

Smithville Beginnings



In Celebration of our Bicentennial
1808-2008

Alison Owens, Town of Smithville Historian

Smithville – How it started

- First settled by Robert Lytle in 1797
 - Smiths history (1875) - Shanty some 40 Rods NE of lower hotel, not yet built (Seebers Tavern)
 - Land quantity unknown
 - Rod = 16.5 feet
 - 4 Rods = 1 chain = 66 feet
 - 660 feet NE of Seebers
 - Legend says on SE corner of old cemetery

1798

- Lytle sells to Joseph Agard and Epaphras Sheldon and families, property in Smithville.
- They shared a small dwelling.
- Quantity of land unknown
- Epaphras Sheldon settled on property located east of junction of Rte 41 and Rte 220
- Property in 1875 listing as Jesse Read(e)

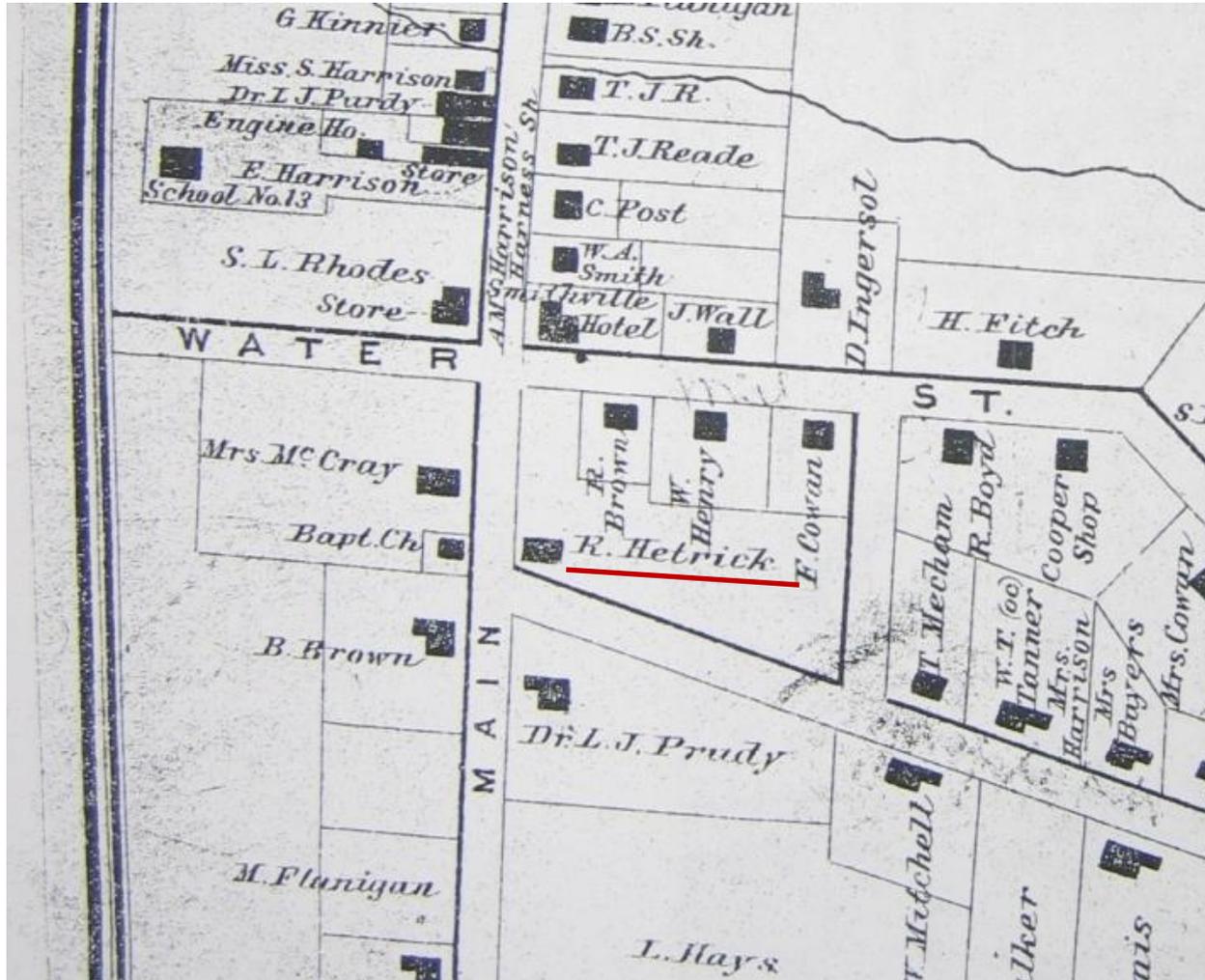
Smithville 1875



Joseph Agard House

- Joseph Agard built first frame house “which stood in front of Robert Hetrick residence” in hamlet of Smithville. (Smith’s History)
- “In front of” is not clearly defined but believed to be across street from current location, next to Seebers.
- Later deeded (1811) to his son Erastus

Smithville 1875



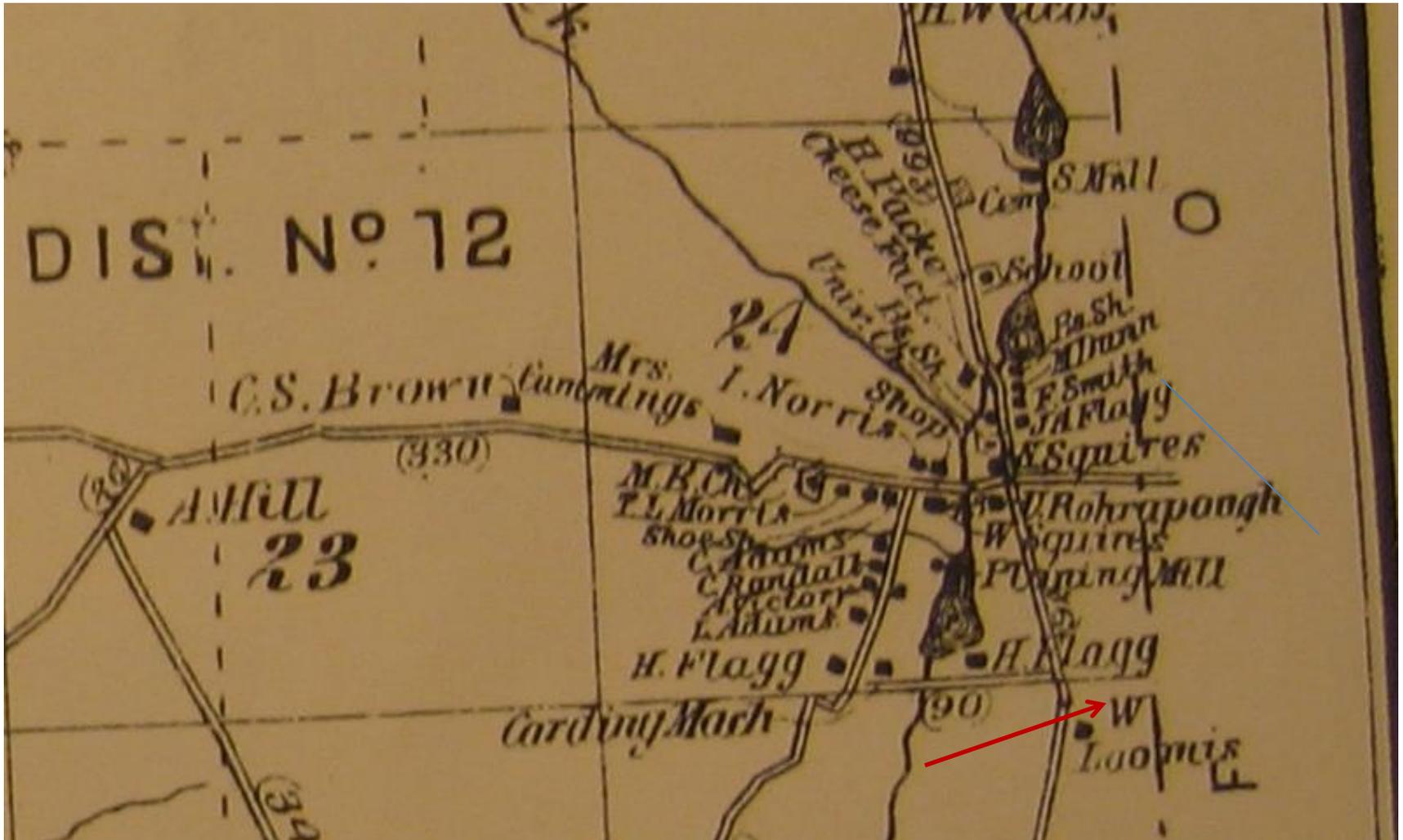
Joseph Agard House



Loomis (A name to remember)

- 1798 +/- Edward Loomis moved from Egremont Mass to Oxford and subsequently purchased property in Lot 25 of Smithville (which is still called Greene), builds a cabin and moves in.
- According to Smith's History, the description of the property puts it right in line with the stone house located on today's S. Tyner Rd.
- (see map, next page)

Tyner 1875 (Loomis House)



Taking a closer look

- House morphs from log cabin to frame House probably fairly early, or by 1830.
- A stone quarry is opened up on the west end of the property.
- Eventually a stone house is built on the front of the frame house. This faces S. Tyner Rd and Livingston Rd. (today's names)
- Many out buildings , huge barns; this place was a showcase.

Loomis house as it looks today



- House changed hands after 1875 and became the property of the Sharp family
- Sharp descendent Doris Lyon passed away this spring and the property was split up and sold. The stone quarry and 50 acres was sold to one person and the house and remaining acreage was sold to Nornew. The house is back on the market for \$345,000.

Loomis Farm Plot



Loomis property Aerial view



View facing east



Kitchen on left, Living room on right



Moving back to the West along Stone Quarry Hill Rd.

- Stone Quarry Rd. appears to be Road # 6 of the 1804 Road surveys done for the Town of Greene.
- This intersection was known as “Dibbles Corners”, now more known as “Engaard’s Corners.
- The cabin here is the original cabin of Eber and Amy Dibble who came from Connecticut and settled in the area about 1805.
- The house across the street was built by one of Eber and Amy’s children in the 1860’s.

“Dibbles Corners” looking north



The Dibble cabin



Pond's Corners.

- The next intersection is “Pond’s Corners”, although it has also been known as “Adams Corners”.
- Road Survey # 6 and #7 both mention “by Mr. Pond’s”. This in all probability would be Phineas Pond who came from VT with his wife Rhoda Wood and 8 children to Smithville sometime prior to 1804.

Ponds Cont'd...

- Rhoda Pond died in 1818 and is buried at Towsley-Pond Cemetery. (south of the intersection)
- The Adams family lived in the 1st house east of the corners. Various people lived at this corner location on the southeast lot but the name Adams seems to have prevailed.
- There was also a school house on the SW corner

The house now at Pond's Corners looking south on Hammerle Rd.



Turning South on Hammerle Rd. to the Towsley-Pond Cemetery



Among those buried here are:

- Capt. James Sellick, a War of 1812 Veteran who died Jan. 2, 1815, age 24. He left behind a wife and a daughter, Electa. Electa married Lyman Cowles.
- Rhoda Pond (1764-1818), wife of Phineas.
- Lucius Jewell who died at the age of 9 in 1836. Over the years his tombstone has merged with a nearby tree.

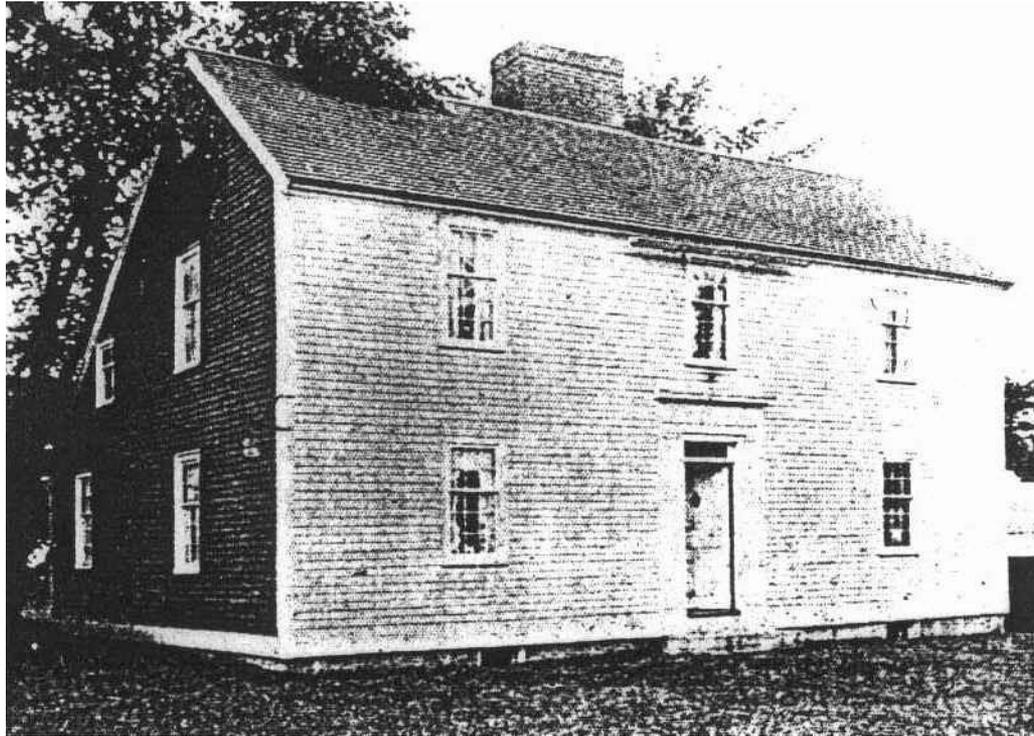
Tombstone of Lucius Jewel



Heading Back West on Stone Quarry Rd. to the Genegantslet River

- The 1000 acres of land purchased at the end of Stone Quarry Rd. belonged in 1804 to Silas Read.
- He and his wife Lucy Lund, two children and a black slave came from MA and NH in a covered carriage. They supposedly owned the first piano in the area.
- Silas built a house fashioned after his New England home with wainscoting, stairways w/banisters, built-in cupboards, brick fireplace and stone hearth and a large kitchen.

Facsimile of the Read Home



Silas Read (1778-1850)

- Silas was very instrumental in building up the Town and served in many capacities in Town government from 1809-1830.
- Each of his 8 children was given a farm of their own. This included the “Pussyfoot Johnson” home to the north and the Jesse Read farm to the south.
- Silas died in 1850 and is buried in the Old cemetery. His property was sold to the Harrison family.

Old House sold!!

taken from: The Otsego Farmer +
The Otsego Republican

AUGUST 6, 1915.

THE LOSS FROM FLOOD

Storm in Otsego County.—Phenomenal Rainfall.—Chief Damage in Butternut Valley

Until Wednesday afternoon did not rain which arrived in Otsego County Sunday evening, break and less than 2.83 inches of rain was registered at Edgewater, Otsego. Sunday night the rain was .38 inches, Monday, .07; Tuesday, 1.60; Wednesday, .78. This, after weeks of rainy weather, extremely damaging to farms, have been unable to get in

ANCESTRAL HOME NOW HEN HOUSE BOUGHT BY NOBLEMAN

Prince and Princess Del Drago, who are building a new country residence on their Chenango county estate known as Canasawacta Farm, in Plymouth, have bought a colonial house situated near Smithville Flats, which was built in 1800. The purchase was made from the Harrison sisters and the old house will be incorporated in the Prince and Princess' farmhouse.

The fine old building which was built by Col. Silas Read, son of Capt. William Read of Revolutionary fame, was being used as a henhouse, when the new owners discovered it.

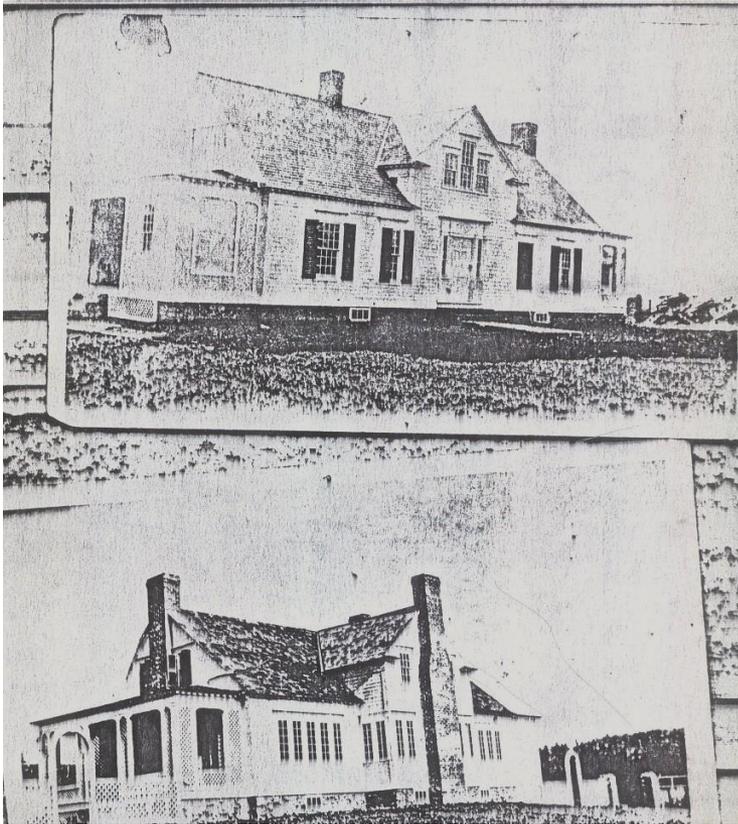
RICH DEPOSIT AT CLAYVILLE

A valuable deposit of marl was discovered on Collinwood I by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and located two and one half miles from Clayville. The bed is at least five acres of marsh from ten to fifteen feet deep. The top of the bed is covered to three feet of rich muck. The deposit lies on a solid rock

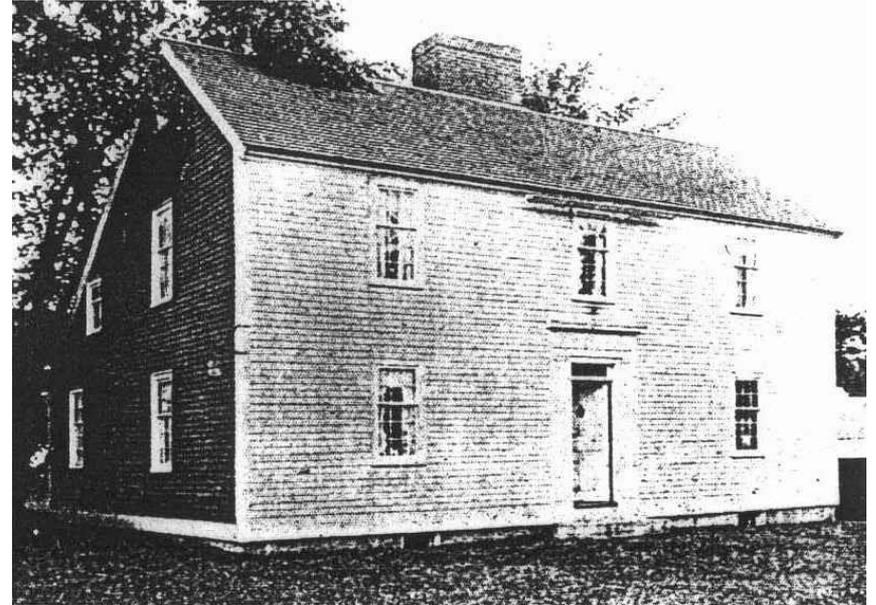
Experts have taken measurements of the bed and they estimate it contains at least 100,000 square yards of marl. A square yard will fill the box of an ordinary wagon and the market price

Comparison of the two houses

Del Drago House in Plymouth



Facsimile of the Read House



Sold Again!!

m It is known that Prince Don Giovanni del Drago of Rome, Italy and his American wife, the former Miss Schmidt of the brewery family visited at Thronbrook Hall during George Cook's time (probably between 1870 & 1920). The Prince and his wife liked the area so well that they had George Cook obtain a farm for them farther up the road. They put about \$80,000 into this home and farm - then tired of the place and sold it for \$8,000.

The Brick House property and its many inhabitants

- This property was initially owned by Capt. Jonathan Phelps who arrived by 1805.
- Phelps was a Rev. War vet, entering the military at age 17 from Lyme, CT. He became a Marine privateer and was at the siege of Yorktown in 1783.
- Lived in Saratoga and Washington Co.'s NY before coming to Smithville.
- Stayed in Smithville until the early 1820's, sold the property to Stephen Goetchus and moved to Chautauqua, NY.
- Capt. Phelps is buried in nearby Fredonia, NY.

Goetchus to Hotchkiss

- Stephen Goetchus owned the property for several years but left shortly after his wife Catherine died in 1832.
- The property went to Amos Hotchkiss who had married Capt. Phelps granddaughter Diantha Phelps.
- Property transferred to Smith Hotchkiss
- By the 1875 Census the house is listed as a “Brick” structure

The Real Brick House



More new owners

- Another set of owners were the Hansmann's, Fred & Meta who came from NYC about 1904.
- They did not own the property very long due to Mr. Hansmann's illness.
- This picture is taken in front of the barns with Fred Hansmann in the wagon, and little Freida Hansmann in front.

Taken about 1908



Fire in the Brick House

- Fred Hansmann sold the Brick House about 1909-1910.
- The house burned in 1911.
- The picture on the next page shows what the new house looked like.

New Brick House



Comparison



Original Brick House



Post-1911 Fire

The Bootlegger Place

- In the 1920's, the Hererra family took ownership of the property.
- They had come from Puerto Rico and had established themselves in NYC prior to moving to Smithville. The early 1930's saw the Prohibition issue begin to take place on the political front.
- It was rumored Antonio Hererra had the makings of a still right here in Smithville.
- And then it happened...

Utica Daily Press

August 17, 1931

LL THE PRESS

UTICA DAILY PRE

Large Seizure Is Made by Federal Men Near Norwich

Norwich, Aug. 17—One of the biggest hauls since the prohibition act went into effect was made by Federal prohibition agents this morning two miles north of Smithville on the road to McDonough. The Federal men took into custody Antonio Herrera, alleged owner of the place, who was arraigned late today before United States Commissioner James S. Planagan.

Federal officers seized the following: One 500-gallon copper still, two 5,000-gallon vats, 200 empty five-gallon cans, six 50-gallon steel drums, 500 gallons of alcohol, 5,000 gallons of mash, 1,200 pounds of corn sugar, 104 pounds of yeast, one steam pump and other miscellaneous equipment.

The Federal agents participating in the raid and seizure were William E. Smith, complainant against Herrera, F. S. Traver and C. V. Pearson.

The place alleged to have been operated by Herrera is said to be well known as "the brick house." The farm property on which the place is located is in the immediate vicinity of the summer home of William E. "Pussyfoot" Johnson, internationally known dry advocate.

THREE HURT IN NORWICH CRASH

Mrs. Eva McNulty and Linn Lewis Are in Hospital

Norwich, Aug. 17—An automobile accident which occurred at North Broad and Pleasant streets this afternoon, while the traffic light at that intersection was being repaired, sent two people to the Chenango Memorial Hospital

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TUESDAY
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Daylight indicated. 177 by stations.

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2.15—House
2.30—Astine
3.00—Woman

Picture of the captured Still



Several Owners since then

- Quite a few owners since then, the last being the Valentino family.
- The current owners are Steve and Wendy Forgacs. They have remodeled the house and would enjoy showing it off. They hope to have another open house soon.

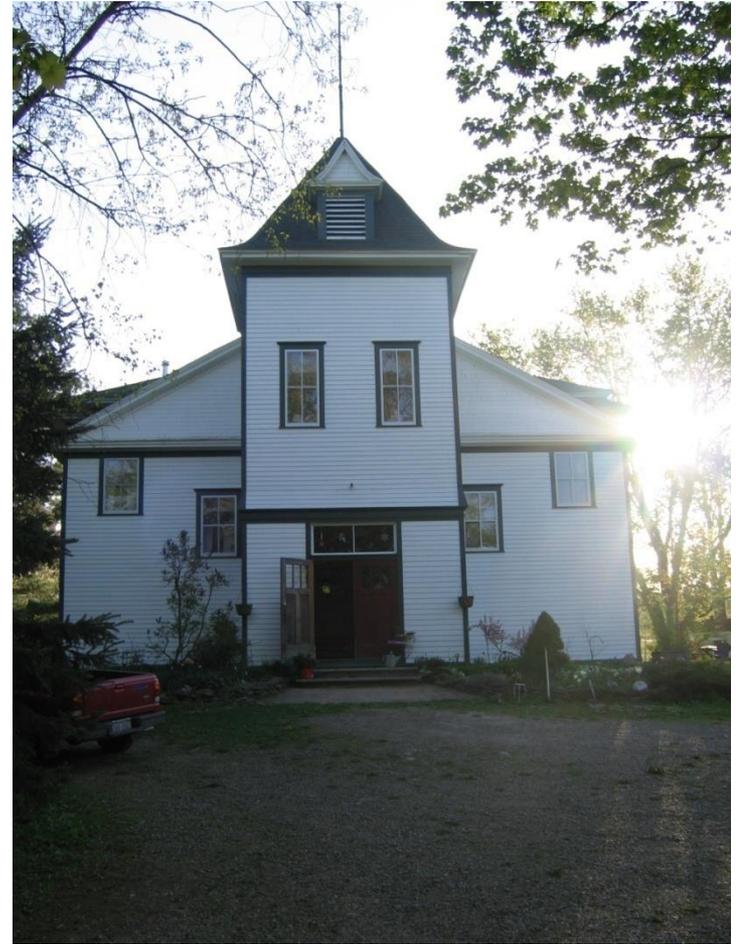
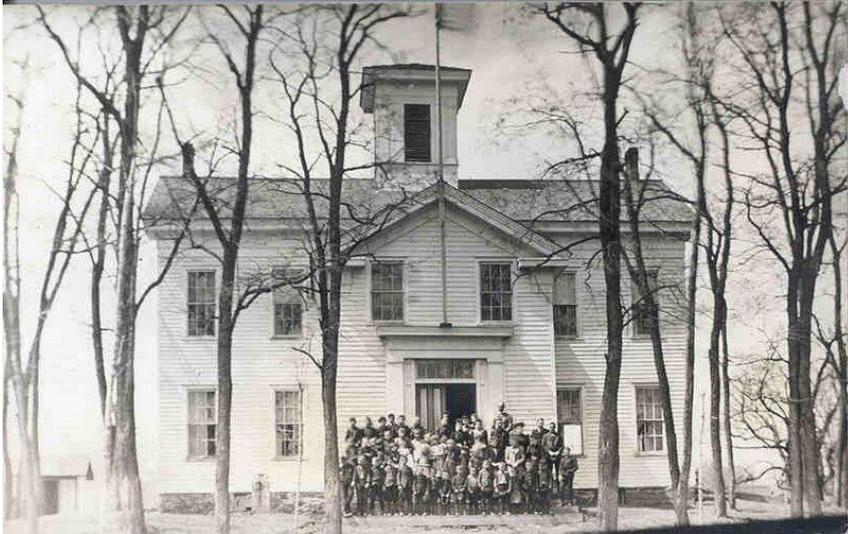
Then and Now Photos

The next photos were taken by Matthew Owens for his “Citizenship-in-the-Community” merit badge.

The Community Center



The Old School House



Hansmann's Mill



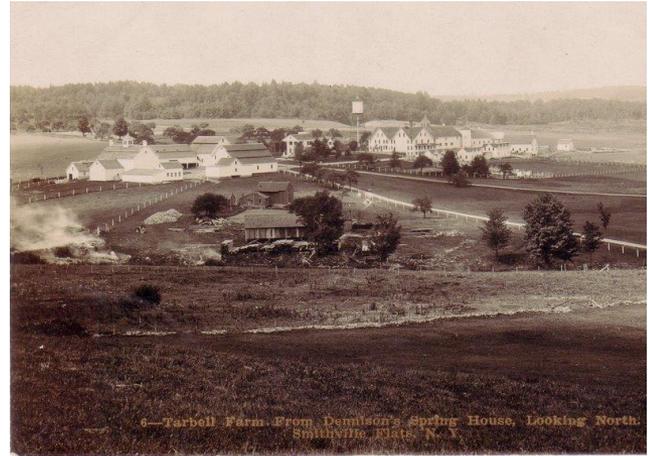
The “Crazy House”



Smithville House (Seeber's Tavern)



Tarbell Farms



The End