

Historically Significant Sites/Areas of the Town of Canandaigua

- A. The list starts with the sites recommended to the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council's project to identify culturally significant sites in the Town:
1. An Owasco stockaded Indian village on "old Routes 5 & 20" (West Avenue Extension). Excavated by Dr. William A. Ritchie, NYS Archeologist, in 1936 and again in 1959. Research records of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences No. 3 "A Prehistoric Fortified Village Site at Canandaigua, Ontario County New York": In the first 8 to 10 inches of excavation, numerous artifacts were unearthed which, along with other historical data, suggested that this was also the site of the Seneca Indian village of Kanandaigua.
 2. District No. 9, West Lake Road School. The original schoolhouse here was built in 1819. Its replacement, the existing building, was built in 1906 and is owned by the Town of Canandaigua. Building the new schoolhouse was a long and hard task, but what evolved was a schoolhouse that the New York State Commissioner of Education stated was the finest rural school in the State. It was equipped with slate blackboards, a library with fireplace, running water, student lockers in the basement, along with restrooms. Jumping forward to 1913, in a book published by the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University called "Cornell Rural School Leaflet", Canandaigua No. 9 School building was presented as a model as to how rural schools can be modernized. As the editor of the Cornell booklet put it: "All persons interested in the development of the rural schools of New York State will be impressed with the results of the efforts made by Mr. C. F. Booth and his associates of Canandaigua, who have placed before the State a concrete piece of work that reflects credit on the public spirit and is certainly a most valuable contribution to the entire neighborhood." It is still used for arts and crafts classes for children in the summer months.
 3. Hunn/Woolhouse Cemetery. Located on the corner of County Road 32 and Woolhouse Roads, this cemetery is the final resting place of Zadoc Hunn, a Yale graduate and Congregational Minister, who, at the request of Phelps and Gorham, came to this Town with the express request of establishing churches in this new frontier. Ultimately, through his ministry and influence, 9 Congregational churches were organized in this locality between 1795 and 1802: E. Bloomfield, South Bristol, Bristol, West Bloomfield, Victor, Canandaigua, Naples, Honeoye and Rushville. In addition, at least 10, and possibly 12, Revolutionary War veterans are buried here. Burials date from 1801 to 1931.
 4. The Academy Tract is a rather unique area. In 1804, this tract of land containing three thousand acres in the south end of Lot #9 in Canandaigua, was donated by Oliver Phelps to aid in establishing and maintaining the

Canandaigua Academy, and hence derived its name. It extended from the west shore of Canandaigua Lake west to the Bristol Town line, and north from the north line of the Town of South Bristol to contain the described acreage, roughly in the vicinity of and including Camp Onanda. The first settlement was in 1810. Some maps still carried the name “Academy” as recently as the 1980’s. It had a post office (at Brahms general store on Route 21 South), two district schools (one on Seneca Point Rd. and one on Route 21 South), a church, (on Seneca Point Rd opposite the cemetery, but now gone) and a still active cemetery.

5. Cheshire Grange. It was not yet ten years after the end of the Civil War when the Johnsons, Cheshire Grocers, built a theater in the hamlet, a place for local citizens (many successful farming families) to enjoy their precious leisure time.

The Cheshire Amusement Company produced and preformed countless musical and dramatic programs, and from the stage were heard musicians from near and far. And locals watched, danced, and listened. In today’s vernacular, it was a major area “destination”.

In 1898 the building was bought by the Knights of the Maccabees, a farmers’ fraternal organization, which continued the use of the building for theatrical and musical events and community meetings. The Academy Grange became the major tenant and bought the building in 1920. The building became known generally as “The Grange”.

Since 1970 the building has been privately owned, and is now sadly deteriorated from its glory days. The Cheshire Community Action Team (CCAT) has obtained a grant to purchase the property and will be restoring it for use as a community hall.

- B. This list suggests the following additions to be included in “historically significant” sites/areas of the Town:

1. The other remaining district school buildings, although #9 described above is the only one in public ownership. These would include: #2 (Centerfield), #3 (Hickox Rd.), #4 (Rte 21, Academy), #5 (The Company Store in Cheshire and the house on Bunnell Rd.), #7 (Seneca Point Rd., Academy), #8 (Middle Cheshire Rd. @ Foster Rd.), #10 (Yerkes Rd.), #11 (Cooley Rd.),
2. In addition to the Hunn Cemetery, the cemeteries of Canandaigua, both public and private, organized and abandoned: Pine Bank (Woolhouse Rd.), Sand Hill (Sand Hill Rd.), Academy (Seneca Point Rd.), Red Dock/Wolverton (off West Lake Rd. north of Wyffels Rd.), Tilton (New Michigan Rd.), Cooley (Cooley Rd.), Remington (Nott Rd.), and Lucas (Route 21 south of Lucas Rd.).

3. Squaw Island is located at the north end of the lake. It is known to be New York State's smallest Fish and Wildlife Management Area and one of the two known islands in the eleven Finger Lakes. Much smaller than it once was, the island is often called our smallest state park. Actually, it has always been state property. It was made a State Museum Reservation in 1918 in recognition of the rare lime accretions called oncolites, or "water biscuits," which form in the water there. In 1975 Squaw Island became part of the State Nature and Historic Preservation Trust. The island came to the attention of the state through the influence of Mrs. Mary Clark Thompson and her second cousin, Dr. John M. Clarke. Dr. Clarke, son of legendary Academy principal, Dr. Noah T. Clarke, was paleontologist and later Director of the State Museum.

The monumental 10-ton granite boulder on the island was transported to its present site on the order of Mrs. Thompson in 1919. It was originally placed on the Brigham Hall grounds by Dr. Dwight R. Burrell who also gave us the monumental boulder on the Court House lawn.

The island, preserved in later years by the efforts of Clifford Murphy and Granger Green, is really a sandbar formed by the action of Sucker Brook. It has been swallowed up largely by the higher-than-natural lake level resulting from the damming of the outlet. In 1977, after trying unsuccessfully to sell the island to the county for \$1.00, the Department of Environmental Conservation reinforced the shore of the island to prevent further erosion.

For more than a century, local legend has said that Squaw Island takes its name from its use by Indian women as a refuge during the 1779 Sullivan Expedition. Considering that it is still possible to wade to the Island, and that a dry path usually extended out from shore in the autumn, it is unlikely that the island was a refuge from 5000 experienced wilderness soldiers in September 1779. More likely, the first residents of Canandaigua used the island as a favorite hunting and fishing site; much as it is used today. In recent years, there has been a proposal to change the name of the island since the word, "squaw," may have an offensive translation.

4. Onanda Park on West Lake Road, owned by the Town of Canandaigua and the NYS Department of Conservation, and in cooperation with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, was started in 1911 as a YWCA camp in the old Foster Home. It continued as such until the Town's purchase in 1989. It is located in the extreme northeast section of the Academy Tract (Was known as Bell's Point). In the year 2011 we will be recognizing the park's 100th birthday.
5. The Route 5 & 20 Corridor is recognized state wide as the earliest route of transportation through Western New York. Between 1790 and 1820 this road was the main east-west artery of commerce for New York State.

Travel patterns shifted away from the east-west turnpike corridor with the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 and the railroads in the 1850s. In the 1890s attention was again focused on the roads in New York State. This time the push for better roads came first from bicyclists! By far the biggest incentive for better roads was the dramatic entrance of the automobile in the early 1900s. Between 1925 and 1955, Routes 5 & 20 was the most traveled east-west highways in the New York State. This would change dramatically with the completion of the New York State Thruway in 1954.

6. The railroad right-of-ways of the New York Central: In 1841 the Auburn and Rochester Rail Road, known as the “Auburn Road” entered Canandaigua from Farmington at the Town Line Road, east of Rte. 332, then roughly paralleling and crisscrossing Rte 332, entering the City near Tops Market. It continued on to Shortsville, Clifton Springs, Phelps, Geneva, Waterloo, Seneca Falls, and Auburn. Later extended to Syracuse, it became part of the New York Central system. It was officially abandoned by New York Central in 1958, although parts of it are still in use today. In 1853 another line started in the City of Canandaigua and ran to the suspension bridge at Niagara Falls. Taken over by the New York Central it was called the “Peanut Line” because, as one Central director said, it was too expensive for such a peanut of a line. This line between Holcomb and Canandaigua was abandoned in 1972. The Town of Canandaigua now owns a portion of this line, the section between County Road #30 and Cooley Road.
7. The Rochester and Eastern Rapid Railway (Electric Trolley) ran from Canandaigua to Rochester and from Canandaigua to Geneva. Built in 1904, the track between Canandaigua and Farmington paralleled County Road 28 for a distance, then turned north and came into alignment with the New York Central’s “Auburn Road” at Paddleford Station on County Road 8, from there it went northwest, crossing Rte. 332 at Johnson’s Crossing, and then paralleling 332 to the Town Line. The route east to Geneva through the Town was parallel to County Road 46 (County House Road).
8. There are three hamlets within the Town, each with its own historical significance from pioneer days. They are Academy, Cheshire, and Centerfield.
9. Eric’s Office Restaurant on County Road 28 at North Road is the last remaining building of the Ontario County Orphan Asylum. The Asylum was organized in July, 1863, primarily for orphans of soldiers who died in the Civil War, and was housed in the “Greenleaf” House at the corner of North Main St. and North Road where Heritage Motors is now located. The “annex” (Eric’s Office Restaurant) was built sometime prior to 1904

and was used as the nursery. The Asylum was sold to the Loyal Order of the Moose in 1947, and was destroyed by fire in 1961.

10. Fallbrook Park Subdivision – Construction began on cottages with 50' lake frontages shortly after the construction of the Canandaigua Country Club in 1922. One of the first subdivisions in the Town of Canandaigua with summer homes the main promotion.
11. Saint Mary's Chapel on West Lake Rd.
12. Canandaigua Yacht Club on West Lake Rd. It moved here, to the former home of Maj. F. O. Chamberlain (then the Beecher estate), in 1939. Major Chamberlain purchased the 153 acre farm, now the Yacht Club site, and moved his family here in 1873. In 1869 Chamberlain became Supervisor of the Town of Canandaigua. He later served as Under Sheriff and was Postmaster of Canandaigua for eight years. In 1890 he was elected to the Assembly. Chamberlain was also President of the Ontario County Agricultural Society and a trustee of the State Agricultural Society
13. Along with all the 50+ year old homes in the Town, with records in the Assessor's Office, there are some significant ones to mention including: The Isaac Parrish home (now a B & B) on West Lake Rd.; the Crib home, a cobblestone on Butler Rd.; Main Top, a small turn-of-the century lake hotel; Mentieth Manor on West Lake Rd.
14. Many of the points along the west side of the lake are significant due to their use by the Native Americans and as summer meccas and steamboat stops, including Red Dock, Tichenor Point, and Menteth Point.
15. Approximately 100 to 150 one hundred year old barns still exist in the Town. Their information resides in the Historians Office.

Compiled by Ray Henry, Town Historian, June 16, 2010