York purchased the building and restored it to its nineteenth-century beauty.

#### stone row, madison barracks

After the War of 1812, Major General Jacob Jennings Brown ordered the ill-fed soldiers of the Second Infantry to build Madison Barracks. Named for President Madison and located on a rise of land adjacent to the harbor, the barracks were constructed of local limestone and were built around the same time as the Union Hotel. The barracks were intended to be part of a permanent military



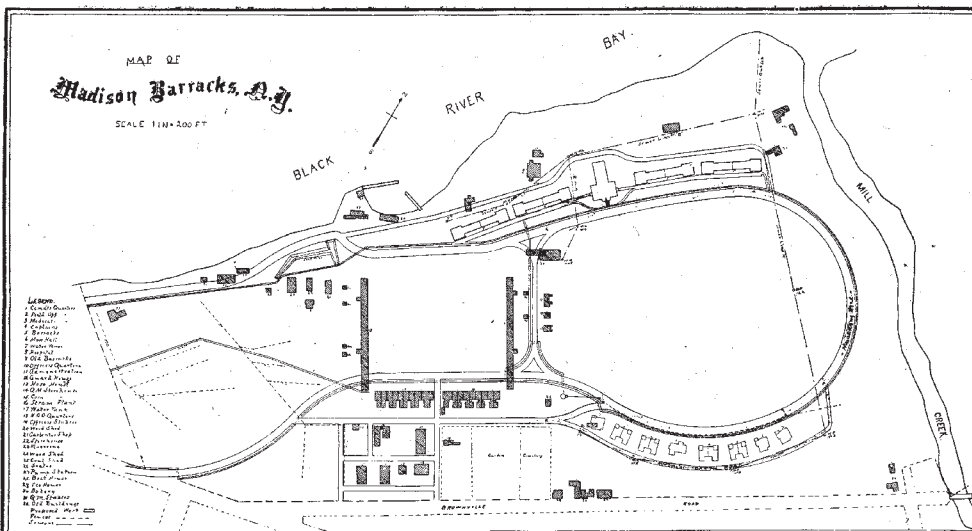


75. Carved handrail in the Union Hotel. Its vertical turning suggests a wave or a snail.

post to protect the northern border. They are not unlike the rival British stone garrison across the lake, at Fort Henry in Canada. According to Milbert, “this military post, surrounded by walls and palisades, covers about three acres, including the

large paved drill courts, a vegetable garden, and a garden for medicinal plants.”

Small stone guard gates still mark some entrances to the barracks. The officers’ quarters, known as Stone Row, face the lake and consist of a row of buildings on the same line, separated by a thirty foot wide sally port. Originally, two limestone buildings for enlisted men flanked this row, forming an open quadrangle or parade ground. The buildings immediately adjacent to the sally port were the most impressive and were intended for the highest-ranking officers. In the stepped gable end of the east quarters is a semicircle engraved with the words “Commenced Aug. 1, 1816. Completed Oct., 1819.” A similar carved inscription on the west gable reads: “Erected by 2nd Infantry.” According to Jefferson County historian Franklin Hough, the barracks were built at a cost of \$85,000 under the direction of Thomas Tupper, DQMG, of the Second Infantry, to plans drawn by William Smith. According to a history of Madison Barracks by Gordon Heiner (*From Saints to Red Legs*, c. 1934), the masonry work was contracted to Orin Ives. The carpentry was done by Joseph Kimball, Philo Johnson, and Chauncey Calhoun. It is said that on a quiet evening, one could hear the sound of nine o’clock taps from the British post at Kingston, thirty miles across the water.



76. Map of Madison Barracks, showing the original Officers’ Row houses facing out toward Black River Bay with the Brownville Road (Military Road) running behind them. Forming the other two sides of the quadrangle were the enlisted men’s quarters. The hospital (8) is the large rectangular structure with its wings close to the bay. The buildings outlined were not yet built when this map was published in Haddock’s *History of Jefferson County*, 1894.



7.7. Gate house at an entrance to Madison Barracks.

In the 1890s, arcaded porches were added to protect the front of the buildings. On each side of the sally port the quarters are distinguished by their smooth-faced limestone façades and four tall chimneys. Each has two rooms on either side of the hall on both stories; one still has a wooden

extension at the rear that would have been used as a kitchen. In the early nineteenth century, because of the danger of fire, kitchens were often relegated to separate buildings. The ceilings of both stories are ten feet high. In the front hall of the second floor was a six-foot-by-sixteen-foot bathroom to which water was brought by hand. It was a room for bathing only—the privy was a wooden structure in the garden, where also was located a carriage house, a stable, a woodshed, and a stone root house with a sod roof. The 1870 Surgeon General's *Report on Barracks and Hospitals* noted that the men's quarters (which would be demolished in the early twentieth century) provided wash rooms with troughs, a barrel of water, and basins. "In the summer a half hogshead is placed in the room for the use of such men as do not bathe in the bay."

The rest of the officers' quarters on Stone Row were originally one-story dwellings with attics. Each set had a kitchen, but the hall and stairway were common for two sets, which proved a source of friction between families. The end of one row was used as a post library, with a reading room and school in the front and court martial rooms in the rear. The open space upstairs was used as a ballroom and chapel. The opposite end row held the officers' mess hall. A seven-foot-high board fence extending along the rear of the row separated the yards. There also was a stone commissary near the wharf, as well as a stone bakery that provided



7.8. Stone Row, officers' quarters, 1816–19. Except for the two end houses on the sally port, this row was originally one story high, with an attic that was a continuous open space. The stone is well cut and varies in type over the length of the row. This is probably due to fire, abandonment, and rebuilding in the late twentieth century.





7.9. Stone Row: sally port with date inscription “Commenced Aug. 1, 1816. Completed Oct., 1819.” Iron brackets remain that would have supported two sets of large wooden gates at each end of the port.

“usually good” bread to the regiment. Shade trees were planted along the roads, and some old sugar maples remain. The rear of Stone Row parallels the Military Road, which General Brown had also ordered built.

It was from Sackets Harbor that explorer and Brigadier General Zebulon Pike launched his attack on Fort York (present-day Toronto). He was killed during that assault in 1813. His body is buried in the old military cemetery near the barracks.

In 1848, on his return from the Mexican War, Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia Dent, were posted to Madison Barracks on two separate occasions. They occupied quarters No. 2 and No. 4 in the officers’ row just west of the sally port. Julia D. Grant recorded in her diary:

A ride to Watertown in a mammoth sleigh, muffled to the eyes in buffalo robes, and drawn by six horses, all with bells. At length the ice on Lake Ontario broke, which was a matter of rejoicing to our little garrison.

Grant himself remembered Sackets Harbor with affection and during his presidency saved it from abandonment after a fire.

### sto ne hosp ital

At any given time after the War of 1812, 1,000 officers and enlisted men were stationed at Sackets Harbor, which was vacated only after World War II. Visitors today enjoy the expansive grounds leading down to Black River Bay, where the Madison Barracks Hospital is undergoing restoration. Only fifty feet from shore, on a rise about fifteen feet above the bay, the hospital is separated from



7.10. Stone Row, officers’ quarters, rear ell. The sally port is to the right.





7.11. Stone Row, end house with stepped gables adjacent to the sally port. Here, the stonework of the front is ashlar. It is laid uniformly on the first floor, with a rubble section and more ashlar above what was a portico. Note the differences in stonework from the adjacent officer's house, which is possibly of quarried cut stone from Chaumont.

Stone Row by a deep ravine. It commands a beautiful view of the harbor and the lake. For most of the year, patients would have benefited from fresh breezes. Winters, however, were bleak, with strong winds blowing across the frozen bay.

Dean A. Biancavilla, a preservation architect with Holmes, King, Kallquist, & Associates of Syracuse, has made the case that Martin Euclid Thompson was the architect of the Stone Hospital. He has found unmistakable similarities between the Governors Island Hospital designed by Thompson in New York in 1840 and the Stone Hospital

constructed in Sackets Harbor two years earlier. The massing and appearance of the two hospitals are nearly identical. Biancavilla has concluded that the windows, the floor layout, the one-story wings, and the balconies and masonry quoins are so similar that we can be certain they had the same architect.

The Sackets Harbor hospital, one of the first permanent military hospitals in the United States, was constructed of locally quarried limestone in the Greek Revival style with Federal and Georgian elements. The corners have dressed stone quoins,

7.12. Hospital, west entrance, 1838. It is possible that the stone to build the hospital was brought by barge from Chaumont. The lighter-colored smooth cut stones of the quoins, lintels, and water table contrast well with the evenly coursed rougher stones. Photograph from the 1860s.



and a wooden balustrade once graced the hipped roof. A stone cornice and water table add to the building's exterior details. The walls are approximately nineteen inches thick.

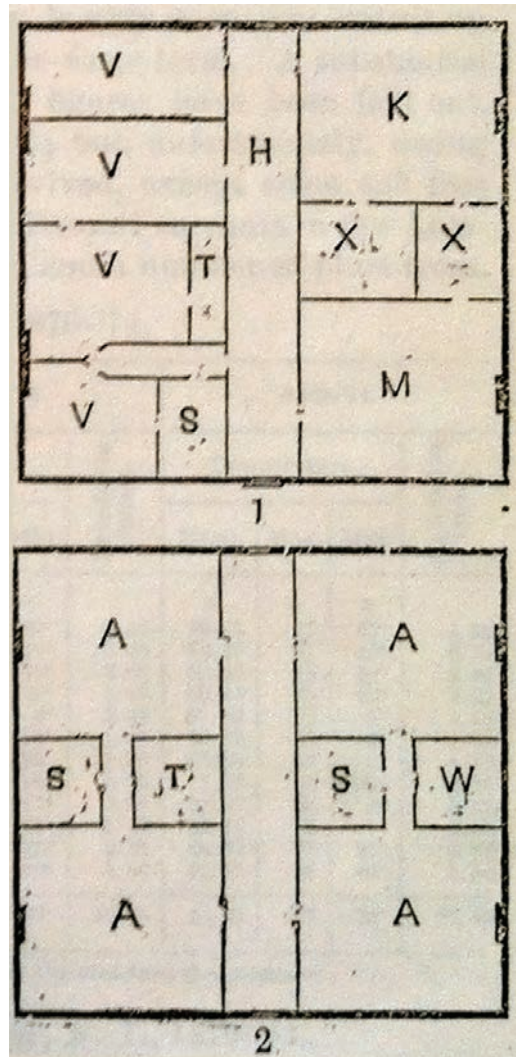
The Army Quartermaster's Department and the third Auditor of the Treasury of 1839 list "Stone: for furnishing and delivering at Madison Barracks, the stone that may be required for erecting an hospital, for the sum of \$1 per perch. Bond in \$2,000."

Matching one-story wings are attached to the main square section of the building, which measures fifty-six feet five inches by fifty-three feet six inches. Including the raised basement and the two upper stories, the building has 7,606 square feet of usable space. At one time, the wings' raised basements had vaulted brick cisterns for storing rain-water collected from the main roof. The roofs of the side wings had wooden balustrades.



7.13. The stonework in the hospital is exemplary, with corner quoins perfectly aligned up the two stories of the building. Above is a stone cornice, and below, a well-defined watertable.

The west entrance looked toward the vastness of Lake Ontario, which for Jacques Milbert recalled the ocean. Eleven massive limestone steps led to a Greek Revival entry. Secured with a set of double doors, the entry opened onto a wide central hall that divided the main section east to west. The imposing hall staircase had short risers to



7.14. Plan for the Stone Hospital, from the War Department, Surgeon General's Office, *A Report on Barracks and Hospitals*, Circular no. 4, Washington: GPO, 1870.  
1—Basement—K, kitchen; M, dining room; X, pantries; H, hall; S, storeroom, T, closet; V, matron's quarters.  
2—Second floor—A, wards; S, lavatories; T, closet; W, water closet.



facilitate patients' use. Light flowed into the building from a skylight at the apex of the roof, which was surrounded by a balustrade. Spacious sixteen-foot-high rooms with large windows, each with a fireplace, paneled doors, and tall baseboards, opened onto a central hall. The main building was divided into eight patient wards, quarters for nurses, a kitchen, and dining facilities. One wing served as a morgue; the other was used for surgery. The latrines were located a distance from the rear of the building. According to the Surgeon General's report in 1870, the patients at that time were suffering from malaria, dysentery, venereal diseases, and rheumatism. It is worth noting here that during the War of 1812, only a small percentage of men fell in battle. Most died from fevers and infections.

In 1831, just across Mill Creek, not far from the hospital, an important medical discovery was made. Dr. Samuel Guthrie, a country doctor, inventor, and distiller, discovered chloroform. As interesting as the connection is, there seems to have been no direct link between the hospital and Guthrie.

Today, the Sackets Harbor Cultural Preservation Foundation has plans to rebuild the hospital's exterior masonry walls, reattach its wrought iron balconies, and rehang its original shutters.

## o l d m i l l

Not far from the hospital and overlooking Black River Bay in Sackets Harbor is the Old Mill. This imposing three-story edifice was begun in 1808 and completed ten years later. It was built as a sawmill for Elisha Camp, one of the wealthiest landowners and foremost promoters of Jefferson County, whose brick house is across the street.

The mill has five-foot-thick walls of limestone masonry at its base, red fir floors, Gothic plank doors, and windows with 12/12 panes. On the first floor, the main room measures thirty-six feet by forty-eight feet and is two stories high. A massive fireplace dominates the room. A 1,000-square-foot room on the lower level boasts an eight-foot-square stone fireplace and long ceiling beams. Somewhat



7.15. The Old Mill, 1808–1818, has walls at the base that measure five feet thick. It was built by an industrious early settler, Elisha Camp, who promoted Sackets Harbor as a commercial center.

comparable in size to the gristmill in Cape Vincent, the space was designed to accommodate the huge logs that were sent down the Black River for cutting into lumber.

Over the years, different owners have renovated the Old Mill to suit their needs. Dr. Samuel Guthrie purchased the property in the late 1830s for his son, Edwin, who operated it as a distillery. Large gold letters on the lakeside announced “E. Guthrie & Co. Distillery.” Beginning in the 1840s, the building was used as a “sail loft” and dwelling. In 1882, the Watertown firm of Sloan & Greenleaf outfitted the building to again serve as a sawmill. In 1916, it was sold to Charles Frederick Naegle, a well-known American artist, and in 1923, to Chard Power Smith, poet and novelist and author of *Artillery of Time* and *Ladies Day*. Today, a





7.16. Overlooking Black River Bay, the Old Mill was perfectly placed to receive logs floated down the Bay. Its generous three story space has been a sawmill, a distillery, and finally a family home.

walled courtyard, formal gardens, terraces, and meandering walkways complement this dramatic site on the bay.

### ch r i s t e p i s c o p a l c h u r c h

Christ Episcopal Church, one of the oldest ecclesiastical buildings in Jefferson County, is located on East Main Street, a few blocks from the Union Hotel on land donated by the hotel's owner, Frederick White. In 1823, the cornerstone was laid by a key committee person, William Waring. Work was halted in December of that year following the death of Mr. Waring. It was not until 1832 that the church was finally completed, at a cost of \$5,000.

An impressive example of Greek Revival architecture, the church features a four-column wooden portico and Gothic arched windows and doors. The louvered wooden belfry over a portico follows the

traditional eighteenth-century pattern for churches. Square stone quoins were used to reinforce and accentuate the corners as well as the door and window openings. The front wall is made of a conchoidal stone of a most interesting texture.

The original box pews provide seating for three hundred parishioners. The fine interior includes a twenty-one-pipe organ and a carved cherry altar with a reredos, or altarpiece, behind it. Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant attended services at this church when he was stationed at Madison Barracks in 1848 and again in 1851.

### s a c k e t s h a r b o r b a n k

Near Christ Episcopal Church, at the northwest corner of Broad and West Main Streets, stands the Sackets Harbor Bank Building. This two-story limestone structure in the Georgian style is best



7.17. Christ Episcopal Church, built between 1823 and 1832, is one of Jefferson County's earliest churches and represents the determination of its congregation. The stone building is enhanced by a wooden-columned portico and belfry. Its pointed Gothic revival windows have smooth quoins set against a rubble stone wall.



7.18. Sackets Harbor Bank, 1834. The beautifully cut ashlar limestone makes for an impressive front façade on West Main Street.





7.19. The conchoidal stone on this side wall of the Sackets Harbor Bank is similar to that used on Christ Episcopal Church, a couple of blocks away. The rear ell holds the offices of the Sackets Harbor Historical Society, which was instrumental in saving the building.

known for having been the second bank in Jefferson County. It was constructed in 1834 for General W. H. Angell, who had moved to Sackets Harbor from nearby Clayton. The building's stonework is especially refined. The front, which faces West Main Street, is thirty-eight feet across and boasts smooth dressed ashlar stone with wide lintels above the windows. A water table details the foundation. The front entrance is sheltered by a small wooden portico with hand-carved details. The paneled door is surrounded by a fan light and side lights. A secondary entrance, on the building's fifty-three-foot length, faces Broad Street. A wing on the northeast side housed a pantry and kitchen.

The main floor originally consisted of six large rooms flanked by smaller ones. Each floor had massive, elaborately carved fireplaces. The staircase had a hand-carved railing. On the third floor a flight of stairs led to the rooftop, where a balustrade surrounded a small lookout over the harbor. The cellar housed the original vault, which was protected by strong bars over the one window.

Over the years, the building became the residence of the Inglehart family, who were prominent in politics and banking. Another owner was Lewis W. Day, a county assemblyman. At one time

the building was a tearoom, at another a dry cleaners. After years of neglect, the site was purchased and restored by the Sackets Harbor Historical Society. Today the Watertown Savings Bank operates a banking facility in the main building. The Historical Society uses the ell as its headquarters.

#### t i s d a l e m a n s i o n

The Tisdale Mansion is another fine limestone structure in the village. Built by George Leonard Tisdale, son of George Tisdale, a Revolutionary War soldier from Massachusetts, it stands on just over one acre of land. Located near Fort Virginia, one of the five blockhouses that protected the village during the War of 1812, the mansion was constructed in 1832, reputedly out of Chaumont limestone.

The front gable mansion has a wide fan light of dressed stone. The entrance has its original front door and side lights. The chimneys, quoins, and lintels are made of smooth dressed limestone. Identical side stone wings once displayed balustrades across their fronts. The stone walls are two feet thick.

All of the rooms but one are twenty feet by twenty-four feet with eleven-foot ceilings. Fireplaces





7.20. The Tisdale Mansion, built in 1832, has a front gable entrance that is well sequestered from the street.

heated the rooms, and a stone oven for baking is connected to the kitchen fireplace. The basement also contains a fireplace. The floor beams are four inches by eight inches with floorboards two inches thick.

Before the village constructed a water system, a large tank was installed in the attic. In the 1930s, water was still being pumped up from the well by a neighborhood boy. Gravity allowed a flow of water to the bathroom and kitchen from the attic tank.

Past owners of the mansion include Thomas L. Rankin, a well-known inventor and friend of Thomas Alva Edison. Rankin invented the ice-making machine and the loop-the-loop ride that graced the midway of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The current owners enjoy the extensive garden, which still has some of its old fruit trees.



7.21. The rear wall of the Tisdale Mansion is of rubble with smooth quoins and lintel.



7.22. Each gable end of the Tisdale Mansion has a fan window surrounded by an elliptical stone arch with keystone.

member y homestead

Outside the village, this house faces south over the Camp Mills Road. Stephen Simmons, a Sackets Harbor hotel owner, built the house and started





7.23. This side and rear view of the Tisdale Mansion shows its side wings, which once had balustrades across the front.



7.24. Membery House, 1818. With its narrow three-bay façade, the house has the presence of a fine city dwelling placed in the countryside. It was part of an extensive farm that supplied a Sackets Harbor hotel.



7.25. The interior of the Membery House retains its original doors and woodwork which are enhanced by period furnishings.

the farm in 1818 to supply produce, meat, and dairy products for his guests. The Memberys, an old English family, were among the first settlers in the Town of Hounsfield and owned the house from the 1840s until the 1920s. This building is an example of fine masonry work in a part of Hounsfield that once possessed extensive limestone quarries and kilns.

The house consists of a two-story main block, twenty-eight feet by thirty-two feet, and an original one-story wing. Its notable features include the generously scaled semicircular lunette windows that fill the gable peaks. The lintels, quoins, and water table are of smooth cut stone, which was taken from Camp Mills Creek, down the road. The façade is three bays wide with a recessed entrance. Over the paneled front door is a sunburst window



7.26. From the deeply set downstairs front window, the view is across the lawn to the road and fields beyond.

with its original stained glass. In the main block, the side-hall floor plan with two rooms back-to-back remains intact. The five Federal-style fireplaces retain their original mantelpieces. The full cellar, set on bedrock, features hand-hewn timbers and a fireplace. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As its original owner planned, fields of corn grow close to this farmhouse today.

#### mill creek bridge

Hounsfield boasts two single-span stone-arch bridges: the Bedford Creek Bridge, to the west of Sackets Harbor, and the Mill Creek Bridge, which was built to serve Jewettsville, east of Sackets Harbor. Originally built of wood, the Mill Creek





7.27. In a bright upstairs bedroom of the Membery House, quilts hang in front of the fireplace.

Bridge was replaced in 1819 with a stone structure similar in size and construction to the Bedford Creek Bridge.

Located on the old Military Road, the Mill Creek Bridge is celebrated by a New York State historical marker. On August 4, 1817, during a four-month tour of the United States, newly elected President James Monroe, accompanied by General Jacob Jennings Brown, was greeted at the site by a number of Revolutionary War veterans and a nineteen-gun salute (denoting the number of states in the Union at that time). For the occasion the bridge was festooned with nineteen arches, the first of which displayed a live American eagle whose legs were tethered to the arch.

In May 2001, a portion of the right-end retaining wall collapsed, and for two years the bridge was closed to traffic. Today, reconstructed walls with exposed faces match the existing stone walls in design, color, texture, and materials. The bridge was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

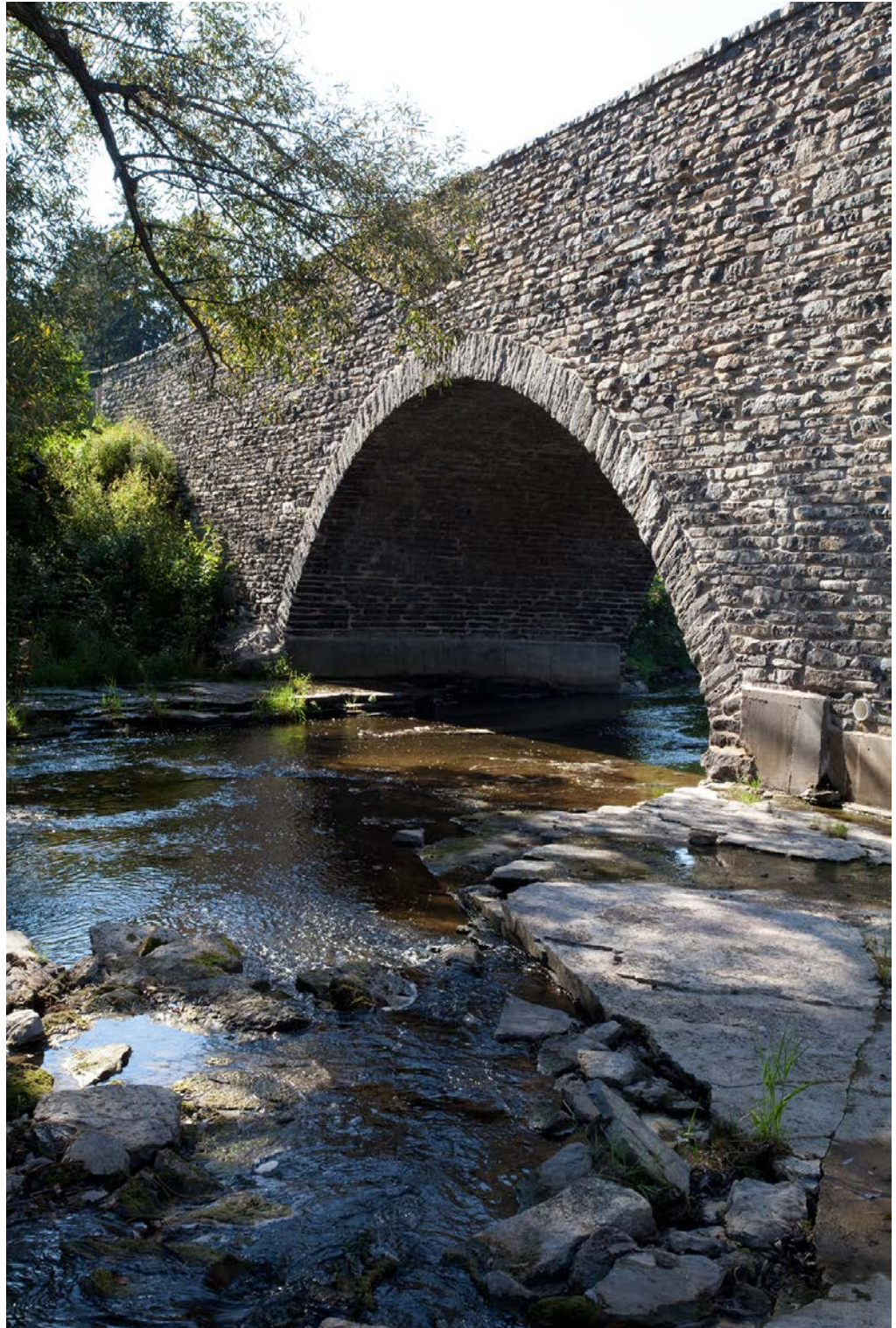
Augustus Sacket's purchase of a fine natural harbor near the Black River's entry into Lake Ontario was a prescient speculative venture. The



7.28. A very memorable feature of the Membery House is the extremely large semi-circular lunettes in the gable ends.



7.29. Mill Creek Bridge was constructed in 1819 and restored in 2001. Drivers passing over it today are easily reminded of the bridge's past as they proceed in single file over the arch and then onto the Military Road, where an historical marker relates the visit of President James Monroe in 1817.



War of 1812 led to extensive investment in the town by the federal government, including the construction of large stone structures like the hospital and barracks, which were unique to this area in the first half of the nineteenth century. The several stone farmhouses and schoolhouses that still stand

in the fertile countryside testify to the wealth the settlers accumulated and to their interest in education. More recently, the idyllic village of Sackets Harbor has been refurbishing its architectural heritage to attract tourists.





## *Part Three*

Towns North of the Black River,  
Bordering Lake Ontario or the St. Lawrence River

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 8. Town of Brownville    | 11. Town of Clayton    |
| 9. Town of Lyme          | 12. Town of Orleans    |
| 10. Town of Cape Vincent | 13. Town of Alexandria |





# 8

## Town of BROWNVILLE

maureen hubbard barros

*A well-marked and reasonably well-frequented path led me toward Brownville, a village just founded by the American general of the same name. It is worth remarking that in the United States a property owner in an unsettled area obtains the right, when constructing a house, to give his name to the village that almost inevitably springs up around his new residence. Clustered near the General's buildings are more than 300 houses, some of which, like the quartermaster's and the well-furnished tavern are very handsome. . . .*

*The most beautiful ornament of the surrounding countryside is unquestionably the Black River with its several falls. At the edge of the village there is an extremely picturesque one traversed by an elegant and light bridge. However, if one had to choose among all the wilderness sites that the river offers, it is the view from the bottom of the gorge that most merits a visit. . . .*

*At this depth the superimposed limestone beds are all in their ranks, and between them they keep an admirable symmetry, which we would think the result of calculation and the operations of man, if we did not know how orderly and with great regularity nature can sometimes proceed in the construction of its own monuments.*

—J. Milbert

In March 1799, while exploring the north side of the Black River, twenty-four-year-old Jacob Jennings Brown came upon a creek that he named Philomel, the Greek word for nightingale. Pleased with its potential for waterpower and with the nearby Black River's short, navigable route to Lake Ontario, he and his brother began clearing land from a tract that his family had purchased from the

Chassanis Company, later owned by James LeRay. Soon, twenty other family members, including his father and mother, arrived. A sawmill, a grist mill, and a store were built, and by 1802, a wooden bridge spanned the Black River, which at this point is a deep gorge between limestone cliffs. A great number of settlers were attracted to the area, and clearings were made for farms. Many

8.1. “Because I had to select a single focus for this grand scene, in Plate XL I reproduced Black River falls, the bridge, the water flow that powers several mills, and the large cotton mill rising above the village.” J. Milbert, *Mills on the Black River*, c. 1820. Milstein Division of United States History, Local History & Genealogy, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.



earned income from potash, the residue of burned trees, which was then shipped to Canada in barrels. Brownville grew more quickly than any other village in the county.

#### Jacob Brown Mansion

Jacob Brown married Pamela (or Pamela) Williams of Williamstown, Massachusetts. Between 1811 and 1815, he built a Georgian mansion at the heart of the settlement. Consisting of twenty-two rooms on an eight-acre lawn planted with maples, pines, and elms, it is a solid block of a building measuring roughly fifty-four feet by fifty-one feet. It was used briefly as the military headquarters of the Northern Division of the Federal Army. Like the Copeland House in Antwerp, it suggests a “fort” where early settlers could gather for safety.

Major Edmund Kirby, Brown’s future son-in-law, supervised the building of the house. Facing west toward Brown Boulevard, it once boasted a balustrade similar to the one on the Stone House in Cape Vincent. Eyebrow windows peek out from the low-hipped roof, and four tall chimneys of cut stone rise above it. The limestone, perhaps from a quarry in the village, is smooth cut and laid in an ashlar pattern on the front and sides; the rear is

coursed rough-cut stone. The lintels and sills are of a slightly darker stone. The five-bay façade has a paneled entrance with a fan light and side lights. There is a water table just above the cellar windows. A wooden porch across the rear looks out toward Philomel Creek and the steeple of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church (1820), another limestone structure in the village.

Local pine, cedar, and oak were used for the interior floors and woodwork. The downstairs ceilings are twelve feet high. The central hall does not flow straight through to the rear, but stops short at stairways leading to the four upstairs bedrooms and to the cellar. There are fireplaces in each of the main rooms, and the cellar kitchen has a cooking fireplace and bake oven. Presidents Monroe, Madison, and John Quincy Adams were entertained here. The mansion, reached by a long, semicircular drive, now accommodates Village of Brownville offices, a library, and a community center. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The mansion’s extensive grounds were probably the site of Brown’s experiments in grape growing. In an address to the Jefferson County Agricultural Society in 1830, Vincent LeRay praised Brown’s planting of a valuable Early Morillon grape cutting, which three years later produced 120 clusters



8.2. General Jacob Brown Mansion, 1811–15. Built of large blocks of limestone quarried nearby, the grand square mansion was noted for the cords of wood needed to keep its many fireplaces going. Once the proud home of the founder of Brownville, it has been the site of military meetings and political gatherings. Today it remains a proud focal point for the community.

of good-sized grapes, “notwithstanding the unfavorable season.”

A native of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Brown had taught school and been involved in a debating society in New York City. A reversal of his father’s fortunes had encouraged him and his family to start again in the wilderness along the Black River. His limestone mansion and the nearby homes and businesses of relatives indicated that the family had succeeded in their new community.

In the North Country, Brown was known for his resourcefulness. His land office was on his property on the corner of Washington and Pike Streets. He surveyed roads and bridges and lobbied for them to be built. In 1808, he was elected to the Agricultural and Philosophical Society of the State of New York. Though he was born a Quaker, his strong leadership qualities led to his appointment as a brigadier general in the New York Militia at the beginning of the War of 1812. His home soon became the headquarters for defense of the frontier between Oswego and Ogdensburg. He played an important role in the Battle of Sackets Harbor, after which he was appointed brigadier general in the Federal Army. He defeated the British forces three times in 1813, and according to historian and biographer John D. Morris, he was the nation’s

most successful battle commander. His bravery, self-confidence, and concern for his soldiers’ welfare were widely recognized. Henry Adams, in his *History of the United States of America during the Second Administration of James Madison*, noted that “among all the American major-generals [Brown] alone made raw troops as steady as grenadiers, and caused militia to storm entrenched lines held by British regulars.” After the war, he moved to Washington as commander-in-chief of the Army, where he advised President Monroe on military matters and instigated changes to professionalize the army.

The evening before his departure for Washington, Major General Brown held a party at the mansion with “more than two hundred of very genteel and polite persons attending, of both sexes; and on a notice of one day” (James LeRay, “Remarks to the Jefferson County Agricultural Society,” 1820). Brown had made his fortune selling land and was partly responsible for the county’s rapid growth; but he suffered losses in the Panic of 1819, and by 1821, he was in debt. He died in 1828 and was given an impressive funeral in Washington, DC. President John Quincy Adams noted in his diary that “General Brown was one of the eminent men of this age and nation.”



His widow returned to Brownville, and his descendants continued to live in the mansion until 1865. The original Town of Brownville, which had extended from Champion to the St. Lawrence River, was broken up into several smaller townships. Today the Village of Brownville commemorates the heroic general with a yearly parade in his honor along roads he walked in his lifetime.

#### knap mansion

Clustered near the Brown Mansion are other limestone structures, including the church, a store, stone cottages, and the Knap mansion. Thomas L. Knap was an early entrepreneur who built a flour mill, a tannery, and a linseed oil mill and was later the village president and town supervisor. His stone mansion, built between 1826 and 1838, faces the Black River, the bridge, and his mills. It has an imposing presence, with stepped gable ends leading to large stone chimneys. There is a broad fan light in the west gable peak. The three-bay façade is narrower than the building is deep. It gives the mansion something of an urban ambience, reminding us that Brownville, not Watertown, was intended to be the county seat. The entrance is topped by

a semicircular arch with a keystone. A fan light brings more light into the interior hallway, where there is a straight-run stair. The stonework features wide, dressed corner quoins in a pattern that is repeated around the windows and door. The lintels and sills are also smoothly dressed, in contrast to the rough coursed stone of the house. There are water tables on the front and west sides.

The proximity of this fine house to the mills reminds us that the odors and noises of the small mill town must have been both comforting and disturbing to the inhabitants. When business was thriving, there would be the hum and creak of the waterwheels as they turned the millstones. But there would also have been the pungent smells of the tanneries, whose chemicals were derived from trees like hemlock and oak.

#### henr y brown mansion

On the Military Road just outside Brownville is the beautiful limestone mansion of Henry Brown, a relative of General Jacob Brown. Built on bedrock, its site is impressive, facing southeast from a rise above the road. A stone springhouse nearby straddles Philomel Creek, which flows toward the

8.3. Knap Mansion, 1826–38. Overlooking the commercially busy section of the Black River, this three-bay mansion gives the impression of a city house. Its stepped gable ends are imposing and the windows and door are surrounded by stone quoins in a strong pattern.





8.4. Henry Brown Mansion, 1830. This mansion has a wonderful symmetry in its five-bay façade. The stone work is especially fine and uses large blocks of local limestone in contrasting shades of gray.



8.5. Henry Brown Mansion. View of the corner quoins and lintel stones.

Jacob Brown Mansion in the village. The year “1830” is engraved on one of the stone chimneys, but the house was possibly built as early as 1815. There is a chimney at each gable end of the building, which has five fireplaces, including one in the stone kitchen ell to the right of the house. The five-bay façade has a wide entrance with an elliptical arch and keystone. The windows have 12/12 panes with shutters, and there are small, square windows in the gable ends of the main house. The lintels and sills are smooth cut of a slightly darker limestone, which contrasts with the rougher stone in the fabric of the building. The water table adds another horizontal line to this perfectly symmetrical mansion, which rises from a landscape of carefully tended grass and trees.

#### calvin britton house

On the Perch River Road, outside the Village of Brownville, lies the Calvin Britton farm. Britton, spelled Britain in old deeds, settled in Brownville



8.6. The Henry Brown Mansion's springhouse with its double stone wall bestrides Philomel Creek. It was used for keeping milk cool, separating cream, and making butter.



8.7. Calvin Britton House, 1815–16. Built into the hillside and surrounded by stone fences, this house has especially thick walls. The front door is recessed and the plan of the house may reflect the first owner's English roots.





8.8. Two stone fences meet at a corner of the Calvin Britton property.

in its early days, in 1801. He is reputed to have been a close friend of General Jacob Brown, whom he succeeded as brigadier general of the Brownville Militia in the War of 1812. His farm is surrounded by dry stone fences and commands stunning views of the countryside. Built in 1815–16, the house nestles into a small hill so that the front door is flush with the ground. Shade trees line the lawn. The five-bay façade has a recessed door with no transom. Smooth-cut stone lintels top the windows, and brick chimneys rise over each gable end.

Inside the front entrance, immediately to the right, is the original kitchen area, and on the left, the original dining room. Extending across the rear of the house is a large workroom once used for farm chores. In this well-preserved English house plan, a closed central stairway leads to the second floor, which is now used as a living room. Deep window wells reveal the extreme thickness of the stone walls; they are beveled to allow maximum light into the rooms. A later frame addition extends from the rear toward a series of outbuildings. This fine farmhouse has been lovingly cared for over the years and remains in excellent condition. Its white

ash floors and three working fireplaces make it a fine place for the owners to entertain.

#### allen road school house

Of the several one-room limestone schoolhouses in the township, No. 18, the Perch River School on the Allen Road, is a good surviving example. It was built around 1840 at a time when students spent more time working the family farm than attending classes. The teacher, who was hired by the local school trustees, usually boarded with a nearby family. Measuring thirty-four feet by twenty-eight feet, the schoolhouse has boys' and girls' entrances in the front gable end and an uninscribed block in the peak. A later small stone ell for washrooms extends from the back. The smooth stone lintels contrast with the rough coursed stonework of the walls. The north side has kept its original windows. Reflecting changing attitudes at the beginning of the twentieth century, the south side windows have been enlarged to allow more light into the schoolroom. It is not known if the school was built with the fifty dollar premium offered by Walter Bickers

8.9. Allen Road School House, c. 1840, is an example of the many stone school houses built in the county. Two front doors provided separate entrances for boys and girls. For many students in the nineteenth century, school did not begin until December and ended with planting in the spring.



Camp of Sackets Harbor to all school districts in Jefferson County to erect stone schoolhouses. The last class was taught in this school in 1941, for eighteen students.

sa muel r ead h ouse

Pillar Point juts into Lake Ontario near the mouth of the Black River. Its name is derived from the

limestone pillars formed by many centuries of water eroding a bluff near the end of the point. In 1826, Samuel Read purchased thirty-nine acres of land along the south shore. The following year, he hired a stonemason to build a thirty foot-by-twenty foot house of native shore stone about a hundred feet from the water. The stonework is especially interesting, for it blends smoothly worn lake stones with exceptionally large lintels over the windows



8.10. Samuel Read House, Pillar Point, 1827, is one of the smallest vernacular farmhouses in the area. Its three-bay façade looks over the road, with Lake Ontario at its side.





8.11. Shore stones of all sizes, some smooth-worn by the lake, and others rough with fossil remains, were used in the Read House.

and doors. The latter are also shore stones, whose edges have been cut to size. Fossils abound in the stones. The three-bay façade faces the road. The gable end overlooking the lake has the house's only fireplace. The joists are made of local red cedar logs twelve inches to fourteen inches wide. A center run stair divides this sweetly proportioned cottage.

Samuel Read came to Jefferson County in 1804 at the age of fourteen and married Sally Sherwin, daughter of Azariah and Sarah Sherwin, for whom nearby Sherwin Bay is named. All are buried in the small Sherwin Bay cemetery.



# 9

## Town of LYME

maureen hubbard barros

*I was walking towards the village of Brown-Ville and then on to Chaumont Bay, when a Quaker who lived there offered me a ride in his carriage. . . .*

*We stopped in a pretty tavern that my driver owned, and where I was given a charming room with an excellent bed. . . .*

*When we sat for dinner I was asked my family and given names, and I was not a little surprised when the daughter of the house presented me with a piece of her cake saying, “Here, Jacques, take thy part.”*

*Among [Chaumont’s] principle buildings, there was the tavern where I was lodged, an essential establishment that in this land preceded all others. Of all the habitations it was the best situated since it was very near the bay and river. It was well constructed with a limestone that is found in the environs of the lake, and on one side there was an open porch of seven arches where the owners and their guests could stroll. . . .*

*The lake’s southern shore provides a fine limestone used in construction and the making of excellent lime. Many of the lime kilns in this region are owned and operated by Quakers who make up a large part of the local population. Most are engaged in farming and fishing.*

—J. Milbert

In 1802, James LeRay de Chaumont made plans for a new settlement to be conveniently located between his home at LeRaysville, north of Watertown, and that of his son, Vincent, on the St. Lawrence River at Cape Vincent. He called the new

village Chaumont in honor of his ancestral home in the Loire Valley of France. *Chaux* is the French word for limestone and well depicts the geology of the area, where the Chaumont Formation of the Black River Group of limestones underlies the surface. Extensive quarries cut and shipped limestone from Chaumont (locally pronounced “sha-moh”) for almost a hundred years. Settlement began at

Information for this chapter supplied in part by Clara VanDoren.

the mouth of the Chaumont River in 1803, and in 1806, construction began on Chaumont House and another stone house directly across the river—two of the first stone houses in the area.

#### chaumont house

Chaumont House was strategically located on the corner of Main and Water Streets, where early travelers waited for the Chaumont River ferry. Constructed for James LeRay by his land agent, Musgrove Evans, it was possibly begun by a Canadian stonemason in 1806 and completed in 1818. The house served as a land office, which was entered through a secondary door on Main Street. Possibly, the house was built of stone so as to render the land office fireproof. The house was also a place to entertain distinguished guests, who included Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon. Its prominent location, facing the Chaumont River in a park-like setting, must have attracted early settlers seeking to buy land.

In 1823, Chaumont House was opened to the public as a stagecoach tavern by Amos Evans and A. Pitman, Quaker landlords. A new stone bridge across the Chaumont River ensured patronage for

the tavern. Philip Gaige was the landlord around 1830, before he bought the stone Musgrove Evans House across the road.

Chaumont House is in the Federal style. A large lilac hedge shields it from the river. Its simple entrance has a fan light and side lights. The doorway has a wonderful segmented arch with a keystone. The paired gable end chimneys are of random ashlar masonry with ribbing near the cap and are more finely worked than the irregularly coursed walls of local stone. The entire building has been pointed with beaded mortar joints, probably at a later date, and shows remnants of stucco or paint, which would have given the impression of ashlar laid stone. The gable peaks have oval windows. The lintels on the front and Main Street sides are of smoothly dressed stone.

Inside, the cellar shows the jagged outcropping of bedrock on which the house was built. A beehive oven in the cellar fireplace suggests that this was the cooking fireplace for the house. To the main stone rectangle measuring fifty-two feet by thirty-five feet, there has been added a wood frame ell with two bays dating from 1818 and another from 1929. Three Colonial Revival porches were built for George Lance, a Watertown industrialist



9.1. Chaumont House, 1806–18, is James LeRay's first stone house in Jefferson County. This side view shows the porch leading to the entrance of his land office. Stone for the house came from limestone deposits nearby.

9.2. Unlike many stone houses where the best stone is put on the front façade, the stonework in the Chaumont House is identical on all sides.



who purchased the home for a summer residence in the early twentieth century.

The interior has simple original mantelpieces in the parlor, library, and dining room. The second floor has a wide central hall lined with seven small rooms that remind one that the building was used as an inn. The home retains an outstanding level of architectural integrity and is a visual landmark in the community. It is one of the most historic houses in Jefferson County and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

evans, gaige, dillenback house

Across the street from Chaumont House on the corner of County Route 179 (the Depauville Road) is the dignified stone house built by Musgrove Evans. On a metal eavestrough high on the corner of the house is the date 1820. This Federal-style house was once part of a 370-acre farm on the Chaumont River. Evans was born in Philadelphia in 1785 and came to Jefferson County in 1799. He married Abi Brown, the sister of General Jacob Brown. He was a land surveyor and helped lay out the Cape Vincent Turnpike between Brownville and Cape Vincent. LeRay entrusted him with the street plan of Chaumont. For himself, Evans first built a twenty-foot-square house of Chaumont limestone whose

first floor consisted of a kitchen and a stone fireplace with a bake oven. Upstairs was another room with a fireplace. After this, he built the main block of the house—two downstairs rooms and three upstairs with a beautiful stairway leading from a separate hall to the bedrooms and up to a high attic with dormer windows. In 1880, frame additions were added for a bedroom and kitchen. In 1950, the garage and connecting rooms were added.

With its three-bay side-hall plan, the house is visually arresting atop its rolling lawn. The stonework displays a high degree of craftsmanship from the elliptical arched entry to the smooth dressed limestone lintels. The original entrance had a single door with side lights and fan light. These were replaced in the 1880s with the current paired doors. The wide gable ends feature elliptical arched fans.

According to the house's description in the National Register of Historic Places, a wooden extension at the rear covers a section of the original exterior paint scheme in which the limestones were painted a deep gray with mortar joints colored white to simulate a fine, very regular ashlar. The window lintels were painted a sandstone red. This is an unusually sophisticated rendering for the period in Jefferson County and may be imitative of an urban dwelling, perhaps evoking Evans's Philadelphia birthplace.





9.3. The Evans, Gaige, Dillenback House, 1820, has an elegant side hall plan with dormer windows and may reflect its first owner's Philadelphia heritage.

9.4. Evans, Gaige, Dillenback House. This side view shows the the rear ell, which was actually an earlier separate small house containing a kitchen with a stone fireplace.



Milbert, in his description of the Village of Chaumont, mentioned the Musgrove Evans house, though he mistakenly identified the roof as a mansard:

Near the road, a distance from the shore were several limestone houses with quite fine details. One of them especially, was composed of two stories and surmounted by a mansard roof, approached by fine steps, with a separate building for kitchens and other stores, giving an appearance of luxury and splendour that was in striking contrast to the isolation of the new-born town.

Through the years, the house has been owned by Philip Gaige, Alexander Copley, and E. Dillenback. On August 22, 1922, the Burlingame murder and suicide occurred in this historic house. Ghost stories are still being told about it.

copley, adams, dufo rd stone office

Alexander Copley of Denmark, Lewis County, had large landholdings. He was also a businessman who owned a store, saw and grist mills, and limestone

quarries and kilns. Besides all of those, he was a shipbuilder as well as a director of the Union Bank. His son Hiram built an office for the Copley lumber and limestone business in 1872 that is a tour de force of limestone techniques and Gothic architecture. In 1902 it became the office for the Adams Duford Quarry Company, which operated many quarries and kilns as well as a stone-crushing plant. This building, which served as a sample for buyers of limestone, features lancet-arched windows. The walls are of rough dressed limestone; the water table, quoins, and trim are smooth cut. The south wall has a large exterior chimney, and the mansard roof is tiled in slate. Plaques in the north and west gable peaks carry the date 1872 and the initials HC. A carriage block and hexagonal limestone posts are located near the street. This building exemplifies the limestone industry in Chaumont.

will iam johnson house

Point Salubrious juts into Lake Ontario south of Chaumont. As its name suggests, the early settlers considered it to have a felicitous climate relative to



9.5. The Copley, Adams, Duford Stone Office, 1872, is a remarkable structure that displays a range of limestone techniques and finishes. It was the sales office first for the Copley lumber and lime business and later for a local quarrying company.





9.6. The William Johnson House, 1818–1819, is a small three-bay farmhouse on Point Salubrious built by a British deserter from the War of 1812.

other areas, where there was “lake fever” (malaria). Between 1816 and 1819, John O’Connor, a British deserter from the War of 1812, built a small limestone house on a ridge overlooking Chaumont Bay. It received its name from William Johnson of Elizabethtown, Ontario, who with his wife Caroline Smith bought the house in 1832.

Two features distinguish the William Johnson House from most of the vernacular limestone houses in the area. On the three-bay façade, a

small gable rises above the front door. Reminiscent of stone houses across the St. Lawrence River in Ontario, it may have been added by Johnson. His great-grandfather, Sir William Johnson, was famous for securing peace with the Indians and building the flourishing settlement of Johnstown, New York. William died just before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, and his son, Sir John Johnson, fled to Canada, where young William was born.

On the southwest side wall is a first-floor coffin window with voussoirs arching its opening. Because of the configuration of the interior walls



9.7. A coffin window was put into the side wall of the William Johnson House, probably because the tight interior layout demanded it.



9.8. The William Johnson House was built of local limestone with black chert nodules.



and doors, it was obviously deemed necessary for passing a coffin out of the house after a wake. The house measures around twenty-nine feet, six inches by twenty feet, and thus is one of the smallest in the county. A long ell projects from the rear and another smaller one from the northeast side. All of the walls are of rubble stone, and those in the front are especially interesting for the black chert nodules in the limestone. Also unusual is the use of wooden lintels to span the windows and doors.

Descendants of the Johnson family lived in the house for 112 years. For a time they ran a cisco (or lake herring) fishing business. Johnson's Shoal was a noted fishing area in Chaumont Bay in the days when the bay teemed with millions of the silvery fish. Two large barns were added to the property, and in 1960 the Borden family, which has summered on Point Salubrious for five generations, took up ownership.

ja mes hor ton ho use

The second stone house built on Point Salubrious is not far from the Johnson house. Its dramatic view over Chaumont Bay was selected by James Horton, the first permanent settler on the point, in 1802. Horton and his wife lived with their large family in

a log cabin until their Georgian-style stone house was completed in 1819. According to David F. Lane of the *Watertown Daily Times* ("Old Mansions and Houses of the North Country" no. 88), the limestone was quarried on the farm and neighbors helped with the construction.

This house measures thirty-six feet, six inches across its five-bay façade. Its stonework is quite different from that of the Johnson House. The front is evenly coursed, and the original lintel blocks have been incised to resemble voussoirs. There are no corner quoins, but the stones are well laid and have remained true. The house is built into a hillside on Horton's Bay.

From 1903 to 1924, the house was owned by Stuart and Carrie Bagley Lansing, and Mr. Lansing kept a log about his home. In it he recorded that the house had become a deserted ruin by 1880 but was rescued and given a third-floor addition in the 1890s. At this time it lost original woodwork and mantelpieces. Today it is a cherished family home.

ry de r ho use

Joseph Ryder was another early settler. In 1820, he built a two-story house of Chaumont limestone, forty feet by thirty feet, with an attached wooden

9.9. The Horton House, 1819, was built by the first permanent settler of Point Salubrious from stone quarried on the farm. It was rescued from ruin in the late nineteenth century, and the third floor was added.





9.10. Ryder House, 1820. Built by an early settler, the house's five-bay façade and deeply recessed front entry look over Chaumont Bay. It sits on bedrock, without a cellar.

ell. Its symmetrical five-bay façade has a recessed entrance with top and side lights. It faces north, overlooking Chaumont Bay from a slight knoll. The gable ends have stone chimneys and small,

quarter-round attic windows. Built directly on bedrock, without a cellar, the house has a coffin window at the rear. Large lintels top the windows and front door. The sides and rear of the house are of coursed rubble.

On the first floor there is one working fireplace; another has been covered. The current owners have carefully matched the paint colors to samples of old woodwork and plaster found in the barn. The second floor features two fireplaces with original mantels and some original woodwork. The house remained in the Ryder family for several decades, and an attic beam has the Ryder name burned



9.11. The gable ends of the Ryder House feature small attic windows that are now closed, and broad stone chimneys.



9.12. The date 1820 has been inscribed into a stone on the Ryder House.





9.13. An iron detail surrounds a rod reinforcing the Ryder House.

into it. Remnants of a stone smokehouse and tannery can be seen near the house. Old apple and plum orchards are other reminders of this early farmstead.

#### charles wilcox house

On the north side of Chaumont is Point Peninsula, the largest area of land extending into Lake Ontario. The Charles Wilcox House is beyond “the carrying place” where historically canoes portaged to avoid the rough lake waters as they entered the St. Lawrence River. The rear of the house overlooks Chaumont Bay and Lake Ontario. The front faces Carrying Place Road, now County Route 57, Three Mile Bay.

Charles Wilcox came to Jefferson County from Oppenheim, Montgomery County, New York, in 1834 and purchased over three hundred acres of land for \$2,000. His acreage was ideal for pasturing sheep, and he soon kept the largest flock in the township. In 1839, after living for five years in a log cabin, he built a beautiful limestone farmhouse. This was one of the first front gable farmhouses in Lyme and reflected the popular Greek Revival style

9.14. The Charles Wilcox House, 1839, is an excellent example of the fine stone masonry in the county. The façade features a running entablature of smooth cut stone. The entire house is made of small cut limestone that has been evenly coursed.







9.15. The Charles Wilcox House is built into the hillside with a stone ell that extends down to the partially stone barn below. It was the center of a successful farming business for generations.

of the time. The main block measures thirty feet across; the long rear wing is fitted into the hillside, allowing for an extra basement story. This gabled ell plan became one of the most popular styles for farmhouses in the area. For all its originality, the Wilcox House was the last stone house built in the Town of Lyme.

The masonry is among the finest in the township. It includes smooth-cut, running entablatures over the first- and second-story windows of the façade. The rest of the house is very uniform, with its rough-cut and evenly coursed small stones. The quoins, lintels, and sills are dressed. The front gable end has an elliptical fan window. The entrance is paneled with attached columns and side lights. Single brick chimneys rise from each gable end wall and from the ell. The side stone ell is extensive and runs back to a barn that is also partially constructed of stone and that is used for equipment. Inside the barn was found a metal stencil used to label farm products.

The Wilcox house has a side hall plan with a straight stairway running from the front door to the second floor. The front parlor has its original mantel and surround. The woodwork is large in scale, with prominent corner blocks and scalloped flutings. Some doors are faux-painted with wood grain. A service stair leads to a basement kitchen and up to two small bedrooms once used as servants' quarters. This large farmhouse shows high

quality craftsmanship in a rural setting and obviously reflects its first owner's taste and success.

With the arrival of the railroad in 1855, the local economy changed. John M. Wilcox, who had inherited the property from his father, reduced the



9.16. A side window of the Charles Wilcox House shows the smooth lintel and sill with the expressed water table below.

sheep flock by half, doubled his acreage of wheat, and supported his family and three servants. After his death, the property was purchased by his son, John T. Wilcox, who established a dairy farm and raised hay and farm crops until 1960. The Wilcox house with its old nut trees and extensive farmland remained virtually intact from 1839 until 2013, when it was sold at auction by the family.

### old stone shop

Similar design and craftsmanship indicate that the Asa Wilcox Stone Blacksmith Shop in Three Mile Bay and the Charles Wilcox House were very likely built by the same mason. Each has a foundation and walls of coursed native limestone with quarry-dressed ashlar on the façade and rough dressed stone on the side and rear elevations. On the Stone Shop, a smooth entablature of dressed stones creates a strong horizontal line across the front of the building and into the corner quoins.

The old limestone shop has variously been a blacksmith's shop, an auto repair shop (in the 1920s), a butcher shop, a slaughterhouse, an ice cream parlor, a gas station, a marine repair shop, a bait and tackle shop, and, finally, apartments. It faces south near the main road between Cape Vincent and Chaumont, overlooking Three Mile Bay.

It was built in 1838 for Asa Wilcox, a Three Mile Bay shipbuilder, and his nineteen-year-old partner, blacksmith Aura Wilson. Originally a double blacksmith shop, it had two separate forges. One forge furnished metal ship parts for the Wilcox yard nearby; the other served the general public. With the arrival of the railroad, the shipyard closed in 1852, but the blacksmith's shop continued into the twentieth century.

The old stone shop represents an unusual style of commercial building. It has one and a half stories, with a medium-pitched gable roof trimmed with a simple wood cornice. The façade reflects its historic use as a double blacksmith shop, with doorways approximately ten feet wide near the east and west corners. Three small windows are tucked under the front eaves. A loading door in the west gable facilitates storage on the upper level.

The Town of Lyme (named after Lyme, Connecticut) was formed by the merger of parts of Cape Vincent and Brownville in 1818. The area enjoyed boom times during the War of 1812, then experienced a downturn in land values when the Erie Canal bypassed the North Country. James LeRay declared bankruptcy in 1823 and returned to France. After that, fishing, lumbering, quarrying, and boat building carried the local economy.



9.17. Old Stone Shop, Three Mile Bay, 1838. Closely resembling the stone work in the Charles Wilcox House, the shop has a running entablature of smooth faced stone across the front of the building and quoins at the corners and around the wide door openings. It is noted as a building well designed for two blacksmiths.

# 10

## *Town of* CAPE VINCENT

robert a. uhlig

*The following morning found me on the bank of the St. Lawrence River, preparing to enjoy the sunrise. My wait was soon over as the sun appeared from behind a ruby-fringed cloud, and in an instant covered the river with a sparkling light that made it resemble a gently flowing silver gauze. A few light craft with Indians were nimbly plying the luminous ocean and soon touched the beach. The canoes, if we can give this name to simple tree trunks cut without art, were pulled to earth and carried some distance from the riverbank. The Indians walked in single file into the woods. The men at the front only carried their arms, while the women followed with the heavy baggage. Soon they plunged into the forest and disappeared. I learned that it was a Huron family who lived on the other side of the river and had come to hunt for several days.*

—J. Milbert

Cape Vincent is the only township in Jefferson County with frontage on both Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. James Donatien LeRay, who owned much of the land in the area, named Cape Vincent for his son, Vincent LeRay. The elder LeRay planned for a mile-square village to be laid out in the style of French towns. By 1803, a state road had been extended from Brownville to Cape Vincent, and in 1807, a ferry was established linking Cape Vincent to Wolfe Island and Kingston, in Canada. Limestone underlies the township and was an important early building material.

Shipbuilding was a major industry in Cape Vincent, and in 1819 the local yards built at least

twenty-eight schooners. The nearby farms grew vegetable seeds for commercial sale. After 1852, when the Cape Vincent-Rome branch of the New York Railway was completed, wealthy people built summer cottages on the mainland and the islands. Coal docks were built along the river to supply the trains for their return journeys to New York City. Cape Vincent became a center for commercial and recreational fishing as well as ice harvesting.

Today the township's economy revolves around tourism and agriculture. It is justifiably proud of the thirty-three limestone houses that grace its landscape, several of which were built by the gifted stonemason Ignatius (Ignatz) Wiley. Born in Baden,



Germany, in 1809, he arrived in Cape Vincent in 1833. His was one of the many German Catholic families who immigrated there. Wiley constructed the St. Vincent of Paul Church, the Fish Hatchery, his own house (the Wiley House), the Remy Dezengremel House, and perhaps other houses. Each shows his skill, with even coursing and well-crafted voussoirs.

stone house (vincent leray house)

In 1815, a beautiful stone house was constructed for Vincent LeRay, who had become his father's property manager. This large house was built by master mason Hugh MacPherson from narrow blocks of rough-cut coursed limestone quarried on nearby Carleton Island. Its front and rear façades are identical. Smooth, elliptical segmented arches with fan lights top the first-floor windows and doors, distinguishing the house from others in the area. The second-floor windows are square, with 8/8 panes. A wooden balustrade—the only remaining balustrade on a stone house in the county—repeats the rhythm of the windows. Two stone chimneys

emerge from near the center of the hip roof. The cornice has a subtle repeat block pattern. A water table and dark shutters accentuate the symmetry of this important building, which looks out over both the St. Lawrence River and Cape Vincent's Broadway from its park setting. Glimpsing the river through the center hall of the house is a rare treat for passersby.

Inside, the motif of arches is continued over the doorways and two unusual alcoves. An enclosed stairway leads upstairs to the bedrooms and downstairs to the cellar kitchen. The chimneys are positioned in the interior of the house—a detail shared with the house his father later built in LeRaysville.

During the Patriot War of 1838, Canadian rebels were quartered in the Stone House, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Like the Chaumont House, also built for the LeRay family, it represented a solid commitment to permanence and to the business of attracting settlers to Jefferson County.

Cape Vincent has thirty-three limestone houses, but this is the best known of them. Many stories have been attached to it, such as the one told by

10.1. The Stone House, 1815, was built for Vincent LeRay by mason Hugh MacPherson of stone from Carleton Island. Unusually, its first floor doors and windows on the front and rear façades are arched with fanlights and keystones. Its wooden balustrade is remarkably still in place.





10.2. The river façade of the Stone House has curved stairways leading toward the St. Lawrence River. A dormer provides access to the roof from the attic.



10.3. Stone House: detail of the window with an elliptical arch and fan light.

Miss Marion Brewster to Frank Rogers (*Folk Stories of the Northern Border*). One day, part of the interior of the Stone House caught fire. A neighbor noticed it and spread the alarm. A certain “Crotch” Blossom was known as the town telephone (years before the phone existed). She could screech like no one else and was told to yell “fire,” which she did. Mr. Beaufort, who then lived in the Stone House, was so startled he was unable to go on and just sat on the edge of the walk, too scared to move. When the men returned from extinguishing the blaze, he asked where the fire had been.

Another tale is of the death of Mrs. Beaufort’s aunt one cold, stormy night in midwinter. Because of the very deep snow, the undertaker “laid out” (no embalming in those days) the aunt, but no burial could take place. So the windows of the parlor were opened, and the doors were closed, and auntie was kept in a frozen state for two weeks





10.4. Stone House: detail of regularly coursed limestone of even height.

until the roads opened again. That same winter the people along Broadway, where the Stone House is located, were able to climb to the tops of the snowbanks and watch horse races in the street.

#### st. vincent of paul church

There are two other imposing limestone structures in the Village of Cape Vincent: the Fisheries Building and the St. Vincent of Paul Church. In the very early days, priests from Kingston, Ontario, crossed to Cape Vincent to say Mass. Then in 1850, a French missionary, Father Ancet, was put



10.5. St. Vincent of Paul Church, 1851, was built by stonemason Ignatius Wiley, a German immigrant who is noted for construction of several buildings in Cape Vincent.





10.6. Tall Gothic-style windows bring good light into the interior of St. Vincent of Paul Church.

in charge of building a church; his place was soon taken by Reverend Louis Lepic, a native of France, who completed the work at the cost of \$5,000. It is said that the limestone for the church was donated by Louis Goler and that Peter and Ignatius Wiley were two of the stonemasons employed by the project. The parish center, also made of limestone, was built onto the church in 1969 using stone from an abandoned house. The façade of the one-story church and its engaged tower are of coursed, rough-cut rectangular stones with many chisel marks. The cupola and spire are of wood, painted white. The sides are rubble. Voussoirs frame the pointed Gothic-style stained glass windows and entrance.

The recessed entrances show many years of paint on their panelling. Inside, the woodwork and plaster walls convey a sense of warmth. The tall windows flood the narrow space with light and



10.7. Limestone of the Trenton Group, Rockland Formation, on the front of St. Vincent of Paul Church. The mason's tool marks can be seen on some stones.

illuminate the names of remembered parishioners. In all, it is a pleasing house of worship, with its limestone brightly trimmed in white and with its cemetery nearby. Another church, with the similar name St. Vincent de Paul, serves the area around Rosiere, Cape Vincent.

#### duvillard mill, us bureau of fisheries

Cape Vincent's picturesque Fish Hatchery is on the bank of the St. Lawrence in the center of this river port. This four-story building was originally a steam-powered grist mill. It was designed in 1856 by John Antoine Duvillard and built by stonemason Ignatius Wiley. Duvillard was the son of Jean Antoine DuVillard, who came to the North Country with Joseph Bonaparte and settled in Cape Vincent. Young John was born in 1833 and at the age of nineteen entered Yale's Sheffield Scientific School, which trained students in various branches of the practical and theoretical sciences. While there, Duvillard may have taken a course on steam engines, during which he would have learned about turbines and waterwheels, including how to draw and build them. According to the *1864–1865 Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University*, Duvillard visited his paternal grandfather in

Geneva, Switzerland, and then returned to Cape Vincent, where he entered the mercantile business and “the manufacture of flour.” If true, it is impressive that within two years of graduation, he had conceived and brought to fruition such a complex engineering project.

The walls are of local limestone, three feet thick at the base and stepping in six inches at each floor. Iron rods “tie” the gable end walls together. Hand-hewn beams support the floors, which are set on cast iron interior columns. Originally a tall chimney rose to the south of the lean-to abutting the main building. This layout is common in mills run by steam power rather than water power. For Cape Vincent, with its endless supplies of wood to burn for steam, this mill must have been state of the art in 1856. It would have provided milling capacity for a great number of farms. Separate stones would have been used for grinding wheat, rye, and corn, all run by belts and pulleys from the engine room.

In 1857, Duvillard married his cousin, Anna Russell Bartlett of Rhode Island. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, he hastened to Providence

to join the First Regiment of the Rhode Island Volunteers. He fought at Bull Run and in sixteen other pitched battles. He was mustered into the Twelfth US Infantry as a lieutenant. Then, in the winter of 1863–64, he was sent to Ogdensburg to recruit in an area along the St. Lawrence River. He had great success as a recruiter in a place he knew well, but his health was much affected by the war and he died in 1865 in Fort Hamilton, New York.

After the grist mill fell into disuse, the federal government bought it in 1895 and turned it into a hatchery for lake trout and whitefish. A porch was added facing the street, and galvanized steel sculptural elements were affixed to the gable ends.

In 1897, Dr. Livingston Stone, Harvard graduate and internationally known authority on fish propagation, became the hatchery’s superintendent. In the early 1900s, according to Ed Schroll, Congress appointed Schroll’s grandfather, John D. Schneider, as superintendent. Congress wanted to close the hatchery because it was not a profit-making enterprise, but his grandfather had other ideas. Every time Congress raised the possibility of closing the Cape Vincent Fish Hatchery, Schneider



10.8. Duvillard Mill, US Bureau of Fisheries, 1856. Designed by John Antoine Duvillard, built by Ignatius Wiley. The mill was run by steam power from the small building on the south wall, which until recently had a large chimney.





10.9. Seen from the St. Lawrence River, the Duvillard Mill, US Bureau of Fisheries, was an imposing structure on the shoreline.

would invite members of Congress to the area for a fishing and hunting vacation. These vacations would kill the bill—temporarily. This cycle of Congressional vacations repeated itself throughout Schneider’s thirty-year tenure. In 1968, the building was sold and became a research property of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

wiley house

The early arrivals at Cape Vincent settled in the village itself; the later ones established farms in the surrounding countryside. Roads crisscross the township, and almost every road has its stone house, or houses. The township has at least twelve limestone quarries, and stone was easily removed in layers from near the surface and cut to size. For example, stonemason Ignatius Wiley cut limestone from the bed of Kent Creek, which ran past the front of his family’s log cabin, to build their stone house in 1847. The one-and-a-half-story Wiley House was passed down within the family to Ignatius’s great-grandson, Francis Wiley, a colorful character who was an avid hunter and trapper. He was known to stretch and dry his pelts on the cupboard doors in the kitchen. During the cold North Country winters, when his wood was getting low, Francis would heat his home by keeping cows in his basement. As he would say, heat rises. (Story related by Peter Margrey, Town of Cape Vincent historian)

de zengremel house

Within sight of the Wiley House is the Dezengremel House. It was built in 1850 on property bought from Vincent LeRay in 1835 by Remy Prosper

10.10. Wiley House, c. 1847, built by stonemason Ignatius Wiley with stone cut from the bed of the Kent Creek, which flowed nearby.





10.11. Dezensgremel House, 1850, built by stone mason Ignatius Wiley not too far from his own house. The ell and its rear stone addition make the farmhouse extra spacious.



Dezensgremel and his wife Marie Hetrick Dezensgremel, one of the oldest French families around Cape Vincent. The main block of the house, which measures thirty-nine feet by twenty-eight feet, is very similar to that of the Wiley House with its one and a half stories, five-bay façade, and central-hall plan. The cellar has a nine-foot ceiling, which is unusually high. According to David F. Lane in his description in the *Watertown Daily Times*, this twelve-room house was the scene of many social gatherings. The dining room could accommodate four sets of square dancers at one time.

The superb stonework by Ignatius Wiley is rough but evenly coursed, with voussoirs over the windows and door. Facing north toward the road,

the entrance has kept its original recessed doorway, rectangular four-light transom, and side lights. The long stone ell with its front porch leads back to a stable and the working side of the large farm. The house is on the National Register of Historic Places and is known for its association with Elizabeth E. Hassler, a Confederate spy during the Civil War.

#### reuber dye house

The Reuber Dye House is on County Route 4, close by the Dezensgremel House. Its first owner is uncertain, and so is its year of construction, though it was definitely in place by 1839. The main structure is one and a half stories, with three bays.



10.12. The Dezensgremel House in its farmland setting on Dezensgremel Road.



10.13. The front entrance of the Dezenegremel House shows off the even quality of Ignatius Wiley's stonework.

Built against a hillside, its roof overhang provides a west-facing porch. On the east side is a one-story ell with its own entrance. The stone is rough cut, with voussoirs above the windows. It fits snugly into the landscape on the road leading toward the St Vincent de Paul Church and cemetery in Rosiere. This cemetery tells the story of émigrés from Rosière in the Haute-Soane region of France, who came to the North Country in the nineteenth century in search of prosperity. It is also the burial place of German Catholic stonemason Ignatius Wiley.

jo hnson house

On the road leading to the Tibbets Point Lighthouse where Lake Ontario meets the St. Lawrence River, more limestone houses enjoy sunsets over the river and Wolfe Island, Canada. The Johnson House, built around 1850, is a one-and-a-half-story vernacular structure, thirty-eight feet by twenty-eight feet, with a kitchen ell at its northeast end and another wing behind that. The porch's wooden columns curve gently inwards at the base and top. A smooth stone entablature runs across the front, just above the windows. An elliptical arch has been cut over the door. Some original 12/12 windows remain on the second floor, and the cellar has a shore well



10.14. The Reuber Dye House with attached porch, c. 1830, is a good example of one-and-a-half story vernacular architecture.



10.15. The gable end and rear view of the Reuber Dye House shows its placement in the landscape.



10.16. The Johnson House, c. 1850, with its panoramic view of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. The original kitchen was in the side ell with a porch.



dug into the bedrock. Its water level rises and falls with that of the river a few hundred yards away.

#### peugnet house

Louis Peugnet, with his brothers Hyacinthe and Theophilus, purchased 610 acres of land in 1837 from the estate of Count Pierre Réal, Napoleon's Prefect of Police during the Hundred Days. The brothers had been officers in Napoleon's army, and they established a military school, whose most renowned graduate was Confederate General Pierre Beauregarde. Theophilus Peugnet built Maple Grove, an imposing Greek revival mansion, on the Tibbets Point Road in 1838.

Also oriented toward the St. Lawrence River from a slight knoll is the Captain Louis Peugnet House. Its main-floor casement windows and front porch with flared roof suggest the French colonial architecture of the Mississippi Valley. Although built to a central hall plan, its chimneys are interior from the gable ends; this allows for back-to-back fireplaces in the downstairs rooms. The entrance is wide, with side lights and wooden pilasters. Voussoirs top the windows and doors. The limestone is coursed on the front and sides and rubble at the rear, like most vernacular houses in the area. The current owner, who spent childhood summers at the house, cherishes the river breezes that waft through the mature maple and locust trees.





10.17. The Peugnet House, 1837–40, is a perfect example of French influence on a Jefferson County building. It boasts interior chimneys, a flaring porch, and casement windows.



10.18. The side casement window of the Peugnet House is topped with voussoirs.

#### rogers homestead

Austin Rogers was born in Massachusetts in 1800. When he was sixteen, he journeyed west into New York State, where he purchased fifty acres on the south shore of Wilson Bay. In 1838, he built a one-and-a-half-story, five-bay stone house thirty-seven feet by twenty-seven feet. In 1841, he added a wooden addition on the east side. His family owned the home for over ninety years. His grandsons Everett and Austin Rogers started the Rogers Brothers Seed Company in 1876—the first commercial pea and bean seed company in the United States. The company later moved to nearby Chaumont, then to the Midwest, and finally to Boise, Idaho, where it is still a thriving business. Old cottonwood trees frame the house to the north and south. To the west is an expansive view out over the lake. Inside, the house retains its historic charm, with low ceilings and period furniture. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### george cough jr. house

Also facing Wilson Bay is the George Cough Jr. House which has a familiar five-bay façade but



10.19. The Rogers Homestead, 1838, is known for its association with the Rogers Brothers Seed Company, an important early business that still thrives today in Idaho.



10.20. The dining room of the Rogers Homestead is located in the wood frame side ell.

unusual eyebrow windows that allow light into the second floor. It was built around 1835. The central enclosed stairway is just inside the front door, and the wooden window sashes are flush with the stonework. The upstairs windows have retained their 12/12 panes. A long frame kitchen ell extends to the right. Voussoirs top the door and all windows, including the cellar ones. It is possible that the house was built by George Cough Jr., a native of Germany who had purchased the land from Vincent LeRay.

#### eber kelsey house

Inland from the lake is the Eber Kelsey House, also known as Deer Lick Farm. Kelsey came to the area in 1809 and is reputed to have made the first clearing. Soon after, he built a house and wharf and began a ferry service to Wolfe Island. He was also a land agent for Vincent LeRay. Shortly after purchasing the original fifty acres in 1832, he built this one-and-a-half-story limestone house. The recessed porch may have been a later addition.



10.21. The George Cough Jr. House, c. 1835, is noted for its eyebrow windows, which provide a view of Wilson Bay from the second floor of the house.





10.22. The Eber Kelsey House, 1832, was built by an early settler and land agent. Its one-and-a-half stories are of rough cut stone with smooth lintels and sills.



10.23. The stone ell at the rear of the Eber Kelsey House, with its outdoor pump.



10.24. The Eber Kelsey House retains many of its out-buildings, some of which are now part of a winery. The small building in front was originally a smokehouse.

10.25. The David Dodge House, 1833–54, from the front belies the complexity of its layout.



There are wide, smooth-cut lintels over the windows. A stone ell leads to a frame addition at the rear. With its adjacent stone smokehouse and many farm buildings, the house is now the attractive centerpiece of a vineyard.

david dodge house

Looking out toward the river near the Clayton town line is the David Dodge House. This charming one-and-a-half-story house has both an interesting layout and highly unusual stonework. A

one-story ell extends from the side of a front gable, and from this ell, there extends another ell. The rear view, in effect, is that of two houses side by side. The ells were probably used for kitchen and farm storage. Frequent inclusions of geodes, crystals, and trilobites enliven the limestone, which is thought to come from nearby. The walls are exceptionally thick, and voussoirs top the windows and doors. The windowsills are smooth and narrow. There is a water table, and in the cellar a large cistern. Across the road, the remains of a lime kiln are visible. Nearby is the small Dodge family cemetery.



10.26. The David Dodge House from the rear shows the gable ends of the two-story house and that of the rear ell.





10.27. The side window of the David Dodge House is set in the well-laid stone wall with voussoirs and a water table.



10.29. Dodge House: detail of crystal in the stone work.

When the property was sold outside the Dodge family in 1932, the deed conveyed half the hay crop stored in the barn and all farm tools in the granary and outbuildings. Like most of the county's rural stone houses, the Dodge House was the center of a farm for more than a century.



10.28. Dodge House: detail of a nautiloid cephalopod fossil in the stone work.

# II

## *Town of* CLAYTON

nor man wagner

greystone inn

The first Clayton town meeting was held at the stone house of Isaac L. Carter on June 4, 1833. Here the Clayton Charter was signed. The document drew borders separating the town from Orleans and Lyme and named it for the Honorable John M. Clayton, US Senator from Delaware. Carter's house was a popular stagecoach stop in the northeast of the township, where the road from

Clayton to Ogdensburg converged with one from Clayton to Watertown.

Built around 1815 and named the Greystone Inn, this two-story limestone building faces south. Two long porches cover the front five-bay façade and look out over the crossroads. From there, travelers coming from any direction can be seen. The stone is rough but well coursed, with smoothly dressed lintels and sills. Fine limestone chimneys rise from the gable ends. The building's interior

11.1. The Greystone Inn, c. 1815, was perfectly located to overlook roads meeting between Ogdensburg, Watertown, and Clayton. A two-story wooden verandah is attached to the stone structure.







11.2. The interior of the Greystone Inn captures the warmth of a comfortable rest stop.

retains the warmth of an old inn, with small rooms, old wooden floors, and the original center hall stairway. There is a wood frame ell at the rear and a stone springhouse in the side yard. Several fine old poplar trees provide shade in summertime. What was once an inn, and then a post office, is now a well-loved residence. The current owners are proud to be living in this historic house.

#### hugunin house

Land for the village and port of Clayton, where the Thousand Islands begin, was set aside by James D. LeRay and laid out into lots for sale beginning in 1822. The Hugunin House stands at the corner of Hugunin and Merrick Streets, not far from the St. Lawrence River. It was built in 1834, when, according to historian Franklin Hough, the port boasted “7 schooners, 1 brig and 1 steam boat,



11.3. Greystone Inn: detail of evenly coursed stonework.

making an aggregate of 1,000 tons.” The Smith & Merick shipyard was still young, and the first vessel built there was named the *Jesse Smith* in honor of one partner. The company built two to four vessels each year and at its peak employed up to a hundred men. Most of the vessels became part of the Ontario and St. Lawrence steamboat lines.

It is not clear whether Jesse Smith or the Hugunin family built this large stone house. It was standing on April 4, 1836, when it was designated as Mrs. Hugunin’s stone house in a deed running from Jesse Smith to Eleanor Hugunin for the lot on which the house stands. Two stories high, its front façade has a recessed entrance in the left of its three bays. The paneled entry has a transom light and side lights. The stone is rough cut with smooth-cut lintels, sills, and water table. The lintel over the front door is extremely large and perhaps not original. An elliptical oculus with louvered shutters set within voussoirs graces the front gable end. There is a second entrance on the Merrick Street side of the house. A two-story woodframe ell extends from the rear and now holds the kitchen. The interior of this side-hall-plan house retains its plank wall separating the hall from the parlor. The spacious living and dining rooms still have their original moldings. This imposing structure reflects the wealth of an early entrepreneur.

The village of Clayton grew rapidly. What had been a lawless spot on the St. Lawrence River



11.4. The Hugunin House, c. 1836, is a large two-story house with its gable end fronting Hugunin Street.



where timber was cut illegally and rafted away became a hub of shipbuilding and merchandising. As reported in the *Watertown Eagle*, March 20, 1835 and quoted by Franklin Hough:

Less than ten years ago, the ground where now stands our village was without a single house, and was, we are informed by one of our first settlers, an almost impenetrable marsh . . . In appearance and size, our village has also kept pace with its increase of population. Six years ago there were 9 buildings in this place; we now number 43 dwelling houses, 6 stores, 3 groceries, 3 taverns, 1 steam furnace capable of melting 4 tons of iron per day, 1 machine shop, 1 ship smith's shop, 1 black smith's shop, 3 shoe shops, 2 tailor shops, 1 chair shop, 2 cabinet shops, 1 butcher shop, 1 bakery, a school house, 5 large and commodious wharves, and within 1 mile of the village, 3 saw mills.

#### angel house

On James Street, the main road into Clayton, stands a small stone house called Angel House. It was bought in January 1859 by Mrs. Hannah Angel, wife of James F. Angel. The house was probably built on speculation around 1853 by

Judge James F. Starbuck of Watertown. The Angels were prominent early settlers in Clayton. In 1820, William H. Angel started a lumber business and opened a small store on French Creek, just outside the village. He also had a rafting business, which involved building huge timber structures propelled by crews with large oars. The crews lived on the raft in tents during the three- to four-week trip to market in Quebec, where the raft was then broken up and its timber sold. General William H. Angell (spelling variation) later moved to Sackets Harbor, where in 1834 he built a Georgian stone house that became the second bank in Jefferson County.

Perhaps because Angel House in Clayton was built much later than most of the limestone houses in Jefferson County, it is stylistically very different. The steeply pitched roof with dentil trim on the fascia and center gable evoke its Gothic Revival cousins across the St. Lawrence River in Ontario. The stone is rough coursed and, where the weather has aged it, sparkles in the sun. Possibly, it was drawn from the Charlebois quarry on the Palisades overlooking the St. Lawrence River, just west of the village. Instead of stone lintels or voussoirs over the windows, there are stepped wooden moldings. The wall thickness is less than average, and inside there are window seats twelve inches to eighteen inches



11.5. The Angel House, c. 1853, was built later than most stone houses in Jefferson County. Its Gothic Revival cottage style in stone is unique in the village.

in depth. The front downstairs windows have kept their original wooden built-in storage spaces with drawers. Perhaps the carpentry was done by someone working in a local boatyard. Also unique about the house are two interior corners that are plastered floor to ceiling in a gentle curve. The back of the house looks out onto Riverside Drive and the busy entrance to French Creek. Columned porches protect the front façade on James Street. On one side of the house, a large and very prickly yellow rose bush adds to the charm.

The Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg Railroad (RW&O) reached Clayton in 1873. Elegant

hotels welcomed affluent summer visitors to the newly popular Thousand Islands. Tourism is still the village's main focus.

There is an interesting cluster of limestone buildings near the Chaumont River in Depauville. Here a church and several houses were constructed near a once-profitable business in water lime, a type of whitewash. According to Jefferson County Historian Franklin Hough, a nearby geological formation provided the water lime, which was ground, barreled, and used in the construction of local cisterns.

# 12

## *Town of* ORLEANS

claire bonney

The Town of Orleans, which was separated from the Town of Brownville along with the Towns of Alexandria and Philadelphia in 1821, has a checkered past. Beginning about 1806, Penet's Square was settled by squatters, who quickly deforested the land to turn profits on the lumber. *Spafford's Gazeteer* of 1824, reporting on the Town of Orleans in 1820, wrote that "the population is unknown, as it was included in that of Brownville at the time of taking the last census. It is computed at 300. It being a new tract of country with few inhabitants, there is nothing to demand detail." The historian J. H. French describes the squatters' "improvident waste of timber" and suggests that the "slovenly clearings made by this lawless set promised little in the way of civilization: and their appearance, as they emerged from the swamps with an ox harnessed to a crotched piece of wood, laden with a trough full of 'black salts [i.e., potash],' or, as they returned in like manner, with a sack of meal and a jug of whisky, was little calculated to inspire hope of speedy improvement."

The first site selected for a village in Orleans was Rexford's Corners, two miles south of the present LaFargeville, named after the squatter Sabin Rexford, who arrived in 1817. Prior to 1820, the settlement had a store, a distillery, and

an ashery, important for the manufacture of soap. Subsequent settlement was to the north, clustering around Reuben Andrus's log cabin, built in 1816 on the site of the Orleans Hotel. Penet's Square, the ten-mile by ten-mile tract in the middle of the town, had been given to John LaFarge's business partner in return for favors he had done for the native Oneidas. LaFarge bought up the titles to these lands between 1817 and 1825, evicting the squatters who had settled on them and making himself hated in the process.

Apparently LaFarge planned to develop a model colony. He erected a land office (now the Orleans Hotel) at the former Log's Mills and employed the skilled stonemason Hial Cook from Rodman to build luxurious housing for himself and his employees. But LaFarge's young bride was unhappy in Orleans, and in 1837, the couple left the area to resettle on Long Island, never to return. Historian Franklin B. Hough wrote that the town received its name in the light of the celebrity that New Orleans had acquired at the end of the War of 1812. It could be, however, that LaFarge, who had already rechristened Log's Mills after himself, wanted to honor Louis-Philippe, Duke of Orléans, who was soon to become the Citizen King of France. Since all early town records were destroyed



in a fire in 1825, we may never know why Orleans was so named.

The hamlet of Stone Mills (previously Collins Mills) was one of the first areas in the township to be developed due to the availability of waterpower from the Chaumont River. Peter Pratt (born in Saybrook, Connecticut, in 1776) and J. B. Collins built a stone grist mill there in 1819 or 1820 (demolished c. 1870), and soon after that, a stone sawmill (no longer standing). These mills served farmers in the southern part of the town at a time before LaFarge purchased most of the land in the area. Stone Mills grew on its own, and over the next few years, a schoolhouse, the Union Church, and the Irwin Brothers Store established themselves there. During this period, Elijah Horr built his large stone farmhouse on the southern edge of the hamlet.

#### o r l e a n s h o t e l

The Orleans Hotel, built around 1825, was originally John LaFarge's land office. LaFarge, a wealthy French entrepreneur, planned to establish a profitable community using this building as his base, but he left the area in discouragement in 1838. The land office is a very large building for its location. Like the LeRay land office in Chaumont, it was

probably also a residence for LaFarge employees. The two-story building with its dressed stones and quoined corners is a good example of Federal stone architecture. Its symmetrical five-bay façade is embellished by a handsome entry arch with side lights. The building's interior retains its original configuration of a center hall with two rooms to each side. There are four fireplaces, three of which have kept their original mantels and shallow brick fire pits. Finely carved woodwork survives in the hallway and parlors. A luxurious bar of turned mahogany was probably a later addition.

#### b u d l o n g a n d b i d d l e c o m h o u s e s

These Greek Revival limestone houses stand side by side at the top of Main Street in LaFargeville. Each has the regular limestone block construction and double stone walls that characterize LaFarge buildings in the town. The two are quite similar in form and massing and show a high level of workmanship. Characteristic attributes of the period and style include a two-story upright block with a low, sloping gable roof and the traditional three-bay, side hall entrance in the gable end.

It is believed that John LaFarge had these houses built as model homes for potential land



12.1. The Orleans Hotel, former LaFarge Land Office, c. 1825, as photographed by David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times* in the mid-twentieth century.

12.2. The Budlong House, c. 1835, one of a pair of stone houses facing the main street of LaFargeville.



buyers around 1835 and that they reflect the sophistication and quality to which he aspired. Both contain deep windows that are beveled out to allow in more light. Neither house originally had a fireplace: very probably they were equipped with state-of-the-art coal-burning stoves.

The Biddlecom House is named after its most illustrious resident, Russell B. Biddlecom, who

helped organize the Republican Party in New York State and was active in town and state politics. It was probably during his tenure that the house gained its ornate Victorian wrought iron fence and its stone carriage step, which are both still intact. John LaFarge retained ownership of the Budlong House until 1855. Why he held on to this one house long after having sold all his other Orleans



12.3. The Biddlecom House, c. 1835. Like its sister house next door, this elegant Greek Revival house was likely built by John LaFarge to attract affluent buyers to his new town.



properties is unknown. The house is best known for having been owned by Gideon Budlong (d. 1882), a wealthy and prominent Orleans farmer of Dutch origin. He purchased the property in 1875, and the house remained in the Budlong family until 1927. Both houses were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.

irwin brothers store

The original three bays of this blue limestone house, located just across the street from the Elijah Horr House, were built around 1825 by William M. Lord. Lord, an industrialist from Boonville, set up a foundry and machine shop in Brownville together with Henry Caswell in 1820. Later, Greek Revival stone wings were added to the east and west sides. Over the years, the building functioned as a tavern, a stagecoach stop and hotel between Clayton and Watertown, and a Masonic lodge.

In 1875, W. B. Irwin & Sons purchased the property and ran a general store, which continued to operate until John B. Irwin's death in 1954. Under the charismatic John Irwin's ownership, the store also housed Stone Mills's post office, telegraph office, and telephone office. Old photographs indicate that a two-story porch once covered the entire south side of the house, lending it a much

less forbidding look than is seen today. A lovely fan light is located in the central gable, and many of the original small-paned windows are still intact, as are several paneled doors. Washington architect Darrel Rippeteau, Jr., has recently taken on the Herculean task of restoring the Irwin Brothers Store, a job to which he brings great patience and skill. The Irwin Brothers Store was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

elijah horr house

Across the road from the Irwin Brothers Store, nestled in a stand of maples, this Federal-style limestone house was built for the prosperous farmer Elijah Horr, who purchased the land from John LaFarge in 1835. Stylistically, the house is similar to the Orleans Hotel, but the craftsmanship of its regular blocks, even courses, and large, prominent quoins is of a higher quality. The two-story, five-bay main façade is perfectly regular and symmetrical, with crisp stone window lintels and sills. The center entrance is supported by an elliptical segmented arch with a large keystone. Indoors, a broad pine arch between the front and back parlors echoes this feature. The interior retains its basic original massed plan (two front rooms and two back rooms) with a one-story kitchen ell. Between



12.4. The Irwin Brothers Store, c. 1825. This large stone building, a landmark in Stone Mills, has held many businesses, including a tavern and a general store.



12.5. The Elijah Horr House, c. 1835, was built in the Federal style, with fine smooth lintels and sills in its symmetrical façade.



the two front rooms is an enclosed straight stair to the second floor, a heat-saving building practice found in many houses in the area. Three fireplaces survive intact; a fourth was once located in the cellar and used for milk processing. Elijah Horr bore much of the expense of building the Union

Church in Stone Mills. He is buried in the Stone Mills cemetery. Elijah Horr's son, Benjamin Stiles Horr, married Ann Eliza Irwin in 1844. The Elijah Horr House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.

# I3

*Town of*  
ALEXANDRIA

gr e t a s l a t e

## azariah walton house

James D. LeRay named the Town of Alexandria for his son, Alexander. He also set aside one square mile for the port of Alexandria Bay on the St. Lawrence River. This port was soon the center of a thriving timber trade. Later, it became a landing place for steamers and summer tourists. In 1828, Azariah Walton, a blacksmith and machinist from New Hampshire, was appointed collector of

customs. He bought land on James Street in 1835, and soon after, began building the only early stone house in a village that is underlaid with sandstone and granite.

His large house is two stories high and measures thirty-six feet across the front gable. Voussoirs top the windows and doors. The façade is not perfectly symmetrical. To the left is a wide, paneled entrance with transom and side lights. The interior has a straight run stairway to the left and a parlor



13.1. The Azariah Walton House, 1835, was built when the port of Alexandria Bay was young. Its gable front with 9/9 windows faces onto busy James Street.



to the right. In some places the stone seems to have been stuccoed. There is a water table and, in the gable ends, brick chimneys. A later frame addition is attached to the north side of the house. An old apple tree graces the garden. The house once looked toward the river with all its activity; today it is on a main artery of this busy resort town.

### co r n w a l l   b r o t h e r s   s t o r e

In the late 1830s, Azariah Walton and his son Lyman built a frame store on the waterfront. The business succeeded well, and in 1846, Azariah invited Andrew Cornwall Sr. to come to Alexandria Bay and succeed him in partnership with

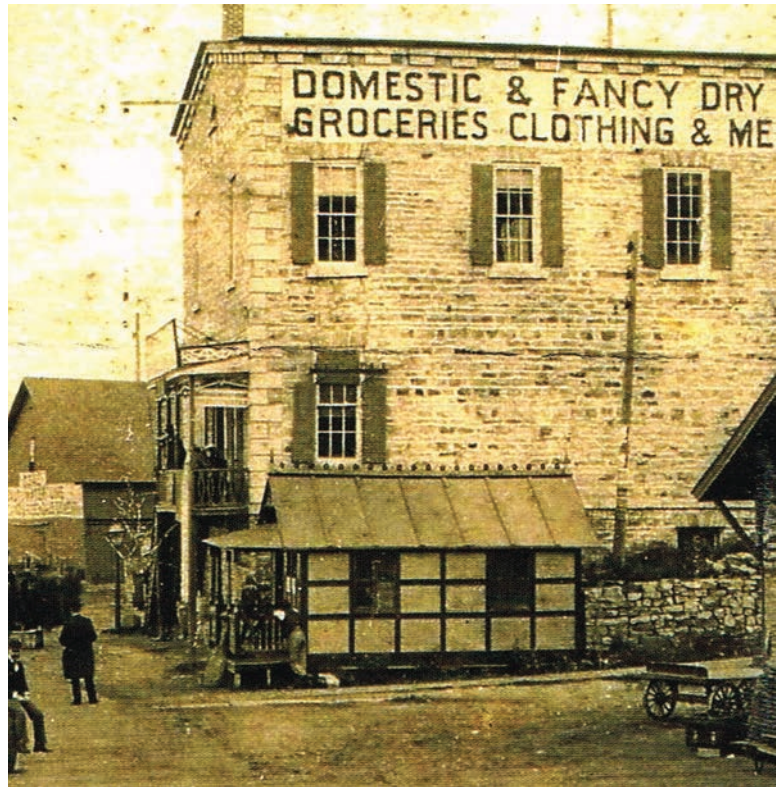


13.2. The Cornwall Brothers Store, 1866, seen from the St. Lawrence River, where in the 1800s it carried on a flourishing business in wood and ashes.





13.3. The Market Street façade of the Cornwall Brothers Store became popular when tourists flocked to nearby hotels in the late 1800s.



13.4. The Cornwall Brothers Store, from an old photo, between 1866 and 1877.

13.5. The Cornwall Brothers Store interior, early twentieth century.



13.6. The Cornwall Brothers Store: detail of the cornice and limestone quoins, reputedly from Kingston, Ontario.



Lyman. Cornwall agreed, and the store became known as “Cornwall and Walton.”

Although the store carried general merchandise, the bulk of its business was in lumber and ashes. Timber was floated down the river and sold to the wood-burning steamers that plied the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. Walton purchased a number of the Thousand Islands and logged them. It is said that the store sold as much as twelve thousand cords of wood annually. Ashes from cleared land provided settlers with cash and credit.

A spark from a riverboat supposedly caused the frame store to burn to the ground in 1865. It was replaced by a very large stone building, approximately forty-one feet by eighty-eight feet, that became a landmark in village social and commercial life. Built on the sloping river edge, the store is two stories high on the street façade and three stories on the river façade. Smooth limestone sills and quoins are said to have been quarried and dressed in Kingston, then shipped across to Alexandria Bay.

There are narrow stone dentilled cornices on the sides of the building as well as a water table. On the river side, a wide entrance leads into a high cellar.

In 1877, Andrew Cornwall’s four sons took over the business and it became known as the Cornwall Brothers’ Store. With the influx of summer tourists to nearby hotels, the owners enlarged the store with a twenty-foot addition that included elaborate cornices on the street side. The store had long been oriented toward the river with its wide boardwalk; now, large display windows were installed between limestone corners on the street façade, and these became the focus of shoppers’ attention. The interior with its pressed tin ceilings is now a museum and home to the Alexandria Township Historical Society. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### reformed church of the thousand isles

The congregation of the Reformed Church of the Thousand Isles at 54 Church Street was founded

13.7. The Reformed Church of the Thousand Isles, 1848–1851, reflects an interesting aspect of Alexandria Bay history: the need for summer visitors in the 1840s to have Sunday services. The structure is solidly built of dolomitic sandstone.





in the 1840s when Reverend George Washington Bethune, a Princeton graduate of Huguenot descent and a summer visitor, noted that no regular religious services or Sunday school classes were being offered in the village of Alexandria Bay. Bethune may have been in the area to engage in his favorite sport of fishing. He is known to have worked on American editions of Isaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*, using a pseudonym because Calvinism was opposed to such pastimes for clergymen. Acting on his belief (*Our Liberties*, 1835) that "the pulpit will be raised in every hamlet," he sent Reverend Jerome Davenport as a missionary to Alexandria Bay. According to historian Franklin B. Hough, all but \$286.91 of the \$2,821.88 cost of the imposing stone building was raised outside the community, mostly from other Dutch Reform churches in New York State. Construction began in 1848, and the building was dedicated in 1851 as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of the Thousand Isles.

The main building is a rectangular structure of rough-cut dolomitic sandstone laid in courses with a water table. The fifty-five-foot-long side walls are pierced by tall Romanesque windows with voussoirs. Attached to the front gable is a square, triple-tiered bell tower that rises sixty feet and

encloses the front entrance with its wooden fan light. The original bell is recorded as costing \$170. A wide wooden cornice with dentil edging tops the tower. Large round clocks pierce the second tier of the tower. A later stone addition extends from the rear of the church.

The interior walls are plastered and without decoration. The windows allow in generous light. The congregation faces a large organ set into the archway behind the lectern. Reverend Bethune, who wrote many hymns, would have approved of its prominence. The church's solid stonework and generous parish hall serve its community well today.

#### asa newman house

At the northwest boundary of Jefferson County, the countryside reveals the primary sandstone formations underlying the Town of Alexandria. The soil is fertile, but there are abrupt precipices and outcroppings. Boulders tumble from ledges. The small village of Plessis was once known as Flat Rock due to the Potsdam sandstone underlying it. Near Plessis, Asa E. Newman built a one-and-a-half-story sandstone house between 1826 and 1827. Its stone appears to have been quarried on

13.8. The Asa Newman House, 1826–27. The front façade has four bays with an off-center doorway. All openings are topped with voussoirs.





13.9. The rear of the Asa Newman House shows its working cellar entrance facing the rolling fields.

the farm. Newman, the son of a Revolutionary War veteran, chose a peaceful location overlooking the countryside. The front door of the house, all completely original and with side lights intact, faces north and is to the right of center in the four-bay façade. Voussoirs top doorways and windows. Wood frame ells were attached to each side of the house at a later date. There is a fan light on the west gable end. The interior has retained its open stairway, which has a delicately curved handrail and turned newel post. Original woodwork with large corner block moldings, deep window wells, and low ceilings accentuate the beauty of this early farmhouse.

The Town of Alexandria was founded in 1821, but it was not until later in the century that the romantic scenery of the Thousand Islands attracted the world's attention. It was well into the twentieth century before the local granite was quarried commercially. St. Cyril's Catholic Church in Alexandria Bay was constructed of red granite on the site where the stone was quarried in the village. In 1904, multimillionaire George C. Boldt began building a castle on Heart Island from granite



13.10. The Asa Newman House has its original interior stairway, with its comfortable railing and flaring newel.

13.11. The interior woodwork of the Asa Newman House features large corner blocks on windows and doors in the main downstairs rooms.



quarried on Oak Island. Work stopped when his wife Louise died two years later. This restored replica of a Rhineland castle is now an important tourist site in the Thousand Islands.



## *Part Four*

### Towns North of the Black River, Inland

14. Town of Theresa

16. Town of LeRay

15. Town of Antwerp

17. Town of Pamelaia



# I4

## Town of THERESA

maureen hubbard barros

*When Mr. Leray [sic] de Chaumont learned of my mission and desire to visit all the sites of picturesque or natural interest he offered to take me the twelve or thirteen miles from his house to see the Indian River where it forms the falls called Theresa.*

—J. Milbert

The Indian River had been an important Indian route to the St. Lawrence River. These falls were originally called High Falls; James LeRay renamed them in honor of his daughter, Theresa. From a reflective pool surrounded by woods, the water drops eighty-five feet. LeRay saw the great opportunities for power and in 1810–11 erected a sawmill. In 1817, he began to sell land.

### shurtleff house

Among the first to purchase land from LeRay was James Shurtleff of Plympton, Massachusetts. Shurtleff bought a 100-acre tract less than half a mile from LeRay's land office. Around 1821, he built a house of local sandstone facing County Route 46. It was first used as an inn for this young

settlement. The house is one and a half stories with a five-bay façade. There are chimneys and small attic windows in the gable ends.

### ostrander house

Another early stone inn can be found on the north side of the village of Theresa along the original road from Theresa to Alexandria Bay, now New York State Route 26. Its early history is unclear; it is called the Ostrander House because for some years it was owned by Byron Ostrander, a prominent citizen of nearby Plessis. Traveling along the road, the visitor is struck by how the house is set into the landscape. Its front door is even with ground level. The five-bay house is of rough coursed local sandstone. White trim accentuates the sandstone's warm, honey-colored tones. The cornice is wide, with returns, and the front entrance is deeply recessed. Small windows are located in the attic gable ends.

Information for this chapter supplied in part by Mary Wilcox.





14.1. “The outstanding feature in this picturesque group is a mill supported by only three pine trunks (*Pinus mitis*), that are inserted horizontally between the rock strata. These frail supports are held in place at the end by the limestone strips that form a counterweight to balance the enormous four-storeyed wooden structure. . . . Since the edifice projects in such an extraordinary fashion, its outer walls extend over the navigable lower basin of the river, and boats can come close enough to deliver or receive their load of bags by means of a pulley attached to a triangular projection on the roof. Through the terraced trees on the same bank there is a glimpse of a wooden chute, resting on trestles, which lifts tree trunks from the river bank to the sawmills.” —J. Milbert. Milstein Division of United States History, Local History & Genealogy, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.



14.2. The James Shurtleff House, c. 1821. David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times*. This central plan house with its gable end chimneys was an early inn.

harry hunt house

In the beautiful lake area north of the village of Theresa are a number of native sandstone houses of similar construction. The Harry Hunt House is

a fine example of these one-and-a-half-story farm-houses with voussoirs over the windows and doors. This house faces south over County Route 22. Its entrance is wide, with a transom light and side lights. Square pilasters support a deep architrave



14.3. The Ostrander House, 1830s. Its original owner is unknown, but the house is a landmark in the Theresa area.



14.4. The even front façade of the Ostrander House has a wide cornice and return. Its walls seem to be emerging from the ground.



14.5. Detail of the sandstone in the Ostrander House.



14.6. The Harry Hunt House, 1830s. This house is one of several vernacular farm houses in the area. The stone work in both the house and side ell is very evenly laid.



14.7. The entrance to the Harry Hunt House is broad and flanked by transom and sidelights.



14.8. Detail of the careful stone work of the Harry Hunt House with its water table.

above the door. The stonework includes a water table and wide corner quoins. The window sills project prominently from the façade. Some of the stone has been beveled and shows great care. A stone ell with porches extends eastward; another wooden ell with old clapboards and 6/6 windows is attached to the rear. The main house measures thirty-nine feet by twenty-six feet. Birds often nest in the fine wide cornice. The interior retains its original small rooms and back stairs. The house was once part of a large farm with a cheese factory nearby and a school across the corner.





14.9. The Theresa Jail's history is unclear, but it is a small, solid structure of local sandstone.



14.10. Window of the Theresa Jail, which is no longer used as a holding facility.

#### theresa jail

The Town of Theresa was formed in 1841. Ten years later, the village of Theresa had five hundred inhabitants. Centered around the impressive Theresa Falls, the village had two grist mills and three sawmills as well as a machine shop, a plaster mill, a shingle mill, a tin shop, a tannery, four blacksmiths, two saddlers, five physicians, and a goldsmith. A relic of these times is a small two-cell jail built of sandstone. Measuring twenty by twenty feet, the jail is built into the hillside not too far from the bridge that crosses the Indian River at the falls. Its mossy shingled roof has a small cupola to allow light into the interior. The 9/6 paned windows have iron bars requisite to the building's purpose. The stone used in the jail and other local buildings is the well-compacted sandstone found in the townships of Alexandria, Antwerp, and Theresa. Outcroppings along the roadsides contrast sharply in color and bulk with the grey-white limestone of roads farther south in Jefferson County.

# 15

## *Town of* ANTWERP

maureen hubbard barros

The early settlers of Antwerp, in northeastern Jefferson County, knew that it had fertile soil and outcroppings of Potsdam sandstone. Mineral wealth, especially iron ore, and the potential water power of the Indian River encouraged rapid growth. The township received its name in 1810 from the Antwerp Company of Belgium, which was owned by a group of large and small investors who purchased shares at one thousand florins each. The venture eventually failed, and the stockholders lost their investment. Along with the Antwerp Company, General Lewis R. Morris of Vermont and David Parish of Hamburg, Germany, owned large tracts of land in this part of the county. Parish's land practices were known for their benevolence. Most early contracts for settlement required the purchaser to clear land and build a house before a deed was granted; Parish, by contrast, granted the deed upon payment, not when the contract was fulfilled.

### copeland house

Smith Copeland and his son, Clewly, bought acreage in the village of Antwerp along the Indian River. The elder Copeland was the first proprietor of the tavern at the corner of Main and Van

Buren Streets. Farther along Van Buren Street, an impressive stone house was sold to Smith and Polly Copeland in 1819. The only stone house in the village, the Copeland House overlooks the Indian River with an air of solidity. Tradition holds that it was constructed in 1816 of stone brought by ox team from the Render quarry on the Theresa Road. The builder was Ezra Church, who with his brother Daniel Whipple Church had been trained by Joseph-Jacques Rameé, designer of the Parish House in Ogdensburg. The Church brothers were employed by the Parish family in building projects in northern New York. For example, they rebuilt the gristmill in Antwerp in 1810 and the sawmill in 1816.

The house is almost square and not unlike the Brown Mansion in presence. It is two stories high with an unusual four-bay façade. The stone is rough dressed and well laid, with a mix of coursed large and small blocks. There are voussoirs over the windows and doors. Those over the far right entrance are formed of wide-angled blocks that accentuate the five-light transom. The entry is interesting for its Greek Revival fretwork on the pilasters. It also has side lights and a massive threshold. The cornice is deep, the roof is shallow and hipped. At the rear is a wood frame addition. The ten-room

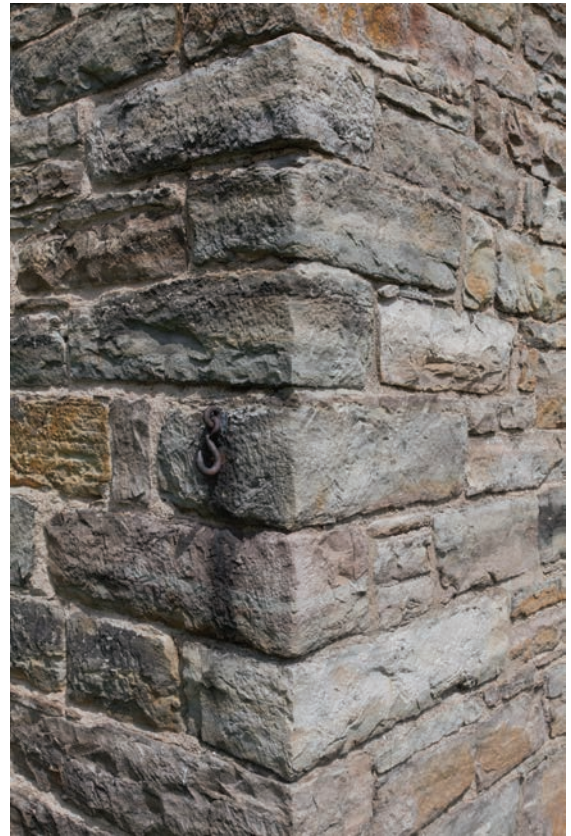




15.1. The Copeland House, 1816, faces the Indian River and a beautiful stone arch bridge. Its square presence with right of center entrance was built by Ezra Church.



15.2. The Copeland House entry is broad with transom light and side lights. The voussoirs are short, stout blocks of stone.



15.3. The Copeland House corner shows the even quality of its quoins.



15.4. The Ira Hinsdale House, c. 1820, was designed with its kitchen entrance just off the driveway.



15.5. Like other windows of the Ira Hinsdale House, the 12/8 kitchen window has a large limestone lintel set in the sandstone of the wall.



15.6. Detail of the sandstone in the Ira Hinsdale House.

interior has a side stairway and wide moldings over the windows and doors. At the rear of the house is a kitchen fireplace with a bake oven.

ira hinsdale house

On the road between Antwerp and Oxbow, Ira Hinsdale, in 1819 when he was twenty-one, bought a tract of about a hundred acres. A few years later he built a one-and-a-half-story house of locally quarried sandstone. Interestingly, the

lintels over the doors and front windows are light in color, probably limestone, and contrast strongly with the colored sandstone. The side windows have voussoirs. There are brick chimneys in the gable ends and a wood frame ell at the rear. The house is built into the hillside; the cellar kitchen is conveniently entered through a door near the driveway. The kitchen with its original 12/8 windows

has a fireplace with a beehive oven. This house's layout perfectly fulfills the needs of a farm family in terms of access to fields, food preparation, and living space. The five-bay house looks out over the pastureland that Hinsdale cleared for Merino sheep. Selling wool during and after the Civil War was a profitable endeavor. Today, the owners of the Hinsdale House raise cattle in this bucolic setting.

# I6

## Town of LERAY

claire bonney and maureen hubbard barros

*At the moment I proposed to leave for Chaumont Bay, I encountered at the tavern in Brownville, Mr. [James] Leray de Chaumont himself who, thanks to his immense properties in the environs of this bay, had in a way acquired the right to bestow his name on it. He kindly offered me a place in his carriage and drove me to his home situated near the village of Leray-Ville in the middle of a forest. It is in this deep retreat at the end of a veritable emptiness that the owner has created a habitation that competes with even the most renowned châteaux and parks in France in luxury, elegance, and commodities of all kinds. I will not say much about the house since I have just learned that it has been entirely rebuilt and arranged with even more elegance than before. I will only report, to give an idea of its former and probably present luxury, that it contained a large salon, billiard and music rooms, a library, and two separate wings for lodging visitors and friends. From the salon there was a view of a vast and magnificent vegetable garden planted in the French style and maintained with great care, and on the other side an attractive pond with a multitude of trout. Beyond there commenced an immense park, formed by the ancient forest, within which alleys had been cut, sinuous paths designed, clearings well-managed, and large and picturesque thickets reserved. Several families of spiked deer, gathered in this park and living in peace, multiplied as in their native forests.*

—J. Milbert

**E**stablished in 1806 and named in honor of its distinguished landowner, James LeRay de Chaumont, the Town of LeRay includes most of the Fort Drum military base, Evans Mills, Calcium, and a section of the village of Black River. Parts of the area are rich in limestone, and there are more than thirty stone buildings scattered through the

township, ranging from LeRay's mansion to farmhouses and small cottages.

the leray mansion

LeRay's neoclassical country villa was built between 1825 and 1827 to replace the LeRay family's first





16.1. The LeRay Mansion, 1825–27. This early photograph shows the balustrades and porches in place. Photo courtesy of the Gorman family.

house, which had been destroyed by fire. Its master builder was David Granger of Champion. Originally set in a Romantic landscaped park with winding paths, a deer park, and underground storage caverns for wines and cheeses, this house is one of the finest in Jefferson County. It was built for James D. LeRay, a land speculator from France, who,

together with his son Vincent, was instrumental to the development of Jefferson County. The building is made from limestone quarried on the site and is covered with a crisp layer of stucco. Originally, the two-story main part of the house and its two one-story wings were graced with wooden balustrades. Even denuded as it stands today, the house is still



16.2. The south elevation of the LeRay Mansion was originally reached by a long drive with a bridge that crossed a stream.



16.3. The cornice of the LeRay Mansion with its decorative modillion blocks.



16.4. The interior of the LeRay Mansion has been beautifully restored. View from the dining room toward the hall and stairway.



16.5. Detail of cove molding in the LeRay Mansion.

impressive with its four wooden Ionic columns shining white out of the dark woods.

The two largest rooms of the house can be turned into one by means of sliding doors. Originally, this was so dances could be held. The first kitchen was in the cellar, linked to the dining room by a dumbwaiter. The windows are graceful casement creations; their indoor shutters fit into their beveled sides to allow in as much light as possible. It is tempting to think that the LeRay family hired the French architect Joseph Ramée, who also worked for their friend David Parish in neighboring St. Lawrence County, to design this house or its predecessor. The house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. The building



has been restored by the Syracuse firm of Crawford & Stearns.

Claire Bonney

le r a y family

*I cannot say enough of Mr. LeRay de Chaumont's kind hospitality. He put a small carriage or a horse at my disposal for long trips, so I could devote all my mornings to profitable studies for the King's Garden.*

—J. Milbert

James LeRay was the son of Jacques-Donatien LeRay de Chaumont (1725–1803) who has been called the “French Father of the American Revolution.” In France, he served King Louis XVI at the Court of Versailles as Governor of the Hôtel des Invalides. He was also Grand Master of Waters and Lands of Blois while at the helm of the family shipping company. After the American Declaration of Independence, a delegation headed by Benjamin Franklin was sent to France to lobby for financial and military support from the French king. LeRay, sympathetic to the American cause, offered Franklin the use of a suite at the Hôtel Valentois at Passy, near Paris. He was to have been reimbursed after the war with a parcel of land in America. Franklin’s nine-year stay at Passy was beneficial for both parties. Franklin became part of the family, which helped him with translation and advice. In return, he taught LeRay’s young son, James, to speak English and play chess. According to Thomas Schaeper, Chaumont supplied the Americans with arms, saltpeter, clothing, and other materials. Unfortunately, his faith in America led to his financial ruin when the American currency was dramatically devalued in 1778.

He sent James, then twenty-five years old, to the United States to plead his cause before Congress in 1785 but was unable to collect on the monies owed. James did, however, become an American citizen. He married Grace Coxe of Sidney, New Jersey, and began speculating in land.

He lacked capital of his own but was backed by his brother-in-law Pierre Chassanis, Gouverneur Morris, Temple Franklin (grandson of Benjamin Franklin), Alexander Hamilton, and Judge William Cooper. He acquired roughly 350,000 acres in northern New York through the Castorland Land Company and the Antwerp Company. In 1802, he traveled in the wilderness of northern New York to survey his lands in Jefferson County. In 1807, he commissioned a home to be built near what is now LeRaysville. The LeRaysville settlement was originally called Brown’s Mill after Benjamin Brown, brother of Jacob Brown, first settler of Brownville, hero of the War of 1812 and one of LeRay’s early land agents.

James LeRay de Chaumont has been called the Father of the North Country. He was a liberal, amiable man and a popular landlord. Speculating in land after the French Revolution, he sold to French aristocrats like Joseph Bonaparte, Count Réal, and the author Madame de Stael, who in turn often sold to others better equipped to settle in the wilderness of Jefferson County. At his mansion he entertained famous Americans, notably President James Monroe, New York governor Dewitt Clinton, and Robert Livingston. The North Country benefited greatly from his enthusiasm for building roads and mills, surveying towns, and encouraging agriculture and manufacturing. On his working farm he bred horses and Merino sheep imported from France. He experimented with growing mulberry trees for silk production, and he encouraged the cultivation of wine grapes. He was the first president of the Jefferson County Agricultural Society. LeRay’s travels and broader experience gave him the opportunity to compare, for example, “the net produce of the farm in Bucks County” with that in Jefferson County in his “Remarks Addressed to the Jefferson County Agricultural Society” in 1829. He died at age eighty after returning to France in 1840.

The LeRay family, which included sons Vincent and Alexander and daughter Theresa, left



16.6. This small stone building near the LeRay Mansion is said to have been used as slave or servants' quarters.



their legacy in the names of several towns in Jefferson County: Cape Vincent, Alexandria Bay, and Theresa.

In the 1810 census, James LeRay reported a household of thirty-five people. It is known that he owned slaves, and there is a gravestone for the slave woman Rachel, who was nurse to LeRay's granddaughter. According to archaeological investigations reported by Fort Drum's Cultural Resources Section, the small stone outbuilding at the rear of the mansion may at one time have been larger and housed servants or slaves.

#### th e h e r m i t a g e

About four miles from the LeRay Mansion and overlooking the Black River was a stone mansion built in 1824 for Madame Jenika de Feriet, a family friend. Named the "Hermitage" by Madame de Feriet, every room had a stone fireplace and was resplendent with imported French furniture and finery. Nothing remains of it today except the front steps and a sketch portraying a façade with six columns on a landscaped knoll. An advertisement in the *Northern American*, Watertown, November 2, 1836, detailed the estate, which Madame de Feriet

herself had laid out. It also noted that "on the bank of the river is to be found an abundance of fine stones sufficient to build a large city."

The LeRay and de Feriet mansions were markers of the strong French influence in some parts of Jefferson County in the nineteenth century. Attesting to this, a French-language newspaper, *Le Phare des Lacs*, was published in Watertown from 1858 to 1869. Today, the Roswell P. Flower Memorial Library in Watertown has a room of furniture, china, and books collected from these early French settlers.

#### h o o v e r   t a v e r n

About three miles from the LeRay Mansion, at the junction of West Creek and Pleasant Creek, is the village of Evans Mills. It is named for Ethni Evans, a millwright from Hinsdale, New Hampshire, who was hired by Jacob Brown around 1802. Several mills were built on the two creeks; these were soon followed by taverns. In 1821, Captain John Hoover built one of the most beautiful stone taverns in Jefferson County at the intersection of the roads to LeRaysville and Watertown. This imposing two-story building has stepped gable ends and finely cut



16.7. The Hoover Tavern, 1821, is an example of the fine stone work of mason Josiah Fuller. It boasts smooth ashlar blocks of Black River limestone, and stepped gables. This photograph of its use as a gas station was taken by David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times* in 1944.

stone. The limestone was quarried on the former H. N. Eddy farm in the northern part of the township. Josiah Fuller was the stonemason, and he laid the large smooth-cut blocks in a coursed ashlar pattern with very little mortar between the stones. As with the Felt Mansion on the Black River, the stone is of the blue-grey Black River variety. There are elliptical arches with keystones over the front and

side entrances and also over a second-floor doorway, which has been converted to a window. The interior carpentry was done by William Delaware.

the aaron root house

The Aaron Root House stands at the Y in Evans Mills facing the Cemetery Road. Its Georgian

16.8. The Aaron Root House, 1830. This two-story house sits proudly with roads running both in front and behind it, in a village that has several stone buildings.







16.9. Inscribed in the keystone above the entrance to the Aaron Root House are the house's date, 1830, and owner's initials, AR.

aspect is most pleasing to come across. At the center of the five-bay façade is a ground-level entrance. The elliptical stone arch with marble keystone over the entrance is inscribed with the initials AR and the date 1830. The locally quarried stone is of mixed coloration. The walls are of rubble with smooth lintels, sills, and water table. Each gable end has an interior brick chimney and small attic windows. A two-story extension has been added to the original ell. On the grounds is a fine smoke-house with large limestone blocks set into its rubble walls.

Maureen Hubbard Barros



# 17

## *Town of* PAMELIA

maureen hubbard barros

In the spring of 1803, nineteen-year-old Ruth Farr, a native of Massachusetts, and her husband, twenty-six-year-old John Parrish from Washington County, New York, arrived in Pamela with their two small children, two ox teams, and all their worldly possessions. Still part of the Town of Brownville until incorporated in 1819, Pamela, just north of Watertown, was named for General Jacob Brown's wife. Nearby were several streams, including the Perch River and Philomel Creek, that provided water for mills. The surrounding

countryside was rolling and fertile and underlain with limestone deposits. Hamilton Child in his 1890 gazetteer noted that "stone was so abundant that a building of that material was almost as cheap as one of wood." Pamela today boasts more than thirty limestone houses.

par rish house

After several years of life in a log cabin, around 1815, the Parrish family built a two-story, four-bay



17.1. The Parrish House, c. 1815, was built of local limestone on the Parrish Road. Behind it are rolling fields and farm buildings, including one that produced large quantities of cheese in the late 1800s.



17.2. In 1992, James Ivey Cummings painted this mural entitled *Parrish Homestead c. 1815* in the hallway of the Parrish House. Reproduced with the artist's permission.

limestone house facing the Parrish Road. The main house measures thirty-three feet by twenty-four feet. Its long stone wing is built into the hillside and contains the kitchen and woodshed.

The stone came from a quarry nearby, perhaps on the Gould Road. The lintels and sills are smooth cut, and the house itself is of evenly coursed rough blocks of a very light color. There is a water table, and the gable ends have small attic windows and brick chimneys. The basement has a large cistern and unusual corner foundation stones. A stone smokehouse has a feeder that attracts hummingbirds to the garden. The rear of the house looks across hayfields to the woods beyond.

Inside, the rooms are low and comfortable. The current owners have restored the interior stairway to protect the paint colors and wear patterns of past owners. In the stairwell is a colorful contemporary mural, painted in a folk idiom by James Ivey Cummings in 1992, that perfectly captures the house at an idyllic nineteenth-century moment. A horse and buggy are moving along the unpaved Parrish Road. The stone farmhouse is poised amidst cultivated fields with great gusts of smoke billowing from its chimneys, even though the trees and fields show the green of summer.

Other stone farmhouses dot the Perch River area, whose good soil was an early draw for settlers.



17.3. An original paneled door leading to an upstairs bedroom in the Parrish House.





17.4. The smokehouse at the rear of the Parrish House is now part of an extensive flower garden.



17.5. Detail of Pamela limestone of the Black River Group, side of the Parrish House.

The land was particularly suited to dairying, and at one time there were many cheese factories. For a period in the 1800s, John L. Parrish, son of the original owners, operated a factory on the property capable of producing fifty thousand pounds of Limburger cheese annually.

#### countryman house

North of the Parrish House is the settlement of Pamela Four Corners, where there is a cluster of limestone buildings. This hamlet at one time was the commercial hub of the area. On one corner there stood a stone tavern, later the grange hall. Across the corner on northbound State Route 37 (actually in the Town of LeRay) is the Countryman House, a large, five-bay house built in the 1830s for Henry Countryman, Pamela's first carriage maker. The house has excellent stonemasonry with walls of rough coursed stone, smooth lintels, sills, and a water table. A long ell extends from the rear of the house. The wide front entrance has a fan light, side lights, and beautiful tapered columns.



17.6. The Pamela Grange, 1824–25, was originally a tavern and an important building in the village of Pamela Four Corners. David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times*, 1944.



17.7. The Countryman House, 1833 or 1840, was the large residence of Pamela’s carriage-maker.

jones, miller and absalom  
house residences

At the corner on southbound State Route 37 is the Jones, Miller House, a large, five-bay stone residence initially built in 1838 by James Jones, a

prominent early settler. During the nineteenth century, the Elton Miller family owned the property. Then in 1926 there was a fire and the greatly damaged house was completely rebuilt. Behind it, facing County Route 16, is the Absalom House residence, whose date of construction is unknown. It is named



17.8. The wide front entrance of the Countryman House, with its transom and sidelights.



17.9. The Jones, Miller House, rebuilt in 1926, northwest corner, Pamela Four Corners. The Absalom House residence is just behind it on the left.

for Absalom L. House, who owned the property in the mid-1800s. Built into the hillside, this compact house has its entrance on the side gable end.

#### harger house

On the southwest corner of Pamela Four Corners was the Harger store, the Harger House, and finally, at the crest of the hill, the Harger Mansion.

The store (now lost) and the house were built by Charles G. Harger in the early 1830s near a spring that was reputed to have medicinal qualities. Harger operated a meatpacking business that began by supplying the troops stationed at Sackets Harbor and then expanded its market to Montreal and the east coast. Harger even supplied the needs of the California Gold Rush by shipping around Cape Horn.





17.10. The Absalom House residence, 1830s or 1840s, is a small cottage in the cluster of stone buildings at Pamela Four Corners.



17.11. The Harger House, early 1830s, was the first house by Charles G. Harger at Pamela Four Corners.

Harger's one-and-a-half-story limestone house with its side ell faces State Route 37. The main house measures thirty-four feet by thirty feet. Its five-bay façade has a recessed entrance. The lintels and sills are smooth and flat. The walls are laid with coarse stone blocks. The cottage kitchen was in the lower level, built into the hillside with the stream flowing

close by. The windows of this charming cottage are original, with wooden pegs and 6/6 panes.

harger mansion

As Charles G. Harger prospered, he built a mansion next door, probably in 1849, which is the





17.12. The rear of the Harger House faces a stream.



17.13. The original pegged window on the rear of the Harger House.

date chiseled into a lintel over the cellar entrance. According to local lore, he gave in to the pleadings of his wife, Maria Irene, for a house that matched their status in the community. Set back from the

road on a knoll, the main block of this elegant house measures forty feet by thirty feet. Its first-floor windows extend from floor to ceiling with 6/6 panes. Some have kept their original pegged wood frames. The stonework, from material quarried just a hundred feet from the house, is especially fine. The five-bay façade and gable end peaks are made of narrower laid stones. The lintels are of smooth worked stone; the one over the front door is a single exceedingly large block. A water table runs under the windows to form sills and under the front door to form the threshold. The cellar has a cistern built on bedrock. All of the cellar's stone surfaces have been parged. A stone ell with a porch extends from the north side of the house. Each gable end has an interior brick chimney.

The wide main doorway has kept its side lights, and the interior of this center hall plan house is likewise unchanged. The rooms have eight foot, nine inch ceilings. The Harger Mansion has no fireplaces, which suggests that it was heated by woodstoves, which were just coming into vogue at the time it was built. At one time the kitchen had a bake oven; it was removed in the 1920s.

The property had a number of outbuildings—a barn, blacksmith's shop, granary, icehouse, and pumphouse. There were also wooden additions to the house. One of these may have been used as a school; the other was a small store. According



17.14. The Harger Mansion, 1839 or 1849, is a grand five-bay mansion, now hidden by trees. Its owner was a successful entrepreneur who developed a thriving business in foodstuffs.



17.15. Harger Mansion: side windows with lintels and sills of Black River limestone of the Pamelia formation.



17.16. Detail of a window with a wooden peg in the Harger Mansion.



17.17. Harger Mansion. The smooth finished water table contrasts with the rough-cut stone of the wall.

to the current owner, who was born in the house, there was also a lineshaft, which was used to power a churn to make butter. It seems that Harger was an industrious man. In any event, his corner of Pamela reflects that in the mid-nineteenth century there was money to be made from providing foodstuffs.

Mr. Harger, as a leading merchant and citizen of Pamela Four Corners, pressed for the Watertown–Potsdam railroad to be routed through this important commercial center. His effort failed, and in 1859, he sold his beautiful mansion with its circular drive and grove of maple trees. He moved to



17.18. Date stone in the side gable of the Samuel Cronkhite House, 1820.

Watertown, where with his son he established the Charles G. Harger & Son bank in 1866.

#### s a m u e l c r o n k h i t e h o u s e

Just inside the town line of LeRay, about a mile north of the Four Corners with its crossroads of limestone buildings, is the Samuel Cronkhite House. High in its gable end is a large cut stone incised with the date 1820. The stone serves as a visual reminder of how early the limestone building tradition began in this area.





## *Part Five*

### Building with Stone

18. Lost Stone Buildings

19. Geology and Quarrying

20. Construction and  
Preservation





# 18

## LOST STONE BUILDINGS

maureen hubbard barros

There are many causes for the loss of stone buildings in Jefferson County. Once the roof of a stone building is damaged, water seeps between the double-faced walls and the building's fabric quickly deteriorates. Similarly, natural weathering erodes the mortar between stones, loosening them until gradually a wall collapses. The intense heat of a house fire can compromise stonework. Abandoned stone houses in the countryside have often been recycled as farm outbuildings for storage and animals. Development can

encroach on a stone house, and if it is not incorporated into the new site, it is often returned to the landscape as stones.

Apathy, neglect, lack of protection, and lack of interest and money by both local government and citizens have deprived us of many of our early stone structures.

Of the seventeen one-room schoolhouses in the Town of Hounsfield, five were constructed of stone and located within a three-mile radius. They were built of rubble limestone from Elisha



18.1. School House No. 3, Evans Road, Town of Hounsfield. View from the side, where collapsed stone and windows allow entrance for farm vehicles.



18.2. Interior entrance to School House No. 3, Evans Road, Town of Hounsfield.

18.3. The John La Farge Mansion, 1833–35, near Lafargeville. The façade was 120 feet long. Copy of a nineteenth-century drawing.



18.4. The North wing and ell of the La Farge Mansion housed the kitchen with a large bake oven, servants' quarters, and woodshed. David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times*, December 4, 1941.

Camp's quarries. All had the same plan that differed slightly from schoolhouses in other areas: a one-story, one-room building, rectangular in shape, three bays wide by three bays deep. A vestibule projected from the front gable. Centered on the vestibule was a deeply recessed entrance. A plaque on the gable was inscribed with the school number and date. The flat, arched window openings were of a uniform size and had lintels of radiating voussoirs and slightly projecting window sills. A brick chimney with a prominent cap was located at or near a gable end. The interior walls were either

plastered or finished with varnished beaded board. Floors were wide wooden planks. The roofs were sheathed with wooden shakes.

One of the county's greatest losses was the LaFarge Mansion. According to Bessie Walldroff, historian of the Town of Orleans, in *LaFarge and His Mansion*, the blue limestone for the La Farge mansion was quarried nearby. A close-up detail of the north wing's façade shows smooth-faced coursed ashlar in a pattern of alternating bands of narrow and wide blocks. Hial Cook is credited as the stonemason.



18.5. The Flemish bond pattern in the stonework of this building in LaFargeville is identical to that of the front façade of the La Farge Mansion, credited to mason Hial Cook.



18.6. Adriel Ely's stone store, c. 1830, was at the corner of Washington and Stone Streets. From Joel H. Monroe, *Through Eleven Decades of History: Watertown, A History from 1800 to 1912*.



18.7. This abandoned stone house is typical of many in Jefferson County. Once the roof is compromised, moisture gets between the stones in the double-faced walls and deterioration begins. The Smith, Wright House, Clayton.



John LaFarge was a Frenchman who amassed a large fortune in the West Indian trade and invested in over 3,700 acres in what became LaFargeville. In the early 1830s, he built a large stone mansion with flanking wings. According to the description of the property for public auction in the *Watertown American*, February 24, 1837, it included a four-acre vegetable garden with a spring at its center. There was a young orchard and vineyard with about seven hundred grafted trees of all kinds. The “pleasure grounds” had groves of native forest trees, surrounded by cemented stone walls five feet

high. A cut stone wall a mile and a half in length extended along the road. Across the road was the overseer’s fine stone house.

The house’s interior was furnished in the “best style,” and the auction list included French wines, china, and silver “complete for 24 persons.” In 1838, LaFarge sold the mansion to Father DuBois, a Catholic priest, and the St. Vincent de Paul Seminary School used the property for a few years. The main block fell into ruin and was razed in 1905. The stone wall was torn down and used as bedding stones for the road.

# I9

## GEOLOGY AND QUARRYING

kenneth a. schwarz and maureen hubbard barros

*Looking to the east, I saw a very different picture: for as far as the eye could see was an eternal forest on a limestone plateau, which contained in its care a mass of fossilized marine life.*

*I also collected several varieties of fluvial shellfish, several rocks that carried impressions of fossils, and finally considerable animal fragments. All this curious material is in the geological collection of the King's cabinet.*

—J. Milbert

geologic comment on the building  
stones of jefferson county, new york

The oldest sedimentary rock in Jefferson County is the Potsdam Sandstone, a pebbly to fine-grained sandstone deposited in a beach-to-shallow-water environment about 525 million years ago during a break-up of the continent. It contains fossils only in its upper section and is often stained a red to brown color by iron oxide impurities, providing clues to its largely subaerial origin.

As the tectonic activity continued about 450 million years ago, marine waters began to encroach on the sands, depositing carbonate sediments in the form of limestone (calcium carbonate,  $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) and dolomite (calcium-magnesium carbonate,  $\text{CaMg}(\text{CO}_3)_2$ ), interspersed with lime muds (carbonaceous shales). Marine animals proliferated in these waters, in the form of reefs, mounds, bottom dwellers, and swimming and floating organisms. These abundant life forms included sponges,

trilobites, brachiopods, nautiloids, clams, bryozoans, echinoderms, corals, snails, burrowing invertebrates—a veritable explosion of marine life. After these organisms died, their shells settled to the bottom of the sea, at which point they were redistributed by predators and wave and current action to form part of the Black River and the younger Trenton Group Limestones.

The geological maps published by the New York State Museum/Geological Survey show 128 historic limestone quarries in Jefferson County. In 1956, there were seventy-six quarry sites in the Black River Limestone and forty-six quarry sites in the Trenton Limestone. Realistically, there probably were no more than a dozen or so active quarries at any given time, and of those, only a few were extracting building (or dimension) stones during the limited heyday of this activity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other quarry products included crushed stone (for aggregate), pulverized stone (an agricultural additive), and lime (for

cement). The expense of extraction and transportation, and competition from newer building materials, has considerably diminished the demand for building stones, flagstones, and veneer stones.

Kenneth A. Schwarz

### varieties of limestone and sandstone in jefferson county

Most of Jefferson County is underlain with limestone, but in the northern townships the limestone gives way to sandstone of the Theresa and Potsdam Formations. The limestone falls into two major groups—the Trenton and the Black River. These in turn are subdivided into various formations. We have used the definitions and descriptions provided in John H. Johnsen's *The Limestones (Middle Ordovician) of Jefferson County, New York*, in combination with photographs of the stone in sample houses to show the wide range of building stone seen across the county.

**Sandstone** is formed by the consolidation and compaction of sand and held together by a natural cement, such as silica.

**Black River Group Limestones** are found in beds 250 feet to 270 feet thick and contain many

fossils, burrows of invertebrate animals, and sedimentary structures. These indicate a warm, shallow seawater environment. Limestones of this group have a fine texture and a lighter color, are sparsely fossiliferous, and turn dove-gray when weathered. Some call them “birdseye” stone because of the fossil worm burrows (tubes) that have been filled with clear calcite (CaCO<sub>3</sub>). Within the Black River Group are the following formations:

a. Pamela—principally greenish-gray and medium-gray conchoidally fracturing dolostone with some medium- to dark-gray limestone interbeds.

b. Lowville—principally medium-gray, conchoidally fracturing, fine- to medium-textured limestone; light-gray weathering.

c. Chaumont—massive, medium to dark-gray, fine-textured cherty limestone, weathering light-gray with silicified fossils including large cephalopods.

**Trenton Group Limestones** are 475 feet to 500 feet thick and indicate a land-derived mud environment (silt and clay). This group is coarser in texture, darker in color, and highly fossiliferous. Within the Trenton Group are the following formations:

a. Rockland—thin-bedded, somewhat argillaceous medium- to dark-gray, fine- to medium-textured limestone with shale interbeds.



19.1. Theresa sandstone. Reformed Church of the Thousand Isles, Alexandria Bay.



19.2. The Black River Group, Pamela Formation: the Parrish House, Pamela.





19.3. The Black River Group, Lowville Formation: the Felt Mansion, Felts Mills.



19.4. The Black River Group, Chaumont Formation: the Copley, Adams, Duford Stone Office, Chaumont. The stone on the left is beveled and worked more finely than the stone on the right.

b. Kirkfield—medium- to thick-bedded, medium to light gray, medium- to course-textured limestone; abundantly fossiliferous with obvious echinoderm columnals often cross-bedded.

c. Shoreham—irregular lensing, thin- to medium-bedded, medium-gray, medium- to course-textured limestone. The coarser limestone beds have wavy surfaces, producing an irregular lensing appearance.



19.5. The Trenton Group, Rockland Formation: St. Vincent of Paul Church, Cape Vincent.



19.6. The Trenton Group, Kirkfield Formation: the Read House, Town of Brownville.

d. Denmark—thin to thick-bedded, occasionally cross-bedded, medium to medium-light gray, course-textured fossiliferous limestone with shale partings.

e. Cobourg—upper part (Hillier) nodular and argillaceous medium-textured limestone with interbeds of dark-gray calcareous shale; upper part (Hollowell) thin- to thick-bedded, occasionally cross-bedded, medium-light-gray, coarsely textured fossiliferous limestone with shale partings.

#### quarrying industry

The first commercial limestone quarry began in about 1825 in Chaumont, where seven quarries





19.7. The Trenton Group, Coburg Formation: the Salisbury House, Ellisburg.



19.8. Road cut of wet limestone (Black River Group, possibly Lowville formation) on Rte.12, Town of Pamela, showing thick bedding stones near the top.



19.9. Saw Mill Bay limestone quarry near Chaumont (no date), showing the depth already cut. There is another eight to ten inches of stone still to be cut before reaching the water level. *The Heritage of Chaumont 1874–1974*. Courtesy of Lyme Heritage Center, Three Mile Bay, NY.

were worked until 1929. Census records for 1850 show ten stonecutters and two masons living in the township. Most had come from New England and New York, but three were from Canada. Later, hundreds were involved in the industry, which included not only quarrying but also the crushing of stone and the burning of limestone to make lime.

The plug-and-feather method was applied to beds of stone that were naturally divided into blocks by seams and joints at regular angles to each other. Sometimes these seams ran straight and parallel for many feet. Figure 19.9 shows remnants of drill holes. The thicker sixteen-inch and thirty-two-inch beds were cut for lock facing on the Erie Canal and for bridge work. The papers of Elisha Camp of Sackets Harbor show contracts like that

of August 8, 1837, for shipping two hundred tons of limestone for the pier in Oswego aboard the schooner *Indiana* for \$1.50 per ton.

Besides selling blocks of stone, the industry made use of odd cuts of limestone for making lime (calcium carbonate) for agriculture, masonry, and plaster. The process involved running huge kilns built of stone measuring as high as forty feet and about twenty feet square at the base. These chimney-like structures were often erected against the side of a hill. A team of horses could then draw a wagonload of stone up the hill and dump the stones into the kiln. Inside the stone chimney was a circular brick chimney within which the limestone burned. The fire was laid between the inner brick construction and the limestone walls. Wood and

It is hereby agreed, between Elisha Camp of Sackets Harbor, Jefferson County, N.Y. & R. C. Smead, Lt. of the 4<sup>th</sup> U.S. Artillery, Agent for the Engineer Dept. at Oswego, N.Y. as follows - viz -

The said Elisha Camp agrees to furnish 200 Tons of good sound Limestone for coping the Walls of the Pier at Oswego, of the following dimensions, viz - About 100 Tons to be <sup>from 6 to 8</sup> 8 feet long & about 4 feet average width with one straight edge & the two ends perpendicular to it; the remainder to be from 6 to 8 feet long & from 3 to 4 feet wide, with one side straight & the two ends perpendicular to it, or one end straight & the two sides perpendicular to it. all to be of a suitable thickness to work a foot thick with one smooth plane face - to be delivered on board of the Schooner *Indiana*, or such other vessel as the said Smead may send for them by the first day of September 1837. -

And the said Smead agrees to pay the said Camp for every Ton of such Stone so delivered one Dollar & fifty Cents per Ton - Witness our hands & seals this 8<sup>th</sup> August 1837 -

In presence of

Elias Marsh

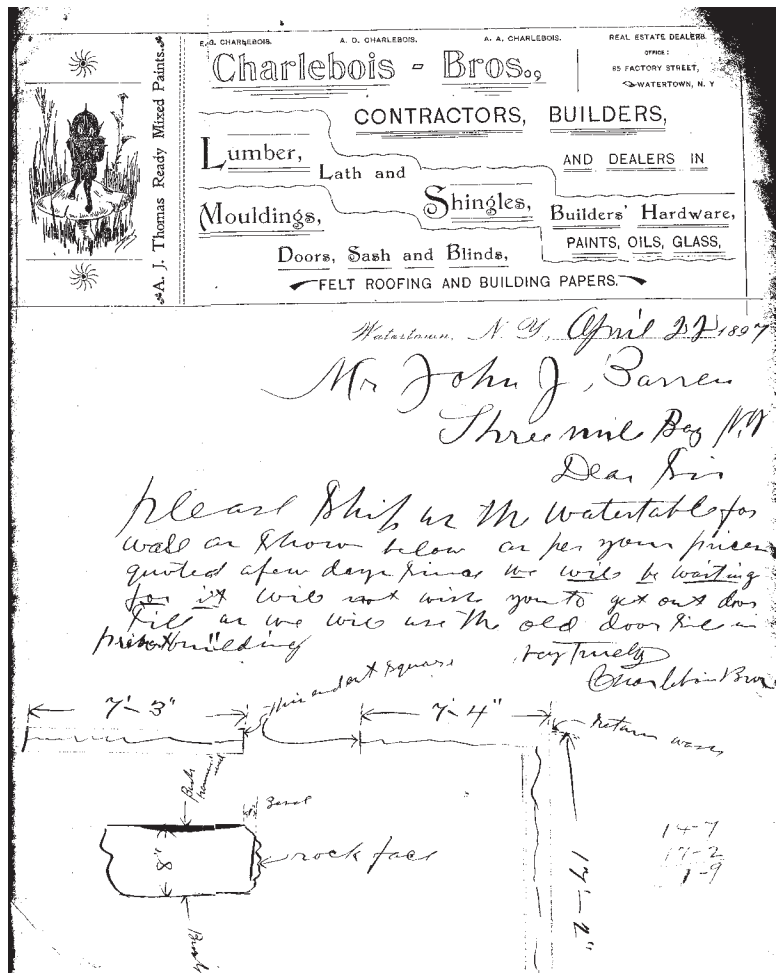
Elisha Camp

R. C. Smead  
Lt. 4<sup>th</sup> Art. 3

19.10. Contract between Elisha Camp and R. C. Smead, Lt., 4th Artillery. Elisha Camp papers, #696, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.



19.11. Quarries also provided cut stone to order, as in this sketch for a water table. Charlebois Brothers, request to the Barron quarry, Three Mile Bay, NY, 1897. "Please ship us the watertable for wall as shown below as per your prices quoted a few days prior. We will be waiting for it. . . ." Reproduced in Elaine Bock, "The Limestone Quarries of the Town of Lyme, NY," *Bulletin: Jefferson County Historical Society*. 38, (2009).



sometimes coal were fed through openings on the sides of the limestone walls. When the limestone was reduced to powder it was removed from the bottom and, after cooling, packed in barrels for shipment. The barrels were usually made on site at the cooper's shop.

The Chaumont industry involved not only extracting, cutting, and shaping stone, and making lime, but also ancillary jobs in shipping, blacksmithing, forestry, and railroads. By 1872, its diversity was well represented on Chaumont's Main Street by the Copley, Adams, Duford Stone Office (see p. 94).

Other quarries in the county were smaller and offered variations in limestone that are interesting to trace. In a Champion quarry, possibly used for

the Hubbard houses, the beds are deep and of differing heights with layers of shale separating beds of limestone. Remains can be seen of the quarry office and the shack used to store dynamite for blasting.

Most small quarries were worked until the good stone gave out. For example, the Charlebois quarry near Clayton was worked year round until the 1930s. It was owned by Joseph Henry Wood and provided stone for WPA projects. In the wintertime, bobsleds laden with stone were drawn by horses over the ice of the St. Lawrence River. Today many quarries are filled in or used as transfer sites. Two have become beautiful gardens.

Maureen Hubbard Barros

# 20

## CONSTRUCTION AND PRESERVATION

brian w. gorman

our stone houses

This book deals primarily with stone homes that were built in Jefferson County between 1815 and 1860. There are few examples before or after this period. There seems to have been a unique confluence of events and developments that led to our forefathers' brief romance with stone construction. Although that confluence probably occurred in other regions, it is interesting to consider it here.

Why did they build with stone? Of course, the answer to this is too obvious. Stone is beautiful and durable. It evokes substance, security, and status as well as feelings of quaint comfort and hominess. It offers unmatched strength and timeless durability for the modest price of an occasional pointing-up. There is no wonder that stone was favored by many who could afford to build with it, or that most of our oldest surviving structures are of stone.

However, stone construction has its disadvantages. Stone is a poor insulator and therefore conducts cold readily. Anyone who has experienced winter in an uninsulated stone structure knows it can be but an elegant igloo. Limestone is especially porous and absorptive of moisture. This can lead to quite a bit of instability as a result of seasonal freeze/thaw cycles, as well as to a variety of

moisture problems throughout the walls and in the interior.

Most of our earliest settlers came from New England, and there is evidence that stone construction might not have been an obvious first choice for them. It seems pretty clear that, with a few exceptions, stone house construction did not become commonplace until after the War of 1812.

There could be many reasons for this. Most New Englanders were descendants of those who came over from England between 1620 and 1680. Most of these were from southeast England, where frame construction (center chimney homes) was the common form of dwelling, and they brought these building traditions with them (Larkin 2006; Hutchins 1982, 19). Apparently, too, some New Englanders felt that masonry construction was unhealthy because of the damp and cold it transmitted in the darker seasons. As a practical matter, lime for making mortar was scarce and expensive in New England, with limestone deposits limited mainly to parts of Rhode Island (Isham 1895). These influences helped define New England architecture and that of regions settled by descendants of New Englanders. As an aside, there seems to have been more familiarity with brick construction in the early settlement period. In 1806, William

Smith built a brick store in Watertown, and by 1810, there was a brickyard on what is now the south side of the Watertown Public Square.

A greater influence still was economics. There was much work to be done in the early years. Most of the first settlers acquired land on attractive credit terms from big-city speculators who were trying to promote settlement. This often meant good prices for land and two or three years before any payment needed to be made. For those who bought on credit, success depended on earning a profit in the first few seasons. The farmers focused entirely on clearing land for growing cash crops. For those with capital to invest, building mills, distilleries, taverns, or mercantile businesses to sustain fledgling communities was the first priority.

Lumber was overabundant for the first few decades of settlement, while the land was being cleared of dense forests for farming. Potash and pearl ash, products of burning wood, were the most important cash exports before the war. Every settlement had a sawmill first. Lumber was cheap enough that it made stone construction a far too costly alternative. For example, in early-eighteenth-century Quebec—a region then in early settlement and rich in limestone deposits—a stone house of the same dimensions and detail as a frame house cost eight times more to build (Hutchins 1982, 23). Not only was there much more labor involved in collecting and preparing the stone, but erecting the walls required elaborate scaffolding that frame construction did not. Also, skilled stonemasons, who could find work in any developing region, may have been rather scarce early on, thus commanding higher wages when available.

Only after a settlement had achieved a certain degree of prosperity did buildings intended to be symbols of economic success become viable and more commonplace. As wealth and permanence came to Jefferson County, so too did the demand for more skilled tradesmen.

Organic economic development was interrupted by the War of 1812, which, however, greatly stimulated the local economy. It spurred

stone construction directly; it also provided some with sufficient wealth to build fine stone homes. Madison Barracks, the Union Hotel, and other prominent stone structures in Sackets Harbor were all built immediately after the war and may have contributed greatly to the local development of commercial quarries and certainly brought many skilled stonemasons to the area. The maturing economy and the new availability of masons were the elements necessary to effect the boom in stone construction that was to follow.

During the thirty years following the war, hundreds of hand-hewn stone buildings were raised in Jefferson County. David F. Lane of the *Watertown Daily Times* documented about 250 of them in his series “Old Mansions and Houses of the North Country”; but the number of significant stone structures was at one time twice that. Those that survive evoke an image of a period of heady growth for the county—growth that paralleled that of our nascent country. It was a time when the local economy provided an opportunity for a man to “become eminent by his own industry” (Norris Winslow plaque, Factory Square, Watertown).

More than structures of timeless beauty, these stone works represent the pride and accomplishment of highly skilled craftsmen. It was a time when the value of a craftsman’s labor was measured more in his pride of workmanship, upheld reputation, and desire for a customer’s satisfaction than in dollars per hour.

After about 1840, with the Industrial Revolution taking hold in the United States, came ever cheaper goods and ever more expensive labor by comparison. Wooden doors, windows, moldings, and ornamentation became much cheaper, as milling technologies evolved and the simple elements of frame construction such as the nail and the screw became cheaper with mass production. Though advances in technology aided stone cutting and surfacing, stonemasonry remained a manually intensive labor and therefore became more and more expensive relative to frame construction. For this reason, we have few examples of stone



construction aside from major public works or churches after 1850.

#### first stone use

With a little wandering around the countryside, any open-eyed settler would have seen that there was plenty of limestone to be had in Jefferson County. It would not have been much of a surprise, given that the central part of the state had rich limestone deposits that by 1800 were being tapped for the construction of houses, public buildings, bridges, and dams, and certainly for the making of lime for mortar and plaster. Outcroppings and ledges were common and easily accessed without substantial commercial quarrying or stone working. Early on, the use of stone was probably limited solely to that which could be picked readily, employing the simplest stone-cutting skills and minimal tooling. The banks of rivers and creeks provided large, flat stone for relatively easy albeit heavy picking.

#### foundations

The first use of stone would certainly have been for foundations or barn footings. Stone would have

been essential for strong and stable footings, for keeping out vermin, and for moderating food storage temperatures. When done right, building to these humble requirements was no small undertaking, for it required some engineering skill as well as experience laying a stone wall. The conditions and limitations of early settlement would have led to a variety of quality of workmanship, and many early vernacular houses would not have had any basement at all. For those a little better built, a simple twenty-five foot by thirty foot frame dwelling with a six foot deep full basement would have required about eighty tons of limestone. One cubic foot of stone weighs 160 pounds (Siebert 1905). A full stone house of the same dimension would have required three or four times that amount. The cellar hole would have been dug by hand, and the stone, likely dragged on a stone sled from nearby sources or by heavy wagon from farther away, would have been hauled by oxen.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, there were no architects or building engineers available to any but the extremely wealthy. Besides a skilled stonemason, an experienced carpenter or framer would likely have had the requisite understanding of engineering and stone construction to



20.1. This picture, taken in the 1940s by David F. Lane for the *Watertown Daily Times*, shows a humble stone dwelling in Brownville. The relatively easy access to good-quality building stone allowed an early settler to build a modest dwelling of quality materials that might have been well outside his means in other areas of the country.

complete the typical stone features of most frame houses, such as cellars and wells. Above-ground stone wall construction, where strength, aesthetics, and features such as window and door openings were required, often with dressed stone, would have required higher skills. For example, Noadiah Hubbard had acquired some masonry skills as a young man, helping in stone bridge construction in central New York. But when it came to building his own homes, he hired a skilled stonemason, Asa Eggleston.

For the vast majority of the stone structures of Jefferson County we have little information about the builders. It is likely, though, that the more successful among them had mastered a wide variety of skills related to building, engineering, architecture, business, and—not the least—local politics. Something has been written about one such remarkable individual, who had a significant impact on the county's development as well as that of some of our more significant stone structures.

William Smith, born in Connecticut in 1777, came to the area by way of Litchfield, Herkimer County, New York, where he had been engaged in farming and then cooperage since age nineteen. He came to the county first in 1802, bargaining for 250 acres in Rodman under assignable contracts. He established a cooperage in Watertown in 1803, making potash barrels. After a year, he returned to Litchfield and took up the mason's trade, working until late 1805, by which time he had accumulated capital of six hundred dollars. He then moved back to Watertown, where he formed a partnership with John Paddock in 1805 to establish a general store in rented space. In the summer of 1806, he built with his own hands a two-story brick store on a stone basement; this was the first brick structure erected in the county. The brick was supplied by Eli Rogers, who operated a brickyard at what is now the head of Franklin Street on Watertown's Public Square.

In 1806, he was commissioned by the county to acquire the materials and supervise construction of the new courthouse and jail, Watertown having the year before become the seat of the newly formed

Jefferson County. The jail was of wood construction, the walls four feet thick and built from timbers laid perpendicular to the line of the walls so that the ends of each comprised the inside and outside walls of the jail. When that building burned down, Smith was put in charge of building its stone replacement. In 1811, he supervised the building of the first armory on Arsenal Street, a brick structure on stone foundations. We know little of the stonemasons employed save their names, Thaddeus Smith and Joseph Cook.

Smith headed a body of militia in the Battle of Sackets Harbor in 1813. Then, late in the war, the price of textiles having been elevated by trade embargoes with Canada, he was commissioned to build the stone factory of the Watertown Cotton and Woolen Manufacturing Company, with capital of \$100,000—a monumental sum for the time.

Shortly after the war, Smith's design was selected from among one hundred twenty-four plans submitted to the Secretary of the Navy to build a ship house in Sackets Harbor. The house was intended to cover the hull and partly completed 120-gun battleship resting at Navy Point, its construction having been suspended by the treaty ending the war. That structure remained in place until 1880.

In 1817, Smith laid out the grounds and developed the plans for the Madison Barracks in Sackets Harbor, subsequently built from stone under the supervision of Thomas Tupper, DQMG (Deputy Quarter Master General), at a cost of \$85,000.

In the years that followed, Smith operated a small iron foundry. Then in 1827, he was hired by Levi Bebee to supervise the stone construction of a large cotton factory on what was then called Cowan's Island. The structure was sixty-five feet by two hundred fifty feet and three stories high and could accommodate ten thousand spindles. The work was completed in seven months, and it was not until then that Bebee and Smith sat down to decide what Smith was to be paid for his efforts. He and Bebee each wrote down an amount deemed appropriate and handed it to the other. Smith had written \$500. Bebee had written \$1,000. To this,



20.2. The Old Cotton Factory, Factory Square in Watertown. The largest building in the county and the pride of the village at the time, its construction cost \$72,000 in 1814. A bell captured from a British frigate was placed in the factory tower to summon workers. The bell had been captured by Colonel Zebulon Pike at York (now Toronto), and was the first bell in the village. The cotton factory fell into bankruptcy shortly after the war, when trade with Canada resumed and the prices of wool and cotton fell. It was sold for \$7,000 in 1817 and passed through several hands in the years that followed. In 1869, it was destroyed by flood, but the ruins remained into the twentieth century. Photo courtesy of the Gorman Family.

Smith commented, “Mr. Bebee, you mark too high.” Mr. Bebee wrote a check for \$1,000 and replied, “Mr. Smith, allow me to say that I cannot consent to abate anything from that sum, believing that your services were very cheap to me even at a greater amount of compensation.”

Smith, a leading Whig Party member, served as county treasurer for many years. He was appointed to several commissions established by the county and acted as arbiter of disputes related to Penet’s Square. Also, he represented successfully after six years’ efforts the claims of contractors and suppliers relating to the construction of Madison Barracks, which the US government had left unpaid until 1838. In addition, he was probably the single most effective proponent for the Rome–Watertown Railroad from its planning to its completion almost twenty years later, in 1852.

For this list of accomplishments, it is no surprise that Mr. Smith, a self-taught man, was honored profusely in the local papers on his death in 1858.

Alluding to words first spoken by Augustus Caesar, “he found Watertown an insignificant hamlet in the midst of a howling wilderness, and left it, through the improvements which he was always foremost in carrying forward, a large, prosperous and wealthy village . . . and distinguished for its mechanical skill in an age of mechanism.”

### building a stone wall

Constructing a wall may seem a difficult and complicated process, in addition to requiring heavy lifting. The concept is simplified if one is mindful of the rule that good form follows common sense and economy. A typical wall will be eighteen inches to twenty inches thick with plumb vertical faces on both sides, built of stones with one good face oriented to the outside or inside of the wall. The part of the wall where the backs of the two surface stones meet imperfectly is filled with smaller “rubble” and mortar in a wet mix to completely



fill the interstices. This “double-faced” wall is the universal method of construction for the houses discussed in this book, with the singular exception of the Wood House in Woodville (p. 50).

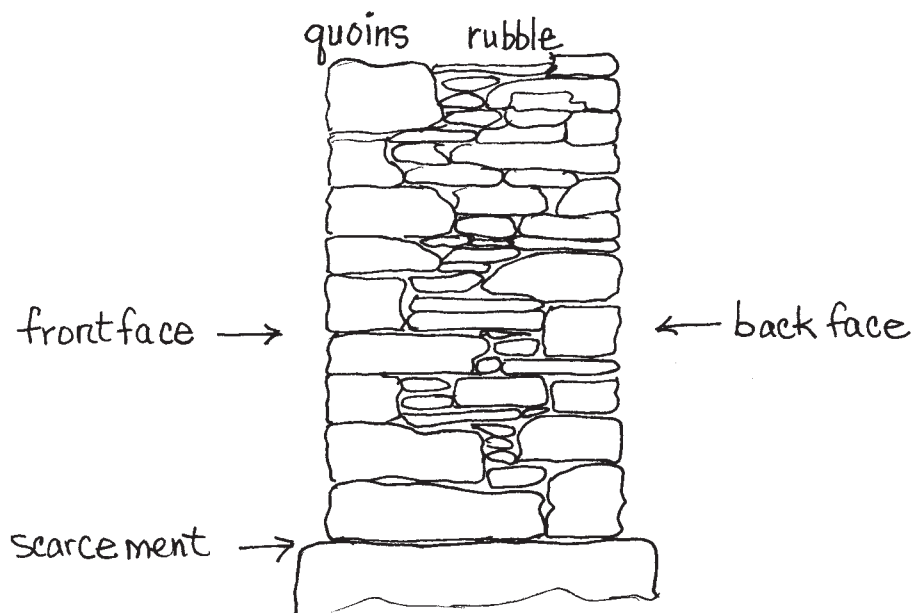
Typically, poorer quality stone (i.e., poor in appearance) would be used for the inside wall or “backing” because it would later be covered directly with plaster or paneling. The outside wall or “face” would employ rubble stone, squared stone, or cut stone, depending on the means and taste of the owner. In any case, the construction would be the same. Figure 20.3 shows a cross-section of a typical rubble stone wall.

Double-faced walls are constructed the way they are for a number of reasons. Stone rarely comes out of the ground with perfect dimensions. It would be very toilsome or expensive to have stones squared on opposing sides to allow the perfect width for plumb vertical surfaces both inside and out. In addition, this type of structure would not have the inherent stability of a double-faced wall built with properly dimensioned stones. In the latter, stresses caused by settlement and seasonal movement in the wall are better dispersed throughout the wall. This construction will usually not fail unless the entire wall disintegrates.

Foundations would begin with very large, sometimes irregular stones at the base. These often were laid upon smaller stones in a prepared bed to inhibit uneven settling of the larger stones and to improve their upper surface orientation to as close to level as possible. Foundation walls typically extend two inches or three inches wider than the wall of the first floor, stepping back on the outside at about floor level of the first floor. The point at which this step back occurs is commonly called the “water table” or, more generally, a scarcement. In more stylish houses, this point is sometimes adorned with dressed stone in a belt course.

As one proceeds to the second floor, the thickness of the wall often decreases, as the strength required by the reduced load on the second floor is less. This reduction is often accomplished by a step in on the inside of the wall at the transition from the first to the second floor, and sometimes, too, where the gable end progresses over the attic floor level. The step in also provides a shelf to help support the joists, which are usually set directly into the stone.

A wall’s strength depends on four things: the size and composition of the stone, the cut or fit of the stone, the bonding or positioning of stone, and the quality of the mortar.



20.3. A side-view sketch of a double-faced rubble wall.

the stone

To provide ample strength, stone needs to be of a certain mass. Tough stone like granite can be used in almost any size; it is indestructible but very difficult to work. Limestone is soft and easily worked, but is more prone to stress fracture and deterioration from the working of the weather. Each building stone has a height, a depth, and a length. Properly dimensioned stone generally has a depth no more than twice the height and a length no more than three times the height (Siebert 1905, 16). Limestone should be of a consistent, solid layer and at least three inches or four inches in height, unless it is being used for rubble infill.

When building a wall, one quickly comes to recognize stone of a “best” manageable dimension. For our limestones, that might be four to six inches in height, eight inches in depth, and twelve to fourteen inches in length, and weighing between forty and eighty pounds. Given the extreme labor involved in handling larger stones, finding “perfect” stones is very satisfying indeed!

Though it is somewhat counterintuitive, stone much oversized in either depth or length can bear too much stress in the normal shifting of walls over time, resulting in cracks. However, it is not uncommon to find very large stones placed higher in walls to help spread stresses over a larger area below.

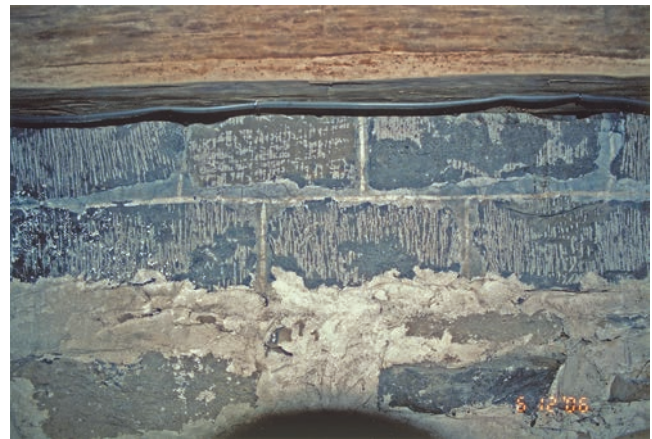
the bond

Bond refers to how the stone is laid into a wall to properly disperse stress and help ensure uniform strength. The proper overlapping and tying in of stones ensures a stable structure. There are a few time-honored general rules to follow:

Each building stone has a height, depth, and length. A stone laid lengthwise, with its long dimension in line with the face of the wall, is called a stretcher. One laid with its length perpendicular to the face is called a header. Headers tie the face of the wall to the back and should extend at least two thirds of the width of the wall—ideally, completely

from one side to the other. The frequency of placement of headers varies depending on several factors. A rule of thumb is that foundations as well as portions of walls bearing greater stress should have one header for every five square feet of face area.

The adjoining area between stones is called the “bed” or the “joint,” referring to the horizontal and vertical joining, respectively. Stone must be positioned in the wall so as to “break joints”; that is, vertical joints must be offset so that no two line up directly above one another. There should be at least four inches of overlap of vertical joints between successive courses. In addition, each header should be placed as close as possible



20.4. This view of the north side of the once-exposed foundation of the Titus Ives House in Watertown (1810) shows a technique often used to give the appearance of cut stone. Rubble stone—or, in this case, roughly squared stone set in even courses—would have its beds and joints pointed with mortar that had been tinted, usually with ash or lampblack, to match the face color of the stone. It would then be painted with fine lines of white lead to give the appearance of the thin white lime mortar bond between well-cut stones. This example has been remarkably well preserved, because it was protected from the elements when a stone addition with full basement was built on the north side of the house in 1831. This treatment can be seen in more weathered forms on the east side of the Hiram Hubbard House in Champion, the foundation of the Smith House in Smithville, and in several places on the Ives House stone addition. Photo: Brian Gorman.

to the center of the stretcher on which it is placed. All stone that nature created in layers of material deposited over time (stratified), like limestone, must be laid on its natural bed, that is, with layers horizontal and not vertical.

Strength in corners, both inside and outside, is accomplished by alternating headers and stretchers, one above the other. This provides an opportunity for weaving the two plane surfaces together by interlocking these stones with each adjoining wall. These alternating stones on outside corners are called “quoins” (“rybits” to the Welsh). Often seen on window and door openings as well as on outside corners, they are frequently made with a higher quality of fit and finish than the rest of the face stones, both for appearance and for greater strength.

#### cut a nd f it

Stone was sometimes placed in the wall randomly, as it fit best, with no apparent regularity. Other times it was placed in rows called “courses.” Courses are uniform in height within the row and either regular or varying in height from row to row. The exactness of fit of beds and joints defines the quality of the work. The best fit could be accomplished either by tooling the stone carefully or by making use of the stone’s natural shape as it was found in the ledge, the creek bed, or the quarry.

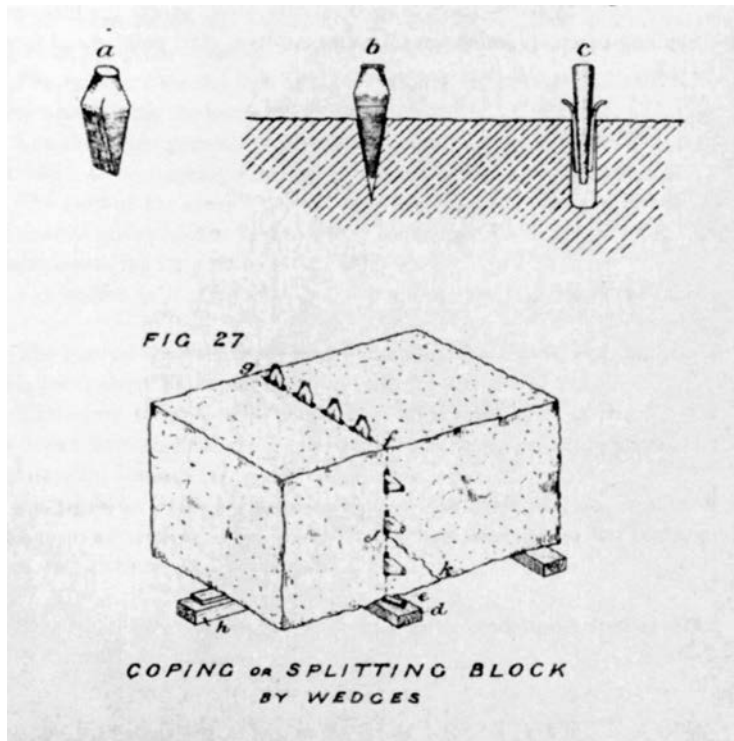
The limestones of Jefferson County vary in composition, but most seem to have some advantages in building. For example, limestone of the Chaumont formation (Black River Group) can be taken directly from the surface or a river bed in large, uniform blocks with very regular flat, sheer faces. This stone gives the appearance of finely worked blocks (ashlar) without the tool work that would otherwise have been required. While good for lighter domestic applications, this stone, high in calcium carbonate, seems not to have had the strength or consistency required for large commercial buildings and was little used after the first half of the nineteenth century except for bridge piers, water breaks, gravel, and then lime.

An appreciation of stone’s finish and of the human effort required to achieve it requires some discussion of the methods for quarrying, cutting, squaring, and finishing stone. The principal tools of the trade were hammers and chisels. Stone was broken from a ledge or stream bank with very large, two-handed stone sledges weighing as much as thirty pounds. It was cut out in blocks, using wedges driven into holes cut by hand with chisel drills or punches. Surfaces were levelled and brought to a rough finish with a stone axe that bore opposing four-inch-wide pointed edges and weighed up to fifteen pounds. Stones that required a finer finish were first “rough pointed,” with material removed by a stout iron chisel struck



20.5 Blocks of limestone in beds of varying thicknesses along the Black River near Watertown.





20.6. This drawing and excerpt from *Practical Masonry: A Guide to the Art of Stone Cutting*, by William R. Purchase, first published in England in 1895, describes in careful detail the process of cutting a block with wedges or “plug and feather.”

Fig. 27.—Shews a method of coping or splitting a block of stone to a required size.

Begin by cutting a V chase on top and two sides of the block, as at *g f e*; directly under this place a wood skid, and on the top of the skid a long iron bar, which should bone with the line *g f*, or a punch driven in on each side, as at *e*, will do nearly as well. At extreme end place a short skid, as at *h*, and packed up to within an inch of the underside of the block. This is done to prevent the coped piece from breaking under by its own weight, as the fracture would not take the line of direction proposed, but would probably break away from *j* to *k*, and spoil the block.

Sink wedge holes with the punch (at distances apart varying with the nature of the stone) to as fine a point as possible at the bottom of the hole, as in sketch at *b*, so that the wedge will bite or hold when struck with the hammer. The apex of the wedge, which is of iron, is blunt-pointed and about a quarter of an inch wide, so that it does not touch the bottom of the hole, or when struck it

would jump out. The holes being cut, the wedges are inserted in each one: care must, however, be taken to keep them upright, so that the cleavage takes the line of direction required. The wedges are now gently tapped with a heavy hammer, till all have got a hold; then harder blows are given in quick succession, and the fracture takes place.

*a* shows sketch of wedge, made of iron, and from four to five inches long and one and a half inch wide.

In coping or splitting granite, wedge holes are not cut as in stone, but circular holes are “jumped,” one inch or one and a quarter inch in diameter and about five inches deep, at distances apart varying with the obstinacy of the material, and plugs and feathers are inserted and driven in as for stone. The plug is of soft steel, and made tapering as at *c*.

The feathers are thin pieces of iron, concave in section, as shown at *c*. These are first put in the holes, the plugs are then driven in until they become tight, and a few sharp hard blows are all that is necessary to complete the process of splitting.

with a five-pound hand hammer. Then they were brought closer to the desired texture by finer points or hammers designed to impart a certain finish. A wide variety of hand tools, including saws for use with softer stones, were used to achieve different qualities of finish.

One can imagine, then, the enormous work required for fine cut stone and ornamentation such as cornices or carvings, and why these features are almost non-existent in the domestic buildings of Jefferson County. We have examples of stone block cut by drilling and splitting in several of the finer homes discussed in this book, and a handful of buildings have façades of well-cut stone or textured surfaces. But the vast majority of Jefferson County's stone houses and other domestic structures were built with stone used as found, with little tooling or shaping.

Stone fit and finish is broken roughly into three categories:

1. Rubble stone
2. Squared stone
3. Ashlar or cut stone

In practice, the definitions of these seem to have overlapped, by region or by the preference of the master mason, and probably all the more before trade books and instructionals became more available in the mid-nineteenth century, better establishing standards of the trade.

Rubble generally refers to stone used as it is found in the field, at the ledge, or on the streamside. In areas where regularly bedded and square stone is not available, rubble stone refers to stone of any shape. Here, where limestone was easily found in uniform level beds, it refers to stone used in many varying heights and with little if any surface tooling. Local definitions can be further complicated by the abundance of many different types of fieldstones of irregular shape that were deposited in this region by glaciers. These are often intermingled with limestone, particularly in foundation work and well linings. Rubble can be coursed or uncoursed, although best practices suggest that all should have some coursing to ensure level, stable walls.

Squared stone is usually worked with the stone axe to remove projecting pieces and provide better fit of joints and beds. It is usually set in regular courses, with the better work set in fairly even courses. The face of the stone might be “quarry faced,” as found in nature; “pitch faced,” in which case the face is chipped from the edge of the block (arris) with a “pitching” chisel to give each block a uniform appearance; or roughly tooled with a hammer or chisel to flatten out the high points of the surface. Here is where the most subjectivity comes in, because the better the finish, the closer the stone becomes to the third category, cut stone or ashlar.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ashlar as “a square hewn stone for building purposes.” The generality of this is probably appropriate, as the term generally seems to conjure up a nebulous concept of smooth, regular stone surfaces with little more precise definition or regard for how they were achieved. Cut stone clearly has superior fit and finish, with well-defined margins and surface texturing often made with a hammer with a serrated face, i.e., a bush hammer (see detail of the Wood House, p. 50). Apparently the standard for cut stone in 1896 was any stonework where the space between blocks in beds and joints is less than half an inch (Siebert 1905, 6) and the face is smooth or bears a specific texture.

#### th e m o r t a r

It is the job of the mortar in the wall to absorb forces of movement and equalize stress. It is the sacrificial element of a wall, taking the wear and tear so that the relatively soft limestone does not. As a rule, the better the joints, the less important is the mortar, as evidenced by ancient buildings constructed with no mortar at all but with very finely matched beds and joints. However, mortar is very important in the stone houses discussed here because most do not have cut joints and most are of limestone of varying degrees of softness.

Up until about 1890, the predominant mortar used in masonry was straight lime-and-sand

mortar. Natural cements had existed long before, but it wasn't until Portland cement came into common use that mortar mixes began to change significantly. Portland cement was invented in the early nineteenth century, and its manufacture in New York State began in the 1870s in Ulster County. However, by the turn of the twentieth century, there were still no Portland cement works north of Syracuse. It is safe to say that all of the stone structures built in the first half of the nineteenth century here would have used lime-and-sand mortar.

An understanding of mortar requires an understanding of lime. This is all the more true today, when we are tempted by so many convenient bagged-concrete products. Lime has proved itself an enduring cement for centuries, and there are impressive examples of its durability, despite early mixtures containing unwashed sands, clay, salts, organic materials, and other impurities that would not pass today's rigorous standards. Although it is perhaps difficult to prove, the National Lime Association claims that Harvard's Massachusetts Hall, a large brick structure built in 1720 with straight sand-and-lime mortar, has never been tuckpointed. Lime's unique chemical characteristics account for this long success.

#### manufacture of lime

Lime as used in early mortars was made by burning limestone at a very high temperature in a kiln. This process drove off the carbon dioxide contained in the rock. The resultant material, called "quicklime," was then wetted or "slaked." The slaking process generates a great deal of heat as the quicklime absorbs hydrogen and oxygen from the water. Because of the inconsistencies in the quicklime and the size and composition of the stone burned, it was necessary to ensure that lime was chemically stable when it was wetted in mortar and placed in a wall. The result, often after slaking/soaking the lime for weeks or months, was a lime putty that would be used in mortar, plaster, fine putty plaster wall finishes, and whitewash.

One remarkable characteristic of high-lime mortar is a phenomenon known as "autogenous healing." When lime mortar is exposed to the elements over time, it reabsorbs carbon and oxygen from the air, causing it to harden or "self-heal," essentially returning to the chemical composition of limestone. By this process, small cracks in the mortar become resealed when exposed to moisture and air.

Lime-and-sand mortar is porous and absorptive of moisture, more so than limestone. It is therefore breathable, which allows it to dry out after it has become wet. These factors combine to create a dynamic substance that, although relatively weak in its bond, adjusts to changes over time, preserving the surrounding stone and improving the likelihood of a stable and strong overall structure. This is somewhat analogous to the fact that many smaller, well-placed stones can create a stronger wall than a few large and very strong ones.

To many, the chemistry and these counterintuitive aspects—the weak is better than the strong—add depth to the romance of stone structures beyond the visual.

#### preservation

It is hard to discuss the preservation of stone structures without a sense of the goal of preservation. There are probably as many interpretations, positive and negative, of this term as there are observers of historic architecture. As a minimum, it should mean "act to do no harm." A refinement of this might be, "act to keep a building structurally sound and maintain its physical appearance, including additions, in a way that is sympathetic to its history and the aspirations of its builders." This is not the same as "restoration," and it probably falls short of the detailed guidelines that have evolved in the field of preservation architecture.

I feel that it is the proper spirit that must first be established. These are special places to us all. That said, the degree to which an owner decides to adhere more rigorously to current architectural rules of rehabilitation or attempt accurate



restoration must ultimately be left to individual taste, intelligence, and morality. Certainly for those of us who just want to know how to best take care of what we have, this definition should suffice. The US Department of the Interior has developed standards by which projects involving historic properties are judged for eligibility for federal grants. These have become general guidelines for most public rehabilitation work. (For more about this, visit the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation website.)

Detailed discussion of the diagnosis and repair of major structural problems is beyond the scope of this book. The matter is best left to the many expert publications listed in the bibliography at the end of this book. The present chapter should, however, point the reader in the right direction.

In most cases, structural problems in stone houses are related to the action of moisture. Moisture inside the masonry can react with salts and cause deterioration of the mortar and "spalling" of the joints, causing the mortar to flake off. In quantity, it can dilute and leach mortars from between the stones, causing uneven settlement of walls and sometimes failure at points of weakness such as lintels or arches. Moisture can pass through highly absorbent stone and mortar and create mold and mildew problems on inside walls. If retained at any length and quantity in a wall in cold weather, it can cause expansion and contraction through the action of freezing and thawing, thus destabilizing foundations and walls and even breaking apart the stone.

The solutions to the problem of moisture penetration are the same as they would be for any house. First, a good gutter system that keeps runoff away from the outside wall surfaces and that leads water away from the foundation at downspouts is a key element of moisture control. So is having the yard sloped down away from the building to drain off water. A modest in-ground drainage system with plastic drainage pipe can be installed very inexpensively. If the severity of the problem dictates, the

foundation may have to be excavated and capped with a waterproof membrane or a poured cement outer wall.

The life of masonry can be extended by not allowing dense foliage to grow up close to it, keeping it from drying properly, and by keeping it free from vines, which penetrate the cracks and joints, hold moisture in, and introduce an easy path for insects to get into the house.

The most important thing one can do to keep a wall well maintained and structurally sound is to keep it properly pointed. Here, the mortar serves many purposes. First, it provides a bond that holds things together. Second, it acts as a sacrificial element in the wall, absorbing movement in it and distributing stresses throughout the whole. In poorly executed or unmaintained walls, stone against stone can cause stresses to be released, usually cracking the stone. Finally, well-maintained mortar joints keep moisture out and keep up the wall's proper appearance.

Nothing seems to have aroused more controversy and discussion than what to use as a mortar in repairing or repointing. A general rule is that it should be soft—softer than the stone it is supporting. Portland cement has become the blackguard of all evil agents posing as modern, enlightened, and beneficial preservation materials. Almost every building seen in these pages has had some repointing done with strong, Portland-based mortar. Some exhibit glaringly disastrous results.

Portland cement is extremely strong, virtually waterproof, and airtight. It can bear great pressure and sets quickly, making it very convenient for many applications. However, when used to repair historic stonework, it creates several difficult problems. First, where it is applied to properly cleaned and prepared joints, it creates a bond so strong that all the stones it connects become one monolithic whole. The stress relief points become the places where the Portland cement repointing ends. Fissures quickly develop at these places, and often the whole mass pulls away from a building, causing

much bigger problems that may not be remediable by anything but replacement of the stone affected.

Portland cement is much stronger than limestone, and when a rubble stone wall with stone of smaller dimensions is pointed with it, the stresses in the wall are relieved through the weaker stone. Often, the stone will break into cubes and be impossible to repair, again requiring replacement. This effect is commonly seen in stone up to five inches or six inches thick.

In poorly prepared repointing, Portland cement is often placed over and against soft and crumbling lime mortar. The cement then bonds to the outermost grains of the mortar, which become easily separated from the inner, softer mortar. It often shrinks when it dries, adhering to itself better than to its surroundings, thereby exacerbating the problem and introducing cracks for moisture to enter the wall. As water gets into and behind the wall, it is retained because the cement acts as a water- and air-proof coating. When a wall with moisture trapped in this way is exposed to freezing, the soft mortar and the stone behind the cement deteriorate rapidly.

Because its bond is so strong, Portland cement is impossible to remove for repair and repointing without damaging the stone around it. The appearance of dark chips on all the boundaries of the original stones, where the weathering and patina have been broken away, is the legacy of removal of cement.

The most commonly referenced mixture for repointing contains Portland cement, lime, and sand in varying proportions. (Historically, mortar would have contained sand and lime alone.) The mixture of the three ingredients in modern mortar yields harder or softer mortar to be used in different conditions. For the old limestone houses in this book, the appropriate mixtures would be very soft: one or less parts Portland, two to three parts lime, and six to ten parts sand. In general, the higher the proportion of lime in the mortar, the more plastic and workable it will be. Because a more plastic

mortar spreads more evenly and creates a tougher bond, it is used when there is a tight fit between stones, as with finely cut joints or brickwork with very thin joints (common in the eighteenth century). In these tight places, a high proportion of sand would yield a mix too stiff to be squeezed into all of the voids. When mixing a high-lime mix, the mortar can become almost the consistency of dense whipped cream.

For most work, a mixture of one part white Portland cement, three parts lime, and twelve parts sand is a good substitute for historic work. In traditional mortar, this would be essentially a one-to-three mixture of lime to sand. In modern mixes, the white Portland is added for its color match, a little extra strength, and its quicker setting properties. When working on exposed areas, it is often desirable to try to match the color of original work. One way to do this is to try to use matching sand from a nearby source. Often tints can be added to achieve a match. When working on walls below the surface of the ground, a stronger mix is often recommended, with white Portland replacing some lime.

Modern Type S lime is uniform and easy to work with, and hardens to a very adequate strength. The great shortcoming of a straight lime mix is that it sets more slowly, requiring diligent care to assure that the exterior of the joints does not dry out too much faster than the interior.

*Soft mortar mixes*

- 6 parts sand
- 1 part type S hydrated lime
- 6 parts water
- Mix the sand and lime together well.
- Add water to the required consistency.
- Use within two hours.

OR

- 1 part white Portland Cement
- 3 parts type S hydrated lime
- 12 parts sand

Mix Portland, lime, and sand together.  
Add water to the required consistency.  
Use within one hour.

### re pointing

Repointing is not a complicated process. Although it is slow manual work, it can be relaxing and satisfying, as with any well-done manual task. The tools are simple and can be found in any hardware store: a mason's hammer or medium weight ball peen hammer, a small chisel, a mason's trowel, a narrow pointing trowel (three-quarter inch) and a mortarboard. As you become more accomplished and confident of your work, you may want to buy more specialized tools; mason's tools can often be obtained very cheaply at yard sales, and it pays to be patient and keep your eyes open. The work should be done only when the temperature will stay above forty degrees Fahrenheit—ideally, when it is warm and humid and there is little heavy rain in the forecast.

The beds and joints (collectively called joints in this section) are prepared by removing loose material back to two and a half times the width of the joint or about a two-inch minimum for most stonework. Generally, you want to remove all loose material back to where you can detect a decent bond. In practice, this can be well into the wall, where you can't easily reach. In these places, material can be blown out if you have an air compressor. Never use a garden hose or pressurized water to wash material out.

Once the joints have been prepared, mix the mortar. A wheelbarrow works very well as a vessel to mix in, and a flat garden hoe can serve as an adequate mixing tool. Add the *dry* sand, lime, and Portland cement, and mix them well dry before adding water. Never use wet sand. Sand retains a lot of water, making it very difficult to know how much water to add to the mix. It is easy to add water to get the right consistency if mortar is too dry, but very difficult to add sand and other ingredients to stiffen it if it is too sloppy. If too sloppy, it

will run out of the joints and shrink on drying, and you will have a poor bond. Mortar is the proper consistency when it is stiff enough to stick to the trowel when the trowel is turned upside down, or about as stiff as moist brown sugar.

Mound up the dry ingredients in the wheelbarrow, then dig out a hole in the center. Pour about half the water into the hole, then mix in the dry ingredients from the sides, turning them as you go. After the first water is mixed in well, slowly add water and mix until the proper consistency is reached. It is tempting to add more water, as this makes the mixing easier. An old mason's joke is that the proper consistency is reached when the last water added is sweat off the brow of the apprentice doing the mixing.

Mix only enough mortar to use in an hour. If it dries out, rewetting and remixing can result in an inferior mix. It is also nice to be able to take a break without worrying about wasting too much mortar.

Start by wetting the joints. This can be done with a fine mist on the hose or by a hand garden sprayer. The limestone is porous and absorptive; if you apply the mortar to it dry, the stone can suck out the moisture, resulting in a weaker bond. The joints should be moist, not dripping wet. Work from the top of the wall across and down, or in a similar way in a limited area if a smaller area is being repaired. Shuttle the mortar into the joint from the surface of a trowel or mortarboard with a thin margin trowel or pointing trowel. When the joint has been completely filled and the mortar well pressed in, its surface should be smoothed with the margin trowel so that it is flush with the surface of the stone and slightly concave so as not to allow water to sit on it. This is often best done after the initial work has set for a few hours. A good match to original work can be achieved by rubbing the joint lightly with wetted burlap, using your finger to make a slight concavity in the joint, or by using a soft brush.

Once the joints have been completed, the face of the stone should be cleaned of any mortar or lime that has run out with water. As the mortar



cures, take care to keep it moist as long as possible. If the outside dries much faster than the inside of the joint, it will not bond well with the inside and spalling can result within a year. When the mortar is allowed to dry very slowly, the cure will be consistent throughout and the bond will remain strong. A common way to retard the drying is to tack burlap sacks to a length of two-inch by two-inch board, hang them over the surface of the work, then lightly spray them at regular intervals. The goal is not to soak the surface but to keep it from drying too fast.

The treatment varies with temperature and humidity. If the area worked is in direct sunlight, it has to be covered to keep from drying too fast. If it is very humid and the work is well shaded, there might not be as much need for covering.

If the work will require the replacement of stone, try to find local stone of a fair match. It should be set in mortar, allowing the outside two inches of the joint to remain empty, to be pointed afterwards, as above. It is often handy to maintain spacing between new stones when setting them, with pebbles or small sticks, which can be removed later when the work is “pointed up.”

#### washing

Most sources will tell you not to wash stone. But there are times when this is necessary and desirable. The rule of thumb is to start with the weakest solution possible and work to something stronger until the result you want is achieved. In most cases, dirt and grime can best be removed with simple dish soap. Never use acid washes with limestone. They will dissolve the lime and damage the surface of the stone, exposing it to water and weather. A gentle low-pressure wash can be effective, but water pressure can damage joints and inject water into the wall. In any case, do not wash a wall unless it has first been repointed and is watertight.

Never use sand blasting on masonry. It removes age and patina from the stone and results in a stark and false appearance, besides weakening the stone and joints. Care must be exercised here.

Often one encounters tar or asphalt roof cement where an old roof might have been attached. In colder weather, lumps of this material are brittle and often the bulk of it can be chipped off. The remainder can be dissolved with mineral spirits or some other petroleum-based solvent, taking care not to dilute it and have the stain soak into the stone. A way to avoid staining, and a method used to remove other stains that can leach into the stone, is the application of a poultice. In this process, make up a stiff paste of an inert, absorbent material such as chalk powder, talc, clay, or sawdust, saturated with a solvent. Apply the poultice to the stained area, then cover it tightly with plastic to keep it from drying out too fast. It is best to apply a poultice over the entire surface of a stone to avoid creating a patchy or spotty discoloration. Once the poultice has dried out, it can be removed by hand with a wooden spatula or other soft tool.

In considering the proper treatment of historic stone structures, it is interesting to consider both the role of the latest technology and that of the best current thinking about early stonework. One might not be able to imagine a structure more worthy of the best care than New York City’s Federal Hall, constructed in 1842 on the site where George Washington first took the presidential oath of office. Its marble façade was sandblasted in the 1960s, then washed and covered with a graffiti-proof coating in the 1970s. The coating proved attractive to water and dirt and had to be stripped off in 1986 with chemical cleaners, then water-washed to reclaim the stone’s original appearance. It is not with the least wisdom that we look to the simpler and time-tested methods to care for these structures today.



Appendix A

Appendix B

Glossary

Bibliography

Biographical Notes

Index





## a p p e n d i x a

# Stone Structures Surveyed

Name of structure	Date	Style	Stories	Floor plan	Origin of first owner	Address	Township
*Adams stone arch bridge	1860					NYS Rte 11	Adams
Allen Road School House	c1840		1	one-room		Allen Rd	Brownville
Angel House	c1853	Gothic Revival	2	center-hall		James St	Clayton
Ballard, Denny House	1827	vernacular	1½	center-hall		Old Rome State Rd	Watertown
Bates, Oliver, House	c1820	vernacular	1½	center-hall	New York/ New England	NYS Rte 3	Henderson
Biddlecom, R., House	c1835	Greek Revival	2	side-hall	France	NYS Rte 180	Orleans
*Brown, Jacob, Mansion	1811–15	Georgian	2	center-hall	Pennsylvania	Brown Blvd.	Brownville
Brown, Henry, Mansion	1830	Federal	2	center-hall	Pennsylvania?	Military Rd.	Brownville
Budlong, Gideon, House	1835	Greek Revival	2	side-hall	France	NYS Rte 180	Orleans
Britton, Calvin, House	1815–16	Federal	2	center-hall	Remsen, NY	Co. Rte 54	Brownville
Burnham House	c1820	Federal	2	center-hall	Vermont?	Co. Rte 72	Henderson

Name of structure	Date	Style	Stories	Floor plan	Origin of first owner	Address	Township
Chaumont House	1806–18	Federal	2	center-hall	France	Main St. Chaumont	Lyme
Christ Episcopal Church	1823–32	Colonial/ Greek Revival				E. Main St. Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
Clark, Asa, Mansion	1835	Greek Revival	2	center-hall	Vermont	Co. Rte 49	Rutland
Copeland House	1816	Federal	2	side-hall		Van Buren St.	Antwerp
Copley, Adams, Duford Stone Office	1872	Gothic Revival	1		New York	Main St. Chaumont	Lyme
Cornwall Bros. Store	1865		2	center-hall	New Hampshire	Market St. Alexandria Bay	Alexandria
Cough, George, House	c1835	vernacular	1½	center-hall	possibly Germany	Wilson Bay	Cape Vincent
Countryman House	1833 or 1840	Federal	2	center-hall	New York	NYS Rte 37 Pamelia Four Corners	LeRay
Cronkhite House	1820	Federal	2	center-hall		NYS Rte 37	LeRay
Dezengremel House	1850	vernacular	1½	center-hall	France	Dezengremel Rd.	Cape Vincent
Dobson, Th., House	c1820	Federal	2	center-hall	Wales	Co. Rte 123	Henderson
Dodge, David, House	1833–54	vernacular	1½		Rhode Island	NYS Rte 12E	Cape Vincent
Dorwin, Wm., House	1823	Georgian	2	center-hall	Massachusetts	NYS Rte 26	Champion
*Duvillard Mill, US Bureau of Fisheries	1856		4		Switzerland	Broadway	Cape Vincent
Dye, Reuber House	1830s	vernacular	1½	center-hall		Co Rte 4	Cape Vincent
Evans, Gaige, Dillenback House	1820	Federal	2	side-hall	Pennsylvania	Main St. Chaumont	Lyme



Name of structure	Date	Style	Stories	Floor plan	Origin of first owner	Address	Township
Felt, John, Mansion	1827	Georgian	2	center-hall	Connecticut	Boot Jack Hill Felts Mills	Rutland
Gates, Asa, House	1828	vernacular	1½	center-hall	Massachusetts	NYS Rte 26	Champion
Greystone Inn	c1815	Federal	2	center-hall	Massachusetts	Co Rte 5	Clayton
Harger, Charles, House	1831 or 32	vernacular	1½	center-hall		NYS Rte 37	Pamelia
Harger, Charles, Mansion	1839 or 1849	Federal	2	center-hall		NYS Rte 37	Pamelia
Hinsdale, Ira, House	1820	vernacular	1½	center-hall	New York	Co Rte 24	Antwerp
Hoover Tavern	c1821	Federal	2		New York	Main St. Evans Mills	LeRay
Horr, Elijah, House	c1835	Federal	2	center-hall		NYS Rte 180 Stone Mills	Orleans
Horton, James, House	1819	Georgian	2	center-hall	New York	Co Rte 125 Chaumont	Lyme
House, Absalom, House	unknown	vernacular	1½	side-hall		Co Rte 16	Pamelia
*Hubbard, Hiram, House	1820	Federal	2	side-hall	Connecticut	NYS Rte 26	Champion
Hubbard, Noadiah, House	1831	Federal	2	center-hall	Connecticut	NYS Rte 26	Champion
Hungerford, Orville, Mansion	1824–26	Federal	2	center-hall	Connecticut	Flower Ave. W.	Watertown
Huginin House	c1836	Greek Revival	2	side-hall		Huginin St.	Clayton
Hunt, Harry, House	1830s	vernacular	1½	center-hall	New York	Co Rte 26	Theresa
Irwin Bros Store	1825	Federal/ Greek revival	2		New York	NYS Rte 180 Stone Mills	Orleans
Jefferson Hotel	1842	Federal	3			Great Bend	Champion
Johnson House	c1850	vernacular	1½	center-hall		Tibbets Point Rd	Cape Vincent

Name of structure	Date	Style	Stories	Floor plan	Origin of first owner	Address	Township
Johnson, William, House	1818–19	vernacular	1½	center-hall	Ireland or England	Co Rte 125 Chaumont	Lyme
Jones, Miller House	1838	Federal	2	center-hall		NYS Rte 37	Pamelia
Kelsey, Eber, House	c1832	vernacular	1½	center-hall	Connecticut	Dear Lick Rd	Cape Vincent
Knap Mansion	1826–38	Federal	2	side-hall	New York	Main St	Brownville
LeRay Mansion	1825–27	neo-classical	2	center-hall	France	Fort Drum	LeRay
Losee, John, House	c1828	Federal	2	center-hall	New York	Dry Hill Rd	Watertown
Membery Homestead	1818	Federal	2	side-hall		Co Rte 62 Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
Mill Creek Bridge	1819					Military Rd Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
Newman, Asa, House	1826–27	vernacular	1½	center-hall	New York	Co Rte 3 Plessis	Alexandria
Old Mill	1808–18		3		New York	Gen. Smith Dr Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
Old Stone Shop	1838		1½	two-room	Connecticut	Co Rte 12E Three Mile Bay	Lyme
Orleans Hotel	1825	Federal	2	center-hall	France	NYS Rte 180 LaFargeville	Orleans
Ostrander House	1830s	Federal	2	center-hall	New York	NYS Rte 26	Theresa
Parrish House	c1815	Federal	2	center-hall	New York/ Massachusetts	Co Rte 16	Pamelia
Peck, Joseph, House	1827	vernacular	1½	side-hall	Connecticut	Co Rte 47	Champion
Pennock, Wilson, House	1825	Federal	2	center-hall	Massachusetts	Co Rte 47	Champion
Peugnet, Louis, House	1837–40	vernacular	1½	center-hall	France	Tibbets Point Rd	Cape Vincent
Read, Samuel, House	1827	vernacular	1½	center-hall	New York	Co Rte 59	Brownville

Name of structure	Date	Style	Stories	Floor plan	Origin of first owner	Address	Township
*Reformed Church of the Thousand Isles	1848–51					Church St Alexandria Bay	Alexandria
Robbins, Austin, House	1830	vernacular	1½	side-hall	Massachusetts	Co Rte 75	Adams
Rogers, Austin, Homestead	1838	vernacular	1½	center-hall	Massachusetts	Merchant Rd	Cape Vincent
Root, Aaron, House	1830	Federal	2	center-hall	New York	Cemetery Rd Evans Mills	LeRay
Ryder, Joseph House	1820	Georgian	2	center-hall	Massachusetts	Co Rte 125 Chaumont	Lyme
*Sackets Harbor Bank	1834	Georgian	2		New York	West Main St Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
Salisbury House	c1833	vernacular	1½	center-hall	Rhode Island	Machold Rd Mannsville	Ellisburg
Shurtleff House	c1821	Federal	2	center-hall	Massachusetts	Co Rte 46	Theresa
Smith, Harvey House	c1839	vernacular	1½	center-hall	New York	Bishop St.	Henderson
Smith, Jesse, House	1831	Greek Revival	2	side-hall	New York	Co Rte 75	Adams
Sterling, M. Mansion	1826	Federal	2	center-hall	Connecticut	Winthrop St	Watertown
Stone House, Vincent LeRay House	1815	Federal	2	center-hall	France	Broadway	Cape Vincent
Stone Row, Madison Barracks	1816–19		2			Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
Stone Hospital	1838	Federal	2	center-hall		Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
*St Vincent of Paul Church	1851					Kanady St	Cape Vincent
Talcott Tavern	1824–25	Federal	2			NYS Rte 11	Adams
Theresa Jail	1800s	1				Theresa	Theresa



Name of structure	Date	Style	Stories	Floor plan	Origin of first owner	Address	Township
Thompson, John, House	1823	Federal	2	center-hall		NYS Rte 11	Watertown
Tisdale, George, Mansion	1832	Palladian	2	side-hall		W Washington St Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
*Union Hotel	1817-18	Federal	3	center-hall		W Main St Sackets Harbor	Hounsfield
Walton, Azariah, House	1835	Greek Revival	2	side-hall	New Hampshire	James St Alexandria Bay	Alexandria
Weeks, Holland, House	c1811	Federal	2	center-hall	Massachusetts	Bridge St	Henderson
Wilcox, Charles, House	1839	Greek Revival	2	side-hall	New York	Co Rte 57 Three Mile Bay	Lyme
Wiley, Ignatius, House	1847	vernacular	1½	center-hall	Germany	Dezengremel Rd	Cape Vincent
Wood, Amos, House	c1825	vernacular	1½	3-room	Connecticut	Rte 120 Woodville	Ellisburg

## summary of stone structures surveyed

33 two-story houses	1 jail
24 vernacular houses	2 bridges
10 mansions	2 mills
3 churches	1 barracks
3 hotels	1 hospital
1 bank	2 taverns
1 schoolhouse	1 double smithy
3 stores	several spring houses and smoke houses

\*denotes open to public

## appendix b

# Masons, Architects, Builders, and Their Works

### masons

Cook, Hial, 1811–1890: LaFarge Mansion and possibly other houses in LaFargeville. Learned masonry from Alexander Cummings, Watertown

Cook, Joseph: Cut stone for the Arsenal in Watertown, 1809

Dobson, Thomas Jr.: Dobson House, Henderson

Eggleston, Asa: Hiram Hubbard House, Champion; Noadiah Hubbard House, Champion

Fuller, Josiah: Hoover Tavern, Evans Mills

Gates, Asa: Asa Gates House, Champion

Ives, Orin: master mason with the Second Infantry, US Army, under direction of Thomas Tupper, DQMG, plans drawn by William Smith, Madison Barracks, Sackets Harbor

MacPherson, Hugh: Stone House, Cape Vincent

Wiley, Peter: St. Vincent of Paul Church, Cape Vincent

Wiley, Ignatius (Ignatz): St. Vincent of Paul Church, Cape Vincent; Duvillard Mill (US Bureau of Fisheries), Cape Vincent; Wiley House, Cape Vincent; Remy Dezengremel House, Cape Vincent

O'Connor, John: William Johnson House, Chaumont

Pennock, Wilson: Wilson Pennock House, Great Bend

Smith, Thaddeus: Cut stone for the Arsenal in Watertown, 1809

### architects, builders, and their works

Calhoun, Chauncey: carpenter at Madison Barracks, Sackets Harbor

Church, Ezra (1778–) and brother, Daniel Whipple Church: built Copeland House, Antwerp; possibly trained under Joseph-Jacques Ramée

Clarke, Jewett: contractor on Black River Canal, built Jefferson Hotel, Great Bend

Delaware, William: carpenter, worked on Hoover Tavern, Evans Mills

Duvillard, John Antoine: designed US Bureau of Fisheries, Cape Vincent

Granger, David: master builder from Champion, NY; built LeRay Mansion, LeRaysville

Johnson, Philo: carpenter at Madison Barracks, Sackets Harbor

Kimball, Joseph: carpenter at Madison Barracks, Sackets Harbor

Kirby, Major Edmund: supervised completion of Brown Mansion, Brownville

Ramée, Joseph (1764–1842): possible architect of the Stone House, Cape Vincent

Smith, William (1777–1858): plans for Stone Row, Sackets Harbor, and Cotton and Woolen Mill, Watertown, and many other buildings

Thompson, Martin Euclid (1786–1877): possible architect of Stone Hospital, Madison Barracks, Sackets Harbor

Tupper, Thomas, DQMG: directed building of Stone Row and barracks (demolished), Sackets Harbor





# GLOSSARY

**ashlar.** Dressed, cut stone.

**architrave.** The lintel or beam that rests on the tops of columns.

**argillaceous.** Containing clay or clay minerals.

**arris.** The sharp edge formed by the meeting of two surfaces at an angle.

**baluster.** One of a number of short, vertical structural members, circular or square, used to support a stair handrail or other railing.

**balustrade.** An entire railing system along the edge of a porch, balcony, or roof deck.

**batten door.** A wooden door constructed of vertical planks or boards held together by horizontal battens (boards).

**bay.** A regularly repeated subdivision in a façade. For example, a five-bay house has five windows evenly spaced across the upper; on the ground floor, it has four windows and a door.

**beehive oven.** A bake oven usually built of brick with a dome-shaped ceiling.

**belt course.** A horizontal band of stone set in a wall.

**bush-hammer.** A hammer with a serrated face that leaves a textured finish on stone.

**capital.** The topmost part of a column, often embellished.

**central- (or center) hall plan.** A floor plan in which a hallway divides the house into two halves. Usually the entrance door opens into this hallway.

**conchoidal.** A surface characterized by smooth, curved breakages, shell-like convexities, and concavities.

**cornice.** An ornamental molding that projects from the top of a building or wall.

**coursed masonry.** Continuous horizontal layers of stone or brick laid in uniform height. It can be

random-coursed (uneven height stones) or coursed and laid in a pattern like Flemish bond (small squarish stone laid between oblong stones).

**coursed rubble.** Uncut stones of varying sizes, laid in courses; sometimes called “mixed work” or “good common work.”

**dentils.** Small rectangular blocks set closely in a row (like teeth) decorating a cornice.

**dormer.** A structural element, often a window, that protrudes from the plane of a sloping roof surface.

**dolostone.** A sedimentary carbonate rock that contains a high percentage of the mineral dolomite, also known as dolomite rock.

**double-pile plan.** A floor plan that is two rooms deep front to back of house.

**dressed stone.** A building stone that has been shaped by hammer or machine.

**eave.** The underside of the roof that overhangs the exterior wall.

**ell.** A wing of a building at right angles to the main structure.

**entablature.** A horizontal, continuous lintel or band on an exterior wall.

**eyebrow window.** A window in the uppermost level of a house, usually under the eaves.

**façade.** An outside face of a building.

**fascia.** A plain horizontal band in a cornice.

**Federal period (1780–1820).** An architectural style typified by a low pitched roof, smooth façade, large glazed areas, elliptical fan light with flanking slender side lights, thin muntins, louvered shutters, and attenuated columns.

**fan light.** A window, often semicircular, with radiating muntins suggesting a fan.

**gable end.** The triangular part of the end wall under a gable roof.

**Georgian period (1700–1800).** An architectural style typified by symmetrical composition with classical detail, coursed ashlar wall, water table, transom light, and quoins.

**gutta.** One of a series of small drop-like ornaments used on a Doric entablature.

**header.** A stone laid with its length perpendicular to the face of the wall.

**hipped roof.** A roof with four inclined planes, leaving no gable ends.

**Ionic capital.** A column whose top has opposing spiral volutes.

**keystone.** The central wedge-shaped stone in an arch that locks its parts together.

**lintel.** A horizontal structural member, like a large flat stone, that spans the top of an opening such as a window or door.

**limewash.** Same as whitewash.

**louvers.** Movable or stationary slats to admit air while controlling light.

**lunette.** Half-moon-shaped window or masonry, often used in the peak of a Georgian or Federal-style building.

**Mansard roof.** A hipped roof that breaks the inclined planes into two horizontal parts, giving the lower part a steeper pitch than the upper.

**metope.** In the frieze of the Doric order, a decorative element that alternates with the triglyphs.

**modillion.** An ornamental bracket on the underside of a cornice.

**molding.** A decorative strip used to ornament a surface or to cover a joint in building materials.

**mortar.** A mixture of sand, cement, lime, and water used for pointing and bonding bricks or stones. **Mortar mixes** (soft) are used for pointing old stone buildings.

**mortise and tenon.** A joint used for connecting two pieces of timber or other materials. The mortise is a cavity cut into the surface of one member; the tenon is a projection on the other member that slots tightly into the mortise.

**mullion.** A vertical bar on a window or door that divides and supports the panes or panels.

**muntin.** A thin strip of wood or metal that holds the panes within a window.

**North Country.** A term in common usage in upstate New York; generally refers to the mostly level lands or the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains, including the counties of Clinton, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence.

**oculus.** A round window.

**paneled door.** A door composed of a frame (stiles, rails, and mullions), with wider boards filling the space between the stiles, rails, and mullions. The panels typically fit into grooves in the other pieces and help to keep the door rigid. Panels may be flat or in raised panel designs.

**pediment.** A triangular gable in classical architecture; also used as a decorative element above doors and windows.

**pilaster.** A square column or pier that only slightly projects from a wall.

**quoin.** Stone or brick detail giving emphasis to a corner or opening.

**random-coursed ashlar.** Stones of uneven height laid in rows.

**reredo.** A decorative screen or facing on the wall at the back of an altar.

**return.** The continuation of a cornice or molding in a different direction from its main direction. For example, the cornice return carries a short distance onto the gable end of a building.

**rubble stone.** Rough, unhewn stone.

**rybit.** The Welsh term for **quoin**: a stone or brick detail giving emphasis to a corner or opening.

**sally port.** A secure entryway (as at a prison or fort) consisting of a series of doors or gates.

**scarcement.** A ledge or offset in a wall; a watertable.

**side-hall plan.** A floorplan with a corridor that runs from front to back of a house along an exterior side wall.

**side light.** A narrow framed window on either side of a door.

**silicified fossils.** Organisms that have been penetrated by the mineral silica in the fossilization process.

**soffit.** A board covering the bottoms of the protruding ends of the ceiling joists as they extend outside of a building; forms part of the cornice.

**spindle.** A long, thin, sometimes decoratively turned element that forms part of a railing.

**stair end.** The outside edge of a step, often with decorative trim, as it meets the stringer.

**stepped gable.** A stair-step type of design at the top of the gable end of a building.

**stretcher.** A stone laid lengthwise with its long dimension in line with the wall.

**tenon.** See mortise and tenon

**town.** A subdivision of a county; can be short for “township.” Often the name of the main village or city of a town is identical with the name of the town. For example, the City of Watertown is a separate entity within the Town of Watertown.

**transom.** A horizontal glazed opening above a door or window.

**tuckpointing.** The process of clearing deteriorated mortar from joints in a masonry wall and filling with fresh mortar.

**uncoursed.** Stones laid irregularly, not in continuous horizontal layers.

**vernacular.** In architecture, the buildings that evolved in a particular place over a long period and whose forms and details entered into the common vocabulary of local builders; as opposed to the designs of professional designers.

**voussoir.** A wedge-shaped stone or brick used to construct an arch or lintel.

**water table.** On an exterior wall, a horizontal ledge to prevent water from running down the face of the wall below it.





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**Claire Bonney** was a North Country scholar at St. Lawrence University, from which she graduated cum laude with Honors in Fine Arts in 1977. A Thomas Watson Fellowship took her to Switzerland where she has lived ever since. Her book *French Émigré Houses in Jefferson County* was published in 1985. Dr. Bonney is professor of architectural history at the Bern University of Applied Sciences.

**Robert E. Brennan** (1921–2013) worked for Bell Telephone for thirty-eight years. He researched the history of Sackets Harbor, Madison Barracks, and Fort Drum and served as Town of Hounsfield and Village of Sackets Harbor historian.

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**Brian W. Gorman** grew up in Watertown and graduated from Watertown High School (1976). He received a BA in Economics from the University of Rochester (1981) and an MBA in Finance from Boston University (1986). He has worked as a Commercial Banker, Finance Manager, and Cheese Store operator. He has been involved in research and the renovation or restoration of three historic houses: a c. 1865 balloon-framed dock worker house in Burlington, VT, a 1853 Greek Revival one-and-a-half-story connected farmhouse in Northfield, VT, and a combined frame (1810) and stone (1831) farmhouse in Watertown, NY.

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**Norman Wagner** was born and raised in Clayton, New York. He is a retired employee of the New York State Department of Corrections, and Town of Clayton historian since 1999.

**Robert A. Uhlig** was born in Mineola, New York and received his BA and MA degrees from Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York. He was in the field of education for 34 years before retiring in 1992. He has volunteered his time to many organizations in Jefferson County and is President of the Stone Building Society of Northern New York. With his wife Ruth he lives in an 1838 stone house in Cape Vincent.



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