

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: SMITH, GERRIT, ESTATE

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Main Street

Not for publication:___

City/Town: Peterboro

Vicinity:___

State: New York County: Madison Code: 053 Zip Code: 13134

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: X

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal:___

Category of Property

Building(s): ___

District: ___

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

3

1

4

Noncontributing

3 buildings

___ sites

___ structures

___ objects

3 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Domestic Commerce	Sub:	Single Dwelling Business
Current:	Domestic Vacant	Sub:	Single Dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: EARLY REPUBLIC/ Federal
MID-19TH CENTURY/ Other: Board and Batten;
Rustic/Chalet

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	STONE
Walls:	BRICK; WOOD
Roof:	WOOD; ASPHALT; METAL
Other:	

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 4**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Gerrit Smith Estate is located in the rural Madison County hamlet of Peterboro, approximately 25 miles east of Syracuse, New York. The nominated property consists of three parcels totaling 7.78 acres bounded on the south side by Main Street, and to the north by Oneida Creek. The three parcels included in the nomination represent the core of the historic Gerrit Smith Estate.

During the nineteenth century, the Gerrit Smith Estate encompassed an undetermined number of buildings located on approximately 30 acres of land. The estate was described as a village by itself, with about thirty buildings located on the premises.¹ Many of these structures are included within the NHL boundaries, including the extant Peterboro Land Office² with an adjacent smokehouse; the site of the Smith mansion, built between 1804 and 1806; the site of an early nineteenth century temperance hotel; the site of an early nineteenth century store; an early nineteenth century frame house referred to as "the lodge"; the sites of two other dwellings; a nineteenth century barn and an adjacent laundry; the site of what may have been an icehouse; the site of a small pavilion and the remains of its roof which may have been a second icehouse; the foundation and ruins of a building that once housed Greene Smith's extensive ornithology museum; the ruins of the nineteenth century garden cottage and adjacent storage building; and the site of a gazebo.

In addition, the boundaries of the NHL for the Gerrit Smith Estate include numerous traces of nineteenth century landscape features, such as the deteriorated remains of a nineteenth century stone garden wall; the remains of the winding driveway which once encircled the mansion before terminating at the barn; a mid-nineteenth century wrought iron fence along Main Street; a mid-nineteenth century cut limestone dam and rubble stone retaining walls along Oneida Creek.

Other buildings are believed to have existed on the site during Gerrit Smith's occupancy. While the function of all of these buildings are not known, the estate included a carpenter and blacksmith shop, a manual labor school for the education of "colored boys," and an unidentified building located near the "bird house." It is also likely that many other utilitarian structures necessary for the operation of a large estate were also present, including privies, woodsheds and other small storage sheds or barns, and possibly a summer kitchen. The historic locations of these features and other potential archaeological resources associated with the estate are presently unknown. The western half of the nominated property is characterized by lawns, open fields and large trees, some of which appear to represent historic ornamental plantings. The eastern half of the site is thickly wooded with native species. The former estate lands east of the current boundary are occupied by utility buildings and parking areas and have been excluded from the nomination due to lack of integrity.

¹ Frothingham, O. B., *Gerrit Smith: A Biography* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1878), 138.

² Smith, Gerrit, Estate, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, National Park Service, 1984 & 1997.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 5**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Although landscape features, ruins, and the archaeological remains of historic buildings are described as specifically as possible in this assessment, all of these features are counted together as one contributing site.

Land Office and Smokehouse (contributing buildings)

Description. The small, single-story office built in 1804 reflects the Federal style in its design. The building is oriented south toward Main Street, and features a gabled facade with a projecting vestibule at the center. The front doorway, located at the vestibule, consists of an elliptically-arched opening, a rectangular six-panel door, and an elliptical transom with a missing light. Windows at the front and sides of the office are headed by flat brick arches and contain six-over-six light sash in the openings where they survive. The glass panels were manufactured at the Peterboro Glass works, owned by Peter Smith. A recessed elliptical panel is centered above the vestibule in the front gable of the office. At the north or rear elevation, a gabled vault room projects from the left or east side. The windows in the vault are secured with iron bars.

A small detached brick smokehouse is located adjacent to the projecting vault room at the right or west side of the office. Architectural trim at the exterior of both the office and smokehouse includes period cornice moldings and returns. The brick used in constructing the two buildings is a light-colored, poorly-fired, orange/brown. The brick is laid in Flemish bond at the facade of the Land Office, and English bond elsewhere. The roofs of both buildings are covered with new wood shingles.

The interior of the office consists of brick flooring above a plank-on-joist sub floor, plaster-on-brick walls and plaster-on-split-lath ceiling. Trim includes wood window and door casings, and a partial picture mold and chair rail. A built-in cabinet is located along the north wall, west of a shelf chimney which historically was connected to a stove. The chimney is built of brick and emerges from the roof at the extreme north end of the ridge. The vault is separate from the rest of the office by a low iron door with dual lock boxes. In addition, the vault is guarded by iron bars covering the small window opening located at the rear of the vault and by a vaulted brick ceiling. There is evidence of a bricked-over doorway in the east face of the office, facing the mansion house which was probably the entranceway used by Peter and Gerrit Smith; a window was subsequently inserted into this opening.

History and Integrity. The land office served as the focal point of the Smith family's real estate activity and business ventures. The building housed the records and accounts of vast land holdings in New York and other states. The brick office and adjacent smokehouse are located in the southwest corner of the estate and were built simultaneously in 1804. The Land Office and smokehouse were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. A condition assessment for the Land Office was prepared in 1994.³

³ Crawford & Stearns, *The Peterboro Land Office Condition Assessment*, 1994.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 6**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Barn (contributing building)

Description. A barn dating to the mid-nineteenth century stands less than 100 feet northeast of the "lodge." Largely unaltered, the barn has a mortise and tenon timber frame on a mortared stone foundation. The building is in fair condition and is currently in use as a garage for a tractor and for general storage. The main portion of the building appears to date from circa 1850-1870 and exhibits little alteration. The barn, located near the coachman's house appears to have originally been used as a carriage barn with attendant space for horse stalls and a hay loft.

The barn is comprised of a large rectangular section at the south and an attached addition at the north. The main or southern portion consists of a main floor well adapted for carriages, a cellar, and a hay loft. Framing is comprised of transverse bents built of squared timbers with mortise and tenon joints, treenail connections and sway braces in alternate bays. The timbers are approximately 12"x10" in section. Sawn floor joists are mortised into beams and covered with sawn plank floors at the main and loft levels. Rafters, where they could be seen, are dovetailed and pinned without the use of a ridgepole. Collar ties connect the rafters near their mid-points. The exterior is sheathed with vertical planks measuring about 12 inches in width. The plank seams are covered by beveled battens. Planks and battens are fastened with square-headed cut nails.

The primary entrance is situated in the south gable end through a large barn door opening. Fenestration consists of multi-light sash windows possibly salvaged from an earlier building, perhaps left over from the 1852-1854 renovations of the 1804-1806 mansion. If true, this may be useful in helping to establish a date of construction. In several openings, windows are arranged as nine-over-six double hung sash and in others as six-over-nine sash.

The gable roof features a north-south ridge and consists of wood decking and modern, standing seam metal roofing. There may have once been a ventilation cupola but this could not be ascertained. The basement of this section consists of a fully enclosed cellar (inaccessible) and an above ground lower story with board and batten walls which appears to have been utilized by animals.

The north extension appears to have been added to the main barn within a decade or two of its original construction. The addition is built at a lower grade so that the barn steps downward to the north. It consists of a ground floor level for animals and a loft. The extension is also built with a mortise and tenon framework, board and batten exterior and a gable roof. The frame rests on a combination of mortared stone piers and poured concrete piers, which appear to have replaced stone piers. A sliding barn door on tracks is located on the east side of the addition alongside a standard door opening. Window openings are located at the north and west sides. The roof is of old, but presently undated, standing seam metal.

History and Integrity. The barn is first shown on the 1875 map. Earlier maps seldom depict outbuildings, and it may have been constructed much earlier. There are many references that Smith's barn was used as a hiding place for fugitive slaves. Gerrit Smith Miller recounts that he

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 7**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

“assisted in hiding the runaway slaves, sometimes in the home but most often they preferred the barns.”⁴

There has been no archaeological investigation of the barn area. However, the overall integrity of the estate suggests the potential that the area contains intact deposits associated with the estate, and possibly with refugees from slavery that stayed in the barn.

Laundry (contributing building)

Description. The building labeled on the 1875 Beers map as the "laundry" consists of three sections (each approximately 20 feet wide and 20 feet long) forming an elongated rectangle in plan measuring approximately 60 feet in length. As with the adjacent barn, this building steps down a gentle grade from south to north. The building is no longer maintained and is in generally poor condition.

The southernmost section exhibits an early mortise and tenon framework (circa 1825?) and appears to pre-date the somewhat wider middle section (circa 1840) to which it was later joined. The two joined sections were combined on a new or rebuilt stone foundation circa (1850-1860) to form a single, unified building by widening the early section. The presence of very old nine-over-six light sash in the new elevation resulting from the joining, suggests the possibility that windows from the mansion (available during the 1852-1854 renovations) were reused here at about the same time to complete the job. This is consistent with what we believe happened at the adjacent carriage barn. Existing six-over-six light first floor windows and six light attic sash remained in situ in many openings of the middle (circa 1840) section. During the joining process, a kingpost truss was installed in the attic to bridge an unsupported room below. The location is revealed in the first floor ceiling, which drops at this location to accommodate the differing ceiling heights of the two units. A new floor was laid across both sections at the time they were joined. A third, more lightly framed section combining some timber framing augmented by stud walls was added to the north as early as circa 1870. The general improvement of this and other estate's dependencies in the 1850s appears consistent with the elaboration of the mansion during this period.

The building was used most recently as a tenant house. First floor alterations associated with this use include some gypsum board finishes and trim, and the creation of a kitchen and an adjacent bathroom near the center. In addition to the framework and foundation, original fabric from the period of significance includes all but two windows, exterior siding and trim, original flooring, interior doors and hardware, stairs to the second floor, brick chimney, and several unaltered plank walls.

The most important thing revealed by this investigation is that the building reflects a configuration effected by Gerrit Smith during his occupancy of the estate. It occurred at a time when Smith and his estate actively supported the work of the Underground Railroad. Although it cannot at this time be determined if the more lightly framed north section was added by Smith or not, clearly enough fabric remains in the first two sections for Smith and his contemporaries to

⁴ Campbell, A. E., "Gerrit Smith," *Mohawk Valley* (1931): 11. See also Wagenen, J. V., "The Story of Gerrit Smith," *American Agriculturalist* (1927).

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 8**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

theoretically recognize this building today as the mid-nineteenth century laundry building. Presumably, the building site and fabric contained within the building itself has potential archaeologically of informing us further of how the building evolved and how it was used during the estate's 1819-1874 period of significance. For these reasons, the building should be classified as contributing in the NHL documentation.

History and Integrity. The Smith family expense records are replete with references to paying individuals for washing, and it is reasonable to suppose that this work was carried out in the laundry building. One individual, Harriet Russell, appears to have done the bulk of the washing for the Smith family since she appears regularly in the available expense records that date from the mid 1850s through the late 1860s. Harriet Russell was born enslaved and had been given to Ann Fitzhugh Smith as a child, whom Gerrit and Ann freed in 1841 and helped settle in Peterboro.

There has been no archaeological investigation of the laundry. The general integrity of the estate suggests that the area has the potential to yield intact deposits associated with Harriet Russell's work in the laundry building.

Lodge (non contributing building)

Description. A residence, described by Gerrit Smith as the "lodge" and labeled as such on the 1875 Beers map, still stands but in an altered condition. The Lodge is located on Nelson Street approximately 100 feet south of Oneida Creek. The two-story frame house appears to have been built circa 1830 in the Federal Style with a gabled three-bay side entrance facade and a single story ell at the north side. The original form of this house remains intact, although modern windows, vinyl siding and a prominent deck have altered the historic appearance of the building.

History and Integrity. The "Lodge" building is labeled on the 1859 map as owned by Gerrit Smith. This may also be the structure that James Dorrance of Peterboro refers to as the coachman's cottage. It is interesting that the occupants of this structure in 1860 were Jonathan Burcheck and his family. Burcheck was listed as a coachman with \$400 in real estate and a personal estate valued at \$540. The name Burcheck was not identified for any of the Smith family household expense ledgers. It is likely that the job of coachman may not have been desirable, resulting in a highly transient, mobile group who fulfilled this work.

Access to this building's interior was not permitted by the landowner. Because of the changes to the exterior of the building, the lodge does not regain the high degree of integrity necessary to be considered a contributing element to the National Historic Landmark.

No archaeological investigation has been undertaken in this part of the Gerrit Smith Estate. Surface survey suggests that this area may be intact. It is likely that subsurface features and artifact concentrations associated with the occupation of the "Lodge" are intact.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 9**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Estate (contributing site)

The Gerrit Smith Estate contains several architectural ruins, archaeological sites, and other landscape features that have the potential to contribute to our understanding of the property and its historic usage. Taken together these components make up one site.

The overall setting of the Gerrit Smith Estate has changed little since the mid-nineteenth century and retains much of the feeling and association of a small hamlet surrounded by rural farmland. Transportation developments in the mid-nineteenth century, such as the Erie Canal and later railroads, shifted the focus of settlement away from the original turnpike routes that traveled through Peterboro. "Peterboro [in 1878] is a quiet, inert, dull village. It has no hotel, no activity, no interest for traveler or sojourner....The inhabitants are chiefly retired farmers whose wants are of the fewest and whose resources are about equal to the satisfaction of their wants."⁵

Being passed over in terms of economic development has meant that Peterboro changed little due to subsequent development and modifications. Nineteenth century stores and houses line both sides of Main Street and the elongated village green. Farmhouses and open fields remain extant along Nelson Street and the north side of Oneida Creek. Although several nineteenth-century buildings in the hamlet have been considerably altered in recent years, the overall scale and form of these buildings continue to reflect Peterboro's early nineteenth century origins. The intact physical context of the estate's surroundings contributes significantly to an enhanced appreciation of the relationship between the estate and hamlet during Gerrit Smith's life in Peterboro.

Mansion Site

Description. The mansion site is located approximately 100 feet northeast of the land office . The house burned to the ground in 1936. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century photos of the house illustrate a three-story frame house with a Doric order portico at the facade, richly bracketed cornices, shallow hipped roofs covered with standing seam metal roofing, and six paired brick chimneys on the main block of the house alone. The house featured a rectangular main block with a five-bay center entrance facade, and seven-bay side elevations. A one-and-one-half story gabled ell extended from the back of the main block. The foundation of the house appears to have been built of even courses of carefully dressed limestone blocks above grade. The frame walls of the house were sheathed with clapboard siding. One photograph taken by Susan Dixwell Miller, believed to date from the 1880s, shows the existence of a bracketed rooftop cupola.

History and Integrity. The mansion was built by Peter Smith between 1804 and 1806 in the Federal Style and enlarged and updated by Gerrit Smith between 1852 and 1854 in the Italianate style. Much of the history of the occupation of the mansion has yet to be clarified. Gerrit Smith and his family moved into the mansion when Smith took over his father's business ventures in 1819.

⁵ Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith*, 139.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 10**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

The family seems to have resided at the mansion until May 1842. The Panic of 1837 resulted in a widespread currency shortage. Even though Smith was land rich, he found it difficult to meet his interest payments. As long as his tenants failed to pay their rents and mortgages, Smith had little cash to pay his own creditors. Using drastic means to cut his own expenses, Smith terminated the employment of two of his clerks and supposedly advertised that the mansion house was for sale. In August 1842, Smith and his family moved “to a cottage a mile from the village.”⁶ It is likely that the family moved to the family farm, located to the north, just outside of Peterboro.

On March 1, 1845, Smith wrote to his son-in-law, Charles Dudley Miller requesting that Charles and Elizabeth return to Peterboro so that Charles could work for Smith. Smith offered them their choice of two houses including “my old mansion” to live in rent free, saying “you will doubtless prefer the latter and the spacious grounds connected with it.”⁷ While Harlow indicates that the Smiths moved back into the mansion house in 1845, this does not appear to be the case. Elizabeth wrote a letter to her mother in October 1852 that describes the mansion house renovations, and documents that the Millers were living in the mansion at that date. It seems likely that Gerrit Smith and his family repossessed the mansion house upon his return to Peterboro after his stint in Congress in 1854.⁸

During Smith’s life, the mansion house was a meeting place for many of New York’s abolitionists. Campbell states that the mansion was one of the leading abolition centers in the nation. Many Abolitionists of national repute traveled to Peterboro to confer with Gerrit Smith and stay in his home. The list of names is impressive and includes Harriet Tubman, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglas, John Brown, James Birney, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Jermaine Lougen, Beriah Green, and Samuel R. Ward.⁹

Numerous accounts state that the mansion itself was utilized to harbor fugitive slaves during the years in which Gerrit Smith lived there and served as a station master on the Underground Railroad. Elizabeth Cady Stanton described meeting Harriet Powell while she was hid on the third floor of the Gerrit Smith mansion. The most famous Underground Railroad conductor, Harriet Tubman, made as many as nineteen trips north and likely passed through Peterboro each time. Tubman viewed the Smith mansion as a safe place where she could always count on help from her friends, where the barn or kitchen floor were used to hide fugitives. Gerrit Smith Miller, Gerrit Smith’s grandson, also recalls that the mansion house, particularly the garret, was used to shelter fugitive slaves.¹⁰

⁶ Harlow, A. V., *Gerrit Smith: Philanthropist and Reformer* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1939), 32.

⁷ Gerrit Smith to Charles & Elizabeth Miller, March 1, 1845

⁸ Harlow, *Gerrit Smith*, 33.

⁹ Campbell, *Gerrit Smith*.

¹⁰ Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 62. Haskins, J., *Get on Board: The Story of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Scholastic Books, 1993), 58. Conrad, E., *Harriet Tubman*. (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1943), 59. Dann, N. K.,

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 11**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Gerrit Smith died in 1874, and his wife Anne died the following year. Gerrit Smith Miller lived in the mansion house until it was destroyed in a fire in 1936. Gerrit Smith Miller died in 1937 at the age of 93. The house remains have basically laid unaltered since the 1936 fire. Recently, the Smithfield Community Center raised money to purchase the immediate house property, and the group donated the land to the Town of Smithfield. In the 1980s, Gravel was brought in to fill the mansion's cellar hole which had been open since the fire in 1936.

The Gerrit Smith mansion site is readily identified by intact stones visible on the ground surface that define the entire footprint of the foundation. Archaeological investigation of the area shows that much of the mansion's foundation survived the fire and remains intact below grade. Test excavations in the yard immediately adjacent to the mansion reveal intact soils underneath a thin layer of gravel, probably the result of the recent basement hole filling. Artifacts recovered indicate a low density of sheet midden refuse dating to the nineteenth century and suggest a high potential for the survival of intact features associated with the mansion.

Temperance Hotel site (contributing)

Description. The Temperance Hotel site is located on the southwest corner of the property, to the west of the land office. The area is characterized by a smooth grassy lawn with no surface traces visible. In 1923, John Woodbury of Peterboro referred to the site as the "Yellow Tavern" and recorded that the hotel fronted 80 feet or so along Main Street and extended north along Nelson Street. The Hotel is shown on the 1859 map of Peterboro, and was probably removed soon after.

History and Integrity. According to Frothingham, Smith built the temperance hotel in Peterboro about 1827, on the corner lot of his estate. He "supplied it with the requisite barns, sheds, and outdoor conveniences, furnished it comfortably throughout, and put a bible in every room." The hotel was operated by David Ambler under the condition that no intoxicating liquors be sold. Frothingham's biography suggests the rocky history of this establishment: "Though the new inn was in every respect superior to the old tavern, it did not prove a successful, or even dangerous rival" to other hotels in the vicinity that sold liquor. At the end of two years Ambler withdrew; but his successors fared no better.¹¹

Frothingham states that Smith sold the hotel to a "General" M____, who Smith knew and had employed. On May 1, 1831, Smith sold the hotel property to John Milton Messinger for \$2,500. The boundary description for this parcel identifies that a tavern shed stood on the lot, and mentions a brick store and dwelling to the east. According to Frothingham, the "General" bought the hotel property, and transferred the keeper of his old inn to this one, and promptly got a liquor

Underground in Peterboro: The Significance of Peterboro, New York as a Station on the Underground Railroad. unpublished manuscript, 1995. Decker, F. N, *Kriemheld Herd: A Chapter in Holstein History*. (Syracuse: Frank Norton Decker, 1923). Wagenen, *The Story of Gerrit Smith*.

¹¹ Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith*, 152.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

license. Frothingham states that, "the well-appointed tavern became the most popular resort for tipplers and vagabonds in the whole county."¹²

A board book for an unidentified individual who was employed by Gerrit Smith indicates that Andrew P. Lord leased the Temperance Hotel lot from Messinger for \$100 per year beginning May 1, 1834. The individual who kept this record records that on September 16, 1836, he began to "board with Fisher F. Myers at the Temperance House." It is not clear if Myers was running the establishment at this time or was a fellow boarder. While this record lacks detail, it does indicate that Smith occasionally used the Temperance Hotel to house his employees even though he no longer owned it.

On February 20, 1845, Smith bought the hotel back from Messinger for the sum of \$2,350.90 and attempted to again conduct the hotel on temperance principles. In 1845, Smith offered the lease of the hotel to E.C. Hyde. In a letter dated April 15, Smith describes the Tavern as being large and that Hyde would need a good deal of furniture. Smith also states that he was "making great and expensive alterations upon it." In this letter Smith says that "the assembly room is reserved for the 'Church of Peterboro,' entered by outer stairs." This is the only information that the Temperance Hotel was used for meetings of the Free Church prior to the completion of the church building in 1847.

A letter from Hyde to Gerrit Smith dated December 15, 1847 indicates that the control of the hotel had passed into the hands of Gerrit's son-in-law Charles Dudley Miller, and that Miller had rented the Tavern to a Mr. Booth. In this letter, Hyde is outspoken about this unfair situation, and complained about the poor trade at the hotel, most of which he associates with prejudices in the community against Gerrit Smith and the temperance movement. Hyde is not listed in the 1850 Smithfield census, although in 1855 he was working as a clerk in Peterboro. It is not clear exactly when his association with the Temperance Hotel ceased, or if Mr. Booth actually took over the operation.

The 1850 Federal census, the first that contains detailed household information, shows that the hotel was operated by David Shipman, and his son is listed as a barkeeper. In addition to Shipman's wife and six children, the occupants of the hotel included eight laborers, a gardener, a shoemaker, and two individuals with no occupation listed. The names listed for this household can also be found in the Gerrit Smith household expense ledgers, indicating that the hotel was functioning as a boarding house for Gerrit Smith's employees.

Gerrit Smith repossessed the hotel soon after 1855 and had the hotel torn down. Hammond (1880:689) dates the removal sometime between 1855 and 1860. The hotel is still shown on the 1859 map of Peterboro, possibly operated by J. Tomlinson. The hotel was likely torn down soon after the map was drawn, since Frothingham states that "Peterboro lost its former visitors: larger and more thriving places took the custom; the buildings were removed; the foundations were destroyed; and the site was adopted into the owner's private grounds."¹³

¹² Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith*, 153.

¹³ Smith, J. H., *History of Madison County, New York* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1880), 390. Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith*, 153.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 13**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Frothingham's description is reflected in the archaeological record. One shovel test pit excavated in the temperance hotel area encountered a clearly defined foundation wall. Five additional 1x1 meter units were dug to get a better look at the foundation and associated remains. The stratigraphy from these units show that Smith had indeed completely, effectively and violently destroyed the foundations. In most cases, the stratigraphic profile was the only evidence that a structure had stood there, since no vestiges of the stone wall were left intact.

In all, close to 5,000 artifacts were recovered from these five units representing a very rich material assemblage. On the inside of the foundation, in what would have been the cellar hole, numerous artifacts were recovered, including a stack of seven plates that were thrown into the cellar hole while it was being filled in. All of these vessels are highly decorated and would have been expensive for their day. One plate is decorated with a blue transfer-print pattern based on the "Doctor Syntax" stories written by William Combe in the early 1820s. Doctor Syntax represented a clergyman with very limited financial means who kept a boy's school in addition to his church duties. The similarities between Doctor Syntax and Gerrit Smith are perhaps not coincidental. The literary nature of this pattern, and the general expense of these ceramics, makes it unlikely that they originated at the hotel. It is plausible that the Smith household used the open cellar pit to dispose of their refuse.

These artifacts found in the cellar hole of the temperance hotel also contrast with materials recovered from the intact yard area around the hotel. Three additional 1x1 meter units were excavated in the rear yard area of the hotel and yielded a total of 1,812 artifacts recovered from intact sheet midden deposits. This assemblage represents a diverse array of types, and includes stoneware ale jug fragments, mold blown whiskey bottle and other alcohol bottle fragments, numerous bar tumblers and smoking pipe pieces.

The archaeological investigation of the Temperance Hotel area illustrates Smith's vigorous demolition of the hotel. While perhaps counter intuitive, this indicates that the context of the Temperance Hotel is intact and has integrity, that is, it is in the exact condition that Smith left it. In addition, the rich archaeological assemblage and material evidence for alcohol consumption and smoking at the Temperance Hotel provide direct evidence for the rocky history of the Temperance Hotel. While these alcohol-related materials could have been deposited during the period that Smith did not own the hotel, they present poignant evidence of Smith's failure to impose temperance on the community of Peterboro. The community reacted in defiance right under Smith's nose, right next to his mansion house. Smith had little recourse but to raze the building and remove the physical evidence of his failure from his own house lot.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Neil Eastman's Essential Oil Shop site

Description. John Woodbury records that a large wooden structure located to the east of the Temperance Hotel, to the west and in front of the land office housed the residence and store of Neil Eastman who operated an essential oils business from this structure. Woodbury states that Eastman's business increased to the extent that he was known as the "oil king," and acquired large tracts of land where he grew herbs for sale in his New York city salesrooms "where he nearly controlled the essential oil market for many years." A deed relating to the Temperance Hotel describes a brick store and dwelling located to the east that provides evidence that a store was in this location by 1831. Woodbury's recollection of the wooden structure may suggest that the original brick was replaced at some point, or that brick was applied to only a portion of the building or used as nogging within frame walls. This area of the estate is currently part of the grass lawn and there is no ground surface indication of the location of this structure.¹⁴

History and Integrity. There is very little concrete historic evidence that would corroborate Woodbury's statements. On February 6, 1847, Gerrit Smith wrote to Neale (sic) Eastman, stating "I find on my return home that you are still residing in this place. I supposed that you would ere this, have removed to Jefferson County." Smith gave Eastman \$100 to assist his family in "getting a home."

Neil Eastman, his wife, and seven children appear in the 1850 census as living next to the Temperance Hotel. Eastman is listed as a distiller of oils and had \$900 value in real estate. The family is listed in no other censuses for Smithfield, and deed research would clarify the dates of Eastman's occupation. Hammond (1880:689) indicates that Smith had the store removed at the same time as the Temperance Hotel was torn down, and that the area became incorporated into his estate grounds.¹⁵

One shovel test pit excavated in this area of the yard encountered a possible foundation wall which may be associated with the Eastman site. In addition, artifacts recovered from this area include several glass bottles with hand-tooled oil finish, several hand blown aqua glass vials, and glass tubing fragments. These finds clearly indicate that the Neil Eastman site is intact and has the potential to yield important information about the occupation and history of this site.

H. Williams site

Description. The H. Williams site represents a structure shown only on the 1859 map of Peterboro. This structure is located to the south of the "Lodge" and north of the C.D. Miller site. This area has been incorporated into the yard of the "Lodge" and is characterized as grassy lawn.

History and Integrity. According to a deed dated June 9, 1860 Harvey Williams had lived on this lot for the last 20 years or more, suggesting that a dwelling had been built on the lot at least by

¹⁴ Woodbury, J., "Peterboro Village of Long Years Ago," *Madison County Leader* (1923).

¹⁵ Hammond, L. M., *History of Madison County* (Syracuse: Truir, Smith & Co., 1880), 689.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 15**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1840. An unidentified board book located in the Smith family papers indicates that Nehemiah Huntington and Federal Dana, who both worked as clerks for Gerrit Smith, were boarding with Williams. It is likely that Smith paid for their board, which included “washing and mending.” They later moved to board at the Temperance Hotel.

The 1860 deed indicates that the parcel contained a dwelling house and barn. Williams sold the property to George W. Stafford for \$700. The boundary description related in this deed helps clarify the land use of adjacent parcels: “bounded northerly by the fence along the southerly side of the road or carriage way to Smith’s barn: east by the fence on the west side of Smith’s house yard; south by lot owned by Charles D. Miller and now occupied by John Buck; westerly by the high way now known as the Peterboro and Canastota plank road.”

The 1860 census shows Harvey Williams living in Stafford’s household; it is likely that Stafford was Williams son-in-law. William’s occupation is listed as a hatter with \$500 in real estate and \$1,000 in personal estate. Interestingly, Stafford is listed as a horse jockey with real estate valued at \$700 and personal estate of \$858. In a hamlet as small as Peterboro, it is unlikely that anyone other than Gerrit Smith could have afforded to employ a horse jockey. George Stafford appears in Caleb Calkin’s household expense ledger for the Smith family in July 1857. He was given \$11 and was “paid in full.”

No archaeological investigation has been undertaken in this part of the Gerrit Smith Estate. However, surface survey indicates little subsurface disturbance, and it is likely that subsurface features and artifact concentrations associated with the occupation of this structure are intact.

C.D. Miller site

Description. The C.D. Miller site represents a structure shown only on the 1859 map of Peterboro, labeled only as C.D. Miller. This structure is located between the H. Williams site to the north and the Temperance Hotel to the south. This area is currently part of the land office parcel and is characterized as lawn.

History and Integrity. The 1859 map of Peterboro shows C.D. Miller’s residence on the corner of Nelson Street, across the park from the Smith Estate. We can be confident that Miller did not occupy this site. A deed dated 1860 indicated that this property was owned by Charles D. Miller, but occupied by John Buck. The 1860 census lists John Buck as a 35-year-old mason who lived with his wife and daughter.

A shovel test pit survey was undertaken in this part of the Gerrit Smith Estate. While no trace of the building’s foundation or other features was found, a high density of architectural remains was identified in this area. Stratigraphic profiles indicate no subsurface disturbance, and it is likely that subsurface features and artifact concentrations associated with the occupation of this structure are intact.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 16**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Small outbuilding site

Historic photos reveal the presence of a small outbuilding located immediately west of the existing barn. The proportions of the small gabled building seen in the photographs and its proximity to the barn suggest that it may have been used as a tool shed or wood house. Outbuildings are not usually depicted on historic maps, so they cannot be used to clarify the construction date of this building. Surface inspection has revealed no surface traces of the foundation for this building, although it is likely that intact foundations and artifacts associated with this building exist.

Ice House site

Description. The archaeological remains of a subterranean ice house was identified by a fairly large depression in the ground surface. Several foundation stones were visible on the ground surface at the perimeter of this depression. The ice house is located about 100 feet north and east of the land office, between the land office and the mansion house site.

History and Integrity. The Gerrit Smith papers indicate that access to ice was a major concern of those living at the estate. In 1845, Smith wrote to E.C. Hyde to propose conditions for the operation of the Temperance Hotel. Smith assured Hyde that he “would make no charge for ice. I have an excellent ice house on my contiguous premises.” The concern with ice also appears in a letter Smith wrote to Charles and Elizabeth Miller, Smith’s daughter, when he offered them the use of the mansion house in 1845: “I will always fill the ice house, because my family and the family in the Temperance house, will need as fair access, as your family, to the Ice house.” The Smith family expense records include numerous references to paying individuals for cutting and packing ice. Two individuals who were paid for this work were Charles Frank and Hanson Williams, both African Americans that lived in Peterboro.

Ten 1x1 meter units were excavated to define and clarify the ice house site. The ice house was square, measuring about eight feet on a side. The vault where ice was stored extended to a depth of over six feet and was constructed of large limestone blocks, quarried in a similar manner to the visible foundation stones of the mansion site. The soil recovered from the lowest levels was very organic and waterlogged. Flotation revealed that this deposit was predominantly wood, probably vestiges of saw dust that would have been used to pack the ice. Otherwise, the ice house vault was filled in with soils containing a high density of brick, mortar and plaster. A total of 1,481 artifacts were recovered from this fill, indicating that the ice house was removed and filled shortly after 1850. It seems reasonable that Smith had this ice house removed about the same time as the Temperance Hotel was torn down, and that a new ice house was constructed in a location that would be more convenient to his household. The high density of brick and mortar may suggest that the ice house vault was filled using materials removed from the brick store located next to the Temperance Hotel.

The ceramics recovered from the ice house site are predominantly utilitarian kitchen vessels, including at least 8 undecorated creamware bowls. In addition, flotation of soil samples from the fill have identified modest amounts of berry seeds, not normally associated with building rubble. This would suggest that the occupants of the mansion site took advantage of the opportunity to dispose of household refuse while the ice house vault was being filled and capped. Therefore,

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 17**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

the ice house site demonstrates a high level of integrity and provides a material assemblage associated with kitchen activities at the Gerrit Smith Estate.

Pavilion site

A small frame structure, square in plan and covered by a hipped roof, is believed to have stood within 25 feet of the laundry's east wall. The hipped, standing seam metal roof, is now located further east in the adjacent field. The size and shape of the roof are suggestive of a well-house; however, local residents refer to it as an ice house with a trap door in the floor. A photo believed to date from 1938 illustrates a small, pavilion-like structure with an open floor, columns at the corners and graceful mid-nineteenth century brackets supporting the roof. Long-time resident Laura Bellamy, who worked at the mansion before the house burned, indicated that an ice house stood in the location shown in the historic photographs. She described it as a subterranean ice house that was lined with sheets of copper. It is likely that this ice house was constructed after the original ice house was abandoned sometime after 1850. It is not known when this ice house was abandoned and filled in. Although no archaeological investigation has been performed in this area, the excellent integrity of the Gerrit Smith Estate suggests that the remains of the ice house should be intact.

Bird House site

Description. Greene Smith, Gerrit and Ann's son, was a noted ornithologist. He traveled the world collecting birds which were housed in his museum, known as the "bird house," located on the Smith Estate in Peterboro. The ruins of this building, consisting of stone foundation walls and collapsed floors and walls, lie approximately 400 feet north of the mansion site along the south bank of Oneida Creek. An undated photograph of the "bird house," presumed to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, depicts a two-story chalet-style frame building with rustic bark-covered walls and a five-bay center entrance facade. The mortise and tenon timber framing of the first floor, still evident in the ruins, suggests that this building was initially constructed during the early to mid-nineteenth century. The bark exterior and other rustic details may have been added as part of improvements and/or additions in the 1860s. A local history of the estate suggests that the bird house had skylights and a mezzanine overlooking the first floor. The building featured marble plumbing, central heating, a mahogany staircase, and cork-lined specimen cases.

History and Integrity. The date of construction of the "bird house" is unknown; however, the building is shown on the 1875 Beers map. The 1859 map depicts an unidentified building to the north of the mansion along Oneida Creek which may represent the "bird house", or its predecessor. However, there has been no archaeological investigation of the bird house site.

Unidentified building site

The 1875 Beers map of Peterboro shows an unidentified structure located 100-200 feet west of the "bird house" on the Smith Estate. No further information exists on the historic function or exact location of this building. The general integrity of the estate suggests that buried foundations and deposits associated with the building may be intact.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Garden House and Tool House sites

Description. The Garden House, or Gardener's Cottage, is a standing ruin located approximately 350 feet northeast of the mansion site. The walls and portions of the building's roof still stand; however, most of the first floor and attic floor have collapsed into the stone cellar. The building appears to reflect two construction episodes. The first phase, undertaken circa 1850-1860, appears to have involved in the construction of a lightly-framed one-and-one-half-story building with clapboard siding and mid-nineteenth century interior trim. A second construction phase, dating from the 1860s or later, involved changes in fenestration, interior alterations, and the creation of a rustic exterior using bark siding, tree limb brackets, and bark-faced fascia boards. A small tool house, clad in novelty siding, is located immediately to the east of the cottage and appears to have originally been connected to it by a hyphen which has subsequently collapsed.

History and Integrity. Examination of Gerrit Smith papers has shed no light on the history, or even function, of the garden house. This building is only shown on the 1875 map of Peterboro, but it may have been extant and not included on the 1859 map. The label "garden house" is vague. The building may have been used by the Smith family and guests while touring the estate grounds, or it may have housed a gardener employed to work for the estate. The proximity of the tool house suggests that the garden house was in fact occupied by a gardener.

Archaeological investigation which may clarify the function of this structure has yet to be carried out. Surface inspection indicates little disturbance in the area, and suggests a high potential to yield intact remains associated with the garden house and tool house.

Gazebo site

An octagonally-shaped open lattice wood-constructed gazebo was located on the hill at the eastern end of the Gerrit Smith Estate about 50 feet southwest of the garden house. The Gazebo appears to have been constructed on stone piers with a wooden sill placed directly on these piers. Each facet was decorated with an elliptical arch. The shallow, pitched roof was surmounted by a carved urn. This structure is shown in photographs taken by Susan Dixwell Miller, which generally date to the 1880s, and continues to be shown in photos dated to 1938. It is not known when the Gazebo was constructed or removed. Surface inspection revealed no obvious traces of this structure. The area does not appear to have been disturbed and it is likely that the stone piers and associated archaeological deposits remain intact.

Dam, Retaining Walls and Bridge Abutments

A mid-nineteenth century cut limestone dam with a semi-circular spillway is located on Oneida Creek approximately 100 feet north of the laundry. The finely built dam is several feet in height and flanked by straight wing walls. An unusual square block with a round hole is centered at the bottom of the spillway and may have been the foundation stone for a fountain or statuary. The dam is believed to have been part of a water supply system on the estate, furnishing water to the garden and the fountain. The impoundment west of the dam is likely to have served as a source of ice for the estate and may have furnished water for the operation of the laundry.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 19**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Battered, dry-laid stone retaining walls line both banks of Oneida Creek downstream from the dam. In several places, these walls have collapsed or otherwise been removed. Surviving stretches of these nineteenth century walls stand four to five feet in height and are assembled of carefully fitted glacial boulders and stones. A wood truss footbridge crossed the stream approximately 300 feet east of the dam, linking the Smith mansion with the "Cottage Across the Brook," home of Elizabeth Smith Miller, and later her son, Gerrit Smith Miller. Although the bridge has long since been removed, a raised stone abutment marks its location on the south bank of the creek.

Garden Wall

Sections of a mortared rubble stone garden wall dating from the mid-nineteenth century, remain standing along the rear lot lines of several Main Street properties. This wall defines that part of the Smith Estate's historic boundary. The wall stands approximately six feet high, and has been breached or collapsed in several locations. There is no other evidence of the nineteenth century garden that was located to the east of the mansion.

Wrought Iron Fence

A wrought iron fence, erected in the mid-nineteenth century, extends along 250 feet of the estate's southern boundary immediately adjacent to the sidewalk at the north side of Main Street. The fence, created from linked panels, is supported by braced posts above a cut stone curb. The ends of the fence are terminated by octagonal cast iron posts with projecting moldings and onion-shaped finials. Posts also define a prominent path gateway in the fence originally leading directly toward the front entrance of the mansion. The fence originally extended further; one decorative post lies out of context on the mansion lawn, clearly indicating the historic presence of at least one additional gateway or corner. The fence was probably erected during the period that the mansion was remodeled by Gerrit Smith between 1852 and 1854.

Landscape Features

Other landscape features of the Gerrit Smith Estate include: the front walk, driveway, bluestone sidewalks, and traces of original garden plantings.

The main walkway to the mansion house is clearly visible as a rise in the surface topography that extends from the gate in the iron fence to the house foundation. A shovel test pit excavated on this rise encountered a layer of limestone gravel of the original walk. The driveway encircling the Smith mansion shown in nineteenth century photographs and the 1875 Beers map remains evident in the contours of the lawn to the south, east, and north of

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

the mansion site. Fine gravel can be observed in patches within the margins of the driveway. Gravel walks and a garden fountain shown in historic photos, located to the east of the mansion are not clearly visible on the ground surface. However, there are several potential foundation or footing stones located in this area of the yard that may be related to these features.

An intact length of a typical nineteenth century bluestone sidewalk remains along the southern perimeter of the nominated property. Sidewalks in Peterboro were installed through the philanthropy of Gerrit Smith in the mid-nineteenth century. Some evidence of the extensive ornamental gardens of the Gerrit Smith Estate survive. A large stand of Lily of the Valley and Narcissus are located immediately to the east of the Bird House, several ancient lilacs remain to the northwest of the mansion site, and a large Scots Pine is located to the north of the land office

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 21**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National
Register Criteria:

A X B X C ___ D X

Criteria Considerations
(Exceptions):

A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria:

1, 2

NHL Theme(s):

II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
2. reform movements
IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
1. parties, protests, movements
4. political ideas, cultures, theories

Areas of Significance:

Social History, Archaeology, Ethnic Heritage: black

Period(s) of Significance:

1819-1874

Significant Dates:

N/A

Significant Person(s):

Smith, Gerrit (1797-1874)

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Unknown

Historic Context:

XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements
D. Abolitionism

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 22**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Gerrit Smith Estate is significant for its strong associations with the life, business operations, and reform work of Gerrit Smith (1797-1874). Smith was a figure of national prominence in politics and social reform movements. Smith's wealth and numerous business ventures gave him the financial means to fund extensive reform efforts, mostly pertaining to abolition and temperance. Smith engaged in the abolition movement on numerous fronts, including active involvement in national Anti-Slavery societies, reform through political involvement, the Free Church movement, education reform, and land reform. Smith also openly defied the Fugitive Slave Act, and his large estate in Peterboro provided a widely-recognized safe haven for refugees from enslavement en route to Canada. In addition, Smith's estate served as an important gathering place for abolitionists interested in discussing the issues of the day and planning political action.

The estate's Land Office was the financial and real estate center of Smith's vast enterprise. With over 2000 active real estate accounts, according to grandson Gerrit Smith Miller--a "considerable clerical force was required to care for the flood of business that went through the [land] office."¹⁶ The estate's surviving buildings, open spaces and archaeological resources are of great significance in understanding Smith's role as a businessman, philanthropist, and social reformer, and in interpreting the history of the Underground Railroad.

Background

Peter Smith, Gerrit's father, was one of the original settlers of Madison County. Peter had spent years involved in the fur trade in the area as a partner with John Jacob Astor. He moved to Utica to set up a land office, learned the Oneida language and formed a close relationship with Chief Skenandor, after whom he named his first son. Peter used this relationship to negotiate a lease for a large tract of Oneida land. The lease was later invalidated by New York state, since by law, individuals could not negotiate for the purchase of Indian land, but the state later sold the land back to Smith. The legality of the purchase by New York state is still the subject of dispute.

As a result of this initial and subsequent transactions, Peter became one of the largest landholders in the state. He owned land in 54 of New York's 60 counties, which totaled over 700,000 acres and included 75,000 acres encompassing most of Madison County. Between 1804 and 1806, Peter had the house and land office in Peterboro built and moved his family there. Thus, the Smith family became one of the only owners of large tracts of land in upstate New York that actually moved to and lived on the land that they owned. The management and sale of these vast holdings during a period of great economic expansion in the state endowed the Smith family with great wealth and influence. The Town of Smithfield, established in 1807, and Peterboro, the principle settlement in the town, were named after Peter Smith.

Gerrit Smith was born in Utica in 1797. In 1814 he entered Hamilton College, graduated in 1818, and returned to Peterboro. In January of 1819 Gerrit married Wealtha Ann Backus, the daughter of Hamilton's president. According to a later deed, Gerrit and Wealtha lived in a house

¹⁶ Wagenen, "Gerrit Smith"

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 23**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

located on the eastern end of the hamlet of Peterboro.¹⁷ Wealtha died 7 months later. In 1819, Gerrit's mother died, and Peter decided to retire from active life. He turned over the management of his extensive property to Smith and Daniel Cady, Gerrit's uncle, and Peter moved to Schenectady. That same year Smith moved into the Mansion house.

In 1822 Smith married Ann Carroll Fitzhugh of Rochester, formerly of Maryland. Ann was devoutly religious and appears to have been extremely influential in her husband's religious conversion and the development of the moral philosophy fundamental to his beliefs about social reform and slavery. The Smith's joined the Peterboro Presbyterian Church in 1826. Their marriage resulted in seven children.

Gerrit Smith used his mansion and the hamlet of Peterboro as the base of his extensive business and philanthropic concerns. In business, Smith is mostly known for his extensive land holdings throughout the state. This included managing the land acquired by his father, but the son also amassed new holdings of his own. Smith also owned much of downtown Oswego and was instrumental in the building of the Oswego Canal. The canal increased his property values in Oswego and the canal became his most lucrative investment. He was also involved in railroads, banks, and many other business concerns. Despite fiscal troubles during the Panic of 1837, Smith's income from his landholdings during the 1840s and 1850s was estimated at over \$60,000 per year.¹⁸

Even with all his wealth, business interests, and political dealings, Smith is best known in terms of philanthropy and social reform. The list of his involvements is extensive, although abolition, temperance, education and religious reform, and land reform were among his prime concerns. While these reform activities may strike us as unrelated, J. L. Friedman has argued that Gerrit Smith was committed to the ideology of cultural voluntarism, the notion that all people had the right to unfettered freedom, but the cultural obligation to use that freedom morally. Smith believed that cultural voluntarism could be readily achieved at the local level and in small communities where people were on intimate terms. This context helps to explain why Smith concentrated much of his reform energies and funds in local level activities centered on his community of Peterboro. All of Smith's activities, whether abolition, temperance, education, religion, or land reform, reflect Smith's commitment to the idea that effective reform had to be local and emphasized the context of Peterboro. Gerrit Smith died on December 28, 1874 while visiting a relative in New York City, and was buried in the Peterboro village cemetery with his family.¹⁹

After his death, Gerrit Smith's Peterboro estate continued to be occupied by his grandson Gerrit Smith Miller and appears to have remained physically intact into the twentieth century. In 1936 the mansion burned to the ground, forcing Miller to relocate. The estate buildings and grounds declined but remained largely unaltered. Recently, money was raised and the immediate house

¹⁷ Gerrit Smith & Ann to Samuel & Harriet Russell, Sept 1, 1846.

¹⁸ McKivigan, John R. and Madeleine Leveille, "The 'Black Dream' of Gerrit Smith, New York Abolitionist," *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* XX (1985): 51-76.

¹⁹ Friedman, L. J., "The Gerrit Smith Circle: Abolitionism in the Burned-Over District," *Civil War History* XXVI (1980): 23-25.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 24**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

property was bought by the Smithfield Community Center, and the land was donated to the Town of Smithfield, complementing the town's previous acquisition of the Peter Smith Land Office. In the 1980s, gravel was brought in to fill the mansion's cellar hole which had been open since the fire in 1936.

Criterion 1

The Gerrit Smith Estate is a property of exceptional significance for its long and widely recognized association with the national abolition movement and its prominent role in the operation and financing of the underground railroad. The surviving Land Office is representative of Smith's abolitionist passions because it was his family's land-based wealth that provided him the opportunity to support this and other reform causes as well as providing property on which to resettle escaped slaves. Although portions of the estate have declined, fallen into ruin, or have become archaeological sites, overall, the Land Office possesses a high level of integrity and retains the location, setting, feeling and association of its history-making period.

Abolitionism

Smith's involvement with bettering the plight of those enslaved was manifested as early as the 1820s when he became a member and benefactor of the American Colonization Society, an organization advocating the gradual emancipation, Christianization, education, and resettlement of African Americans to Africa.

The major turning point in Smith's philosophy on the issue of slavery—his “instructive providence”—occurred on October 21, 1835, when he “more out of curiosity than conviction” attended the Utica Convention, a gathering of 600 anti-slavery advocates at the Bleeker Street Presbyterian Church in Utica.²⁰ William Lloyd Garrison was a featured speaker. The meeting was suspended when a mob of 80 rioters, including Congressman Samuel Beardsley, stormed the church and drove the participants out of the building. The society was reconvened later that night in the temperance hotel, and Smith offered to host the first meeting the New York State Anti-Slavery Society the following day in Peterboro, where he served as a prominent speaker. The meeting was held at the Peterboro Presbyterian Church. The violence of the Utica mob attack and lack of respect for the principle of free speech led Smith to a less compromising advocacy of abolitionism.²¹

Smith served as the president of the New York Anti-Slavery Society between 1836 and 1839, and, by 1839, took the radical step of publically calling upon abolitionists to defy the law and help fugitives escape. Smith put these ideas into practice by participating in several high profile escapes, including that of Harriet Powell and the 1851 Jerry Rescue in Syracuse. Although tried

²⁰ Sernett, Milton C., “Common Cause: The Antislavery Alliance of Gerrit Smith and Beriah Green,” *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* XXI (1986): 55-76.

²¹ The Peterboro Presbyterian Church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 12, 1994 as Smithfield Presbyterian Church.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 25**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

in court for treason under the Fugitive Slave Act, Smith was not convicted. Smith also financially aided other abolitionists who ran afoul of the law.²²

Gerrit Smith also has a long history of social reform through political involvement at both state and national levels. In 1840, he played a significant role in the creation of the New York State Liberty Party (a party dedicated to the support of abolitionist candidates). Smith was nominated as the Liberty Party's candidate for Governor. Smith was elected to Congress in 1852 with the support of anti-slavery Whigs, Democrats, Free Democrats and other abolitionists. He served until his resignation in August of 1854, three months after the passage of the pro-slavery Kansas-Nebraska Act.

Upon his return to Peterboro, Smith continued to advocate for social and political causes including abolition, temperance, education, religious and land reform, women's suffrage, prison reform and the elimination of capital punishment, opposition to Masonic orders and tobacco use, and vegetarianism. In 1858, Smith became the People's State Ticket candidate for Governor and used his unsuccessful candidacy as a platform to speak out on the important issues of the day.

Smith ran for President of the United States in 1848, 1856 and 1860 on the abolitionist ticket. Although Smith was critical of Lincoln's more conservative attitude toward slavery, he supported him and the Republican administration throughout the Civil War. Smith campaigned for Lincoln's re-election in 1864 and became active in Republican politics thereafter, serving as a delegate to the party's convention in Philadelphia in 1868. Smith published several works, including a compilation of earlier speeches and letters and remained active in supporting the community of Peterboro.

Smith was vocal against what he saw as the culpability of established churches in supporting slavery. He broke away from the Peterboro Presbyterian Church in 1843 and organized an alternative "Free Church" in Peterboro. Smith called it the "Church of Peterboro", although it commonly became referred to as the "Free Church." The congregation used the meeting hall on the second floor of the temperance hotel until the church building was finished in 1847. The "Free Church" building still stands at the southeast end of Peterboro, although it has been extensively altered for use as a residence.

Very early in his career, Smith realized that education was a powerful tool in furthering the goals of freedom for African Americans. As early as 1826, Smith had the idea to found a seminary for "pious and promising" young Negro students to prepare for seminary.²³ Smith was a long time supporter of the Oneida Institute, near Utica, New York, which enrolled more African-Americans than any other college during the 1830s and 1840s. In addition to periodic direct financial aide, Smith also donated 3,000 acres in Vermont to the school in the aftermath of the Panic of 1837. Mimicking his assistance to escaped slaves, Smith in 1837 also offered employment at his

²² Sernett, Milton C., "On Freedom's Threshold: The African American Presence in Central New York, 1760-1940," In *The African American Presence in New York State History*, ed. by M. Fordham (Albany: New York African American Institute, 1989), 63.

²³ Harlow, *Gerrit Smith*, 60.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 26**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Peterboro estate to the family of the Oneida Institute's President, Beriah Green, when he learned that Green had worked without compensation during the panic.²⁴

In 1834 Smith opened a manual labor school for "colored boys" at Peterboro. Smith furnished free instruction, board, room, fuel, light, stationary, and books. In return, the students would work for four hours each day on his farm, at some mechanical trade, or doing their own wash. The students were served no tea or coffee, and meat but once a day, and had to sign a pledge abstaining from all intoxicating drinks and tobacco. The manual labor school was located on the Smith Estate, although the exact location is not known. It is not clear if the school operated in a separate building constructed for that purpose, or if an extant building such as the lodge or barn was utilized. The school was closed at the end of summer 1836. In 1836 Smith received a petition signed by six of the students begging him to reconsider closing the school. It is possible that the school failed due to Smith's financial burdens.²⁵

Smith also used his great wealth and extensive land holdings to attempt the large scale settlement of an estimated 3,000 African Americans (in 1846) and 500 whites (in 1848) by selling farm tracts for one dollar each. Smith's policy of selling farm-sized parcels was contrary to the more common regional practice of leasing property to tenants. One little-recognized impact of these sales--in the days of property qualifications--was to enfranchise each of the land owners Smith sponsored, a fact that must have assisted Smith's political successes.²⁶ To qualify for this gift, the individual had to be over 21 and younger than 60, could not already have land or property, and could not be drunkards. Smith attempted to insure this last stipulation by requiring all recipients to sign a total abstinence pledge. The resettlement project, involving the transfer of about 140,000 acres of land, was unsuccessful in many respects due to the poor quality and location of many of the farms and the inability of many of the new landowners to achieve self-sufficiency with their limited resources, knowledge of farming, and experience. Many of these farms were subsequently lost at tax sales.²⁷

The Smith family hosted many of the leading abolitionists of the antebellum period, and the Peterboro estate became a recognized financial and intellectual center of the anti-slavery movement. Frequent visitors included his close friend William Lloyd Garrison, publisher and founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society; Frederick Douglass, a refugee from slavery who became a prominent abolitionist lecturer and publisher; John Brown, a fanatical abolitionist who resorted to violence in the Kansas Territory in 1856 and later led the 1859 attack on the United States Arsenal at Harper's Ferry; and Harriet Tubman, one of the Underground Railroad's most successful and famous conductors. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Smith's cousin, also visited Peterboro and became strongly influenced by his abolitionist principles. Stanton subsequently

²⁴ Sernett, Milton C. "Common Cause."

²⁵ Harlow, *Gerrit Smith*, 61; Sernett, "Common Cause."

²⁶ Campbell, A. E., *Gerrit Smith*.

²⁷ Dyson, Z., "Gerrit Smith's Efforts in Behalf of the Negroes in New York," *Journal of Negro History* III(4): 354-359. The farms, ranging in size from 40 to 60 acres, were located in Franklin, Essex, Hamilton, Fulton, Oneida, Delaware, and Madison Counties, New York.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 27**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

extended and amplified these principles in her advocacy of women's rights. Smith was also visited by Horace Greely, publisher of the abolitionist *New York Tribune*; Senator Charles Sumner, a vitriolic critic of slavery; Lucy Stone, abolitionist and women's rights advocate; and Salmon P. Chase, Treasury Secretary under Abraham Lincoln. Many of these guests were featured speakers at the "Free Church."

Smith also had relations with radicals within the Abolitionist movement: he sold John Brown a 244 acre tract in North Elba, Essex County, New York in 1846 at a reduced price of \$1 per acre.²⁸ Brown lived on this farm for 3 years after 1849 and his family continued to reside there after his removal to Kansas in the 1850s. Smith hosted Brown in his Peterboro home in 1858 and in April, 1859, leading to speculation that Smith not only knew of, but financially supported Brown's October 21, 1859 attack on Harper's Ferry. Upon learning of Brown's defeat and subsequent capture, Smith committed himself to the Utica State Hospital, removing himself from participation in the Grand Jury investigation of the affair. At the time, skeptics claimed that he was avoiding justice for his part in the scheme by feigning insanity, a charge Smith vigorously denied. Current analysis of Smith's mental state suggests that he may have suffered from some sort of bipolar disorder.²⁹

Given the diversity of these reform efforts, Gerrit Smith was clearly a "practical" abolitionist, and that these concerns structured much of his life and work. Smith's reforms ranged from local to national level activities, yet it is clear that he devoted a great deal of effort to operationalize these reforms at the local level concentrating on his home in Peterboro. The "Free Church," manual labor school, and Temperance Hotel are all manifestations of Smith's commitment to reform at the local level.

Underground Railroad

In addition to abolition activities, Gerrit Smith engaged in more immediate efforts to free African-Americans. Smith's mansion in Peterboro has been referred to as the Grand Central Station of the Underground Railroad. Smith's underground railroad activities took many forms and included hiding refugees from enslavement, purchasing the freedom of enslaved individuals, and assisting them with financial aide.³⁰

The estate was located at the junction of several popular Underground Railroad routes through central New York. From Peterboro, the well-traveled paths ran into Canada via Lewiston, Rochester, Sodus Point, Fairhaven, Oswego and Cape Vincent. It is no coincidence that a common route lead from Smith's Peterboro mansion to Oswego, where Smith owned much of the waterfront area and had loyal employees.

²⁸ The John Brown Farm and Gravesite was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1998.

²⁹ Mc Kivigan and Leveille, "Black Dream."

³⁰ Case, R. G., *Civil War Scrapbook: Syracuse was Vital Link in Underworld Railroad*. (New York: *Syracuse Herald-American*, 1961). Dann, "Underground in Peterboro."

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 28**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

One of the most famous examples of Smith's Underground Railroad activities deals with the rescue of Harriet Powell. Harriet Powell had been brought to a fashionable hotel in Syracuse by the Davenports of Mississippi in 1839. She was approached by Tom Leonard, a black waiter in the hotel who learned that she would like to escape. Leonard passed on the information to abolitionists who helped her escape. She was taken to Marcellus, and then to DeWitt before arriving at Smith's Peterboro estate.³¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton describes spending an afternoon talking to Harriet while she hid on the third floor of the Smith mansion.³² Smith helped her reach Canada via Oswego. In 1840, Charlotte Hales of Kingston wrote to Smith to reassure him that Harriet arrived in Kingston safely and was living with their family. She goes on to say that:

Harriet begs me to give her very kind love to you, Mrs. Smith and Laura and any of her kind friends you may see. She wishes me to tell you that she feels very grateful to you all for your great kindness in assisting her to obtain her freedom.

Smith's extensive landholdings in New York fostered his activities along the Underground Railroad. In Oswego, John B. Edwards (Smith's agent for over 40 years) and his wife Lydia documented their efforts on behalf of escaped slaves in frequent correspondence with Smith. In July 1847, Edwards wrote that "Nine poor fugitives from slavery's prison left this port last evening for Canada. They were I am told in much fear that pursuers's were after them. They said that they left in a company of 100 and that about 60 of their number were captured before they got out of the slave states." Early in 1852, Edwards noted that "the fugitive slave Dorsey came to me today with your letter. I have put him aboard a vessel bound for Canada and gave him \$1.00." In March 1860, Edwards reported that "the young colored man that was at your house last week arrived at my house last evening. I shall keep him a few days to recuperate."³³

Gerrit Smith was actively involved in the dramatic "Jerry Rescue." On October 1, 1851 William McHenry, commonly known as "Jerry," was arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act. Jerry was a refugee from slavery who had lived and worked in Syracuse for more than a year. While at work on October 1st, he was arrested and taken into custody. Upon news of Jerry's arrest, the Liberty Party convention, then meeting in Syracuse, was adjourned and Smith and Rev. Samuel May went to the arraignment. They took seats near the prisoner's council while Abner Bates rang church bells in accordance with the Vigilance Committee's response plan. A crowd grew and several members of the Vigilance Committee made an unsuccessful attempt to free him. On the evening of his recapture, a group, including Smith, met at Dr. Hoyt's office and planned an escape. Ultimately, the rescue involved packing the police office with people, the sheer numbers of which overwhelmed the police. The crowd was successful in extracting Jerry from custody and away from the site. Jerry was hidden in Syracuse for four days, and then reached Kingston, Ontario via a schooner departing from Oswego.³⁴

³¹ Sernett, "On Freedom's Threshold," 62.

³² Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*, 62.

³³ Wellman, Judith, "John B. and Lydia Edwards." In *The Underground Railroad in Central New York: A Research Guide*. (http://www.oswego.edu/Acad_Dept/a_and_s/history/ugrr/edwards.html)

³⁴ Sperry, E. E., *The Jerry Rescue, October 1, 1824*. (New York: Onondaga Historical Association, 1924), 24.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 29**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

In another well known example, Harriet Tubman frequently passed through Peterboro. Harriet Tubman was self-liberated from slavery and returned to the south nineteen times to aide other enslaved individuals north to freedom. It is likely that Tubman passed through Peterboro on each of these trips.³⁵ She recollected that the Smith barn and kitchen floor were utilized as resting places for the many fugitives which she conducted through Peterboro.³⁶

In addition to his direct assistance to escaping slaves, Gerrit Smith also intervened directly by purchasing an individual's freedom and arranging for their travel to Peterboro. The best known example of this practice is his purchase of the Russell family. Harriet Russell was given to Smith's wife Ann when they were both children. In early 1841, Smith contacted Samuel Worthington, Harriet and Samuel's current owner, to purchase their freedom. Despite disagreement over the price, by August the deal was completed. The Russell's settled in Peterboro and worked for the Smith family for decades.

In another example, Smith lamented the fact that he could not assist George R. Williams to the full extent that he desired. He wrote, "My hands are full with my present engagements. Some of these engagements are to help purchase the liberty of slaves." Smith did, however, give \$50 to help purchase Williams' brother, and \$25 to assist purchasing a child, possibly Williams' child.³⁷ Despite difficulties in negotiations, Smith continued purchasing, or assisting in the purchase, of individuals' freedom throughout the 1840s and into the 1850s.³⁸

Smith was passionate in his resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act. In 1860, Smith's legal associate, Lysander Spooner, presented the case of John Anderson. A fugitive slave, Anderson had killed a farmer in upstate New York who had been trying to capture him. After an escape to Toronto, Smith traveled to Canada to render assistance to Anderson and prevent his extradition to the United States.³⁹

³⁵ Haskins, *Get on Board*, 58.

³⁶ Dann, "Underground in Peterboro," 7. Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*, 51.

³⁷ *The North Star*, Jan. 19, 1849.

³⁸ For example, there are a series of letters from the 1850s from L. E. Simmonds of New Orleans that deal with this issue. Simmonds was the executor of a will that stipulated that the slaves of the deceased should be freed. Simmons wrote Smith that 50 persons were involved. Simmons to Smith, February 11, 1852.

³⁹ Shively, Charles, *The Collected Works of Lysander Spooner* (M&S Press, 1971). Smith and Spooner were linked several times in the anti-slavery crusade as patron and client. In the 1850s Smith had sponsored Spooner's legal broadside on the "Unconstitutionality of Slavery" and "A Plan for the Abolition of Slavery." Ironically, Spooner was Smith's counsel for a libel suit brought against a New York newspaper that had falsely accused Smith as the author of the abolition plan. Spooner's own testimony fostered a \$2,000 out-of-court settlement which Smith signed over to his lawyer as payment for "writing your admirable books."

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 30**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

African-Americans at the Gerrit Smith Estate

Given Smith's activism with abolition and the Underground Railroad, one might expect that more blacks made their home in Peterboro than in other New York communities. By 1870, "census figures indicate that the town of Smithfield in which the village of Peterboro is located had a higher proportion of African-American residents than any other town in Madison County."⁴⁰ Census information collected for the Town of Smithfield provides the potential to link names, roles and occupations of the individuals mentioned in the Smith papers with the rest of the community, as well as the means to access the material conditions of the African-Americans living there.

The 1850 federal population schedules are the first that give detailed household and occupation information, along with real estate values. The total number of blacks and mulattos enumerated for the Town of Smithfield in 1850 is 55, representing 11 families. Of these individuals, 13 have occupations listed; 9 were laborers and 4 farmers. Only 6 of the heads of household owned any real estate, averaging \$371. The average real estate value for the white population, with Gerrit Smith evaluation removed so as not to skew the results, is \$1,942, over four times the average for African-American households.

The 1855 New York state population schedule contains a total of 71 blacks or mulattoes, encompassing 15 families, including three individuals who worked as servants in white households. Again, 13 individuals had occupations listed: 7 farmers, 4 laborers, 1 grocery man, and 1 servant. Only one of these is listed as owning land. Instead of providing information of value of real estate, the state schedules list house value. In 1855, the average house value for African-American families was \$300, while their white neighbors lived in houses with an average value of \$770; over twice the value of black houses. By 1865, the differences in house value are even more striking, with African-Americans living in houses with an average value of \$200, while white households had an average house value of \$922. For 1875, 15 of 72 blacks or mulattoes had occupations listed: 11 were farm laborers, 2 farmers, 1 servant, and 1 teamster. Deed research shows that at this time only one of the farmers owned land. John West, the only African American farmer in Smithfield that from the records appears to have done well financially, went bankrupt in the 1860s.

The general patterns evident from the census data indicate that the living standards of blacks and mulattoes in the community were much lower than whites. There also seems to be a rapid turnover in the population, with few families appearing in more than one census year. For pre-civil war censuses, this might be interpreted as evidence of the Underground Railroad. This does not seem to be the case. The 1850, 1855, 1860 censuses show that the overwhelming majority of African Americans were born in New York state— adults as well as children. Their pattern of migration is not well understood, but seems to correspond more to the movements associated generally with lower class and laboring families, whether black or white.

These general patterns can be explored in more depth by examining the particular histories of several African American families that are directly connected with the life and reform efforts of

⁴⁰ Dann, *Underground Peterboro*, 8.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 31**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Gerrit Smith. These family portraits were selected to present the widest array of the African American experience at the Gerrit Smith Estate.

The Russell Family

Gerrit purchased the freedom of at least one family of his wife's family's slaves. Harriet and Samuel Russell had been enslaved by the Fitzhughs in Maryland. Smith tracked them to Kentucky, purchased their freedom and the family moved to Peterboro. The Russells named their first child born in New York "Gerrit" in honor of their patron.

On August 25, 1841, during negotiations with their current owner, Samuel Worthington, Smith noted that:

Samuel and Harriet will probably go in to housekeeping as soon as he arrives. We hope to find places in good families for the three oldest children; and then with modest industry on their part, Samuel and Harriet can support their diminished family.

The Smiths wrote a letter to the Russells on October 1, 1841 that outlines the efforts they had expended on their behalf and sets forth their hopes for their future:

Dear Friends,

We have purchased your liberty and that of your five children, and paid, therefore \$3500. In addition, we have paid several hundred dollars to defray your traveling expenses and those of the dear friend James C. Fuller who went for you. We now consent to let you occupy until 1st April next without rent the small white house opposite Mr. Schofield's. The few articles of clothing which we let you have and of furniture which consist of beds, bedding, table, chairs, etc. etc, we give to you. We also give you ten dollars in money. And now we say to you that this little outfit is all in the way of property which you are to expect from us. For the means of your subsistence hereafter you are to look under God to your own industry and frugality and prudence. Our advice is, that Samuel should seek employment immediately in one of the large towns in this vicinity--and that the two oldest girls be put into families where they will be feed and clothed and educated without any expense to yourselves. We beg you to be very industrious-- and to lay up as much as you can of your earnings, so that you may in the course of four or five years be able to buy a little home for yourselves. But above all, we beg you to seek the salvation of your own and your children's souls, and to lay up treasure in Heaven.

Attached to the letter is a testimonial that Samuel could use to search for employment that states "he is better fitted for employment as a coachman or as the head waiter in a private family or public house than for any other situation." By November of that same year, Smith reported to James C. Fuller that "Samuel went to Syracuse last Monday to seek employment. Mary went with the Barney's to Michigan, and Emily lives with me."

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 32**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Only one deed was located for the Russell family. The indenture, dated September 1, 1846, was between Gerrit and Ann Smith and Samuel and Harriet Russell. According to the deed, this is the same house that Gerrit lived in from 1818 to 1819 when he returned to the village after graduating from Hamilton. His first wife, Wealtha, died upon the premises in 1819. Smith transferred the property to the Russells, quote, “for the sum of \$1 and of his desire to have all share in the means of subsistence and happiness which a bountiful God has provided for all.”

The Russells frequently appear in the Smith family papers. From 1849 to 1850, Samuel was paid a total of \$11.43 for chopping wood, after which he received a letter to aide his search for employment elsewhere. Emily and William Russell each appear in Caleb Calkins expense records once for “pay.” In 1864, William Russell and his wife were paid \$10 “to clean.” Interestingly, Harriet Russell appears most frequently in these ledgers. In the records that have been examined that date from 1854 to 1870, Harriet appears many times, collecting pay from the Smiths for washing. It would appear as if Harriet Russell routinely did the Smith family wash and would have been the individual that most frequently utilized the laundry building on the Smith Estate.

John “Dominie” West

John West, known as the “Dominie,” was born to enslavement in 1816. His birthplace is alternately listed in the censuses as Maryland and Virginia. The 1855 census lists that he was born in Maryland and that he has lived in the area for two years, moving to Peterboro when he was 37 years old. While there is no data to indicate how John West came to Peterboro, it is likely that he came north via the Underground Railroad. John Woodbury describes Dominie West as “a little hunchback slave who was brought north by Gerrit Smith.” No deeds have been located that would suggest that John West owned land in Peterboro; however, it is commonly known that Smith allowed “The Dominie” to build a store on his estate property. He may have lived at the store as well. Woodbury describes John West as a “colored” preacher, and that Smith often asked “The Dominie” to lead the singing of the class meetings at the Free Church.⁴¹

Both 1855 and 1860 censuses list John West with the occupation of grocer. In 1855 West lived in a house valued at \$100. John West is not listed in the 1865 census although the cemetery records indicate he died in 1868. The 1868-69 Gazetteer and Business Directory of Madison County lists him as a grocer and shoe maker. John West only appears in the Smith family account books twice. In both cases dated to 1864, West was paid for the repair of a blanket, with amounts totaling 25 and 37 cents.

John West died on Christmas morning in 1868 in his store. Smith had his store removed and the land incorporated into his estate grounds. The exact location of the store is not known. John “Dominie” West’s gravestone in the Peterboro Community Cemetery reads: “Born a Slave, December 25, 1816 / Died a Freeman December 25, 1868 / Deformed in Body But Beautiful in Spirit.”

⁴¹ Woodbury, *Peterboro Village*.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 33**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Hanson Williams

Hanson Williams was born enslaved in 1841 in Maryland. Gerrit Smith Miller recalls that Williams had formerly belonged to his grandmother's brother William Fitzhugh in Maryland. Miller also recounts that Williams came to Peterboro via the Underground Railroad a short time before the war in 1861. He was educated in the Peterboro village school. Hanson Williams first appears in our records of the Smith family papers on December 23, 1863 when he was paid \$42.75. Williams must have enlisted soon after this reference, since during the Civil War he fought with a white regiment, the 22nd N.Y. Vol. Cavalry, and served as corporal with honor until peace was declared.⁴²

Beginning in December 1865, Williams worked steadily for the Smith family and appears frequently in the ledgers for pay. Few tasks are listed, but include pumping, cutting paths, driving team, and cutting ice. Williams was also reimbursed for expenses incurred when he traveled to Pecksport, Canastota, and Cazenovia, suggesting that he often traveled to execute Smith family business. Gerrit Smith Miller began farming in 1869 and hired Williams as foreman, a position he held for 25 years. Williams appears in the 1870 census as a farm laborer with \$1,000 in real estate. He died in 1911 and is buried in the Peterboro Cemetery next to his wife Lucy who died in 1885.

These few family portraits clearly indicate that African-Americans have been an integral part of the Gerrit Smith Estate and the Peterboro community from the time that Peter Smith owned slaves in 1810 until the present since descendants of the Russell family still make their home there. This summary also highlights the fact that African Americans routinely used almost every area of the Gerrit Smith Estate: Harriet Russell worked in the laundry, William Russell and his wife cleaned on the estate, Dominic West's store was located there, and Hanson Williams packed ice in the ice house.

NHL Criterion 2

The Gerrit Smith Estate satisfies Criterion 2 as the property most significantly associated with the life, business operations, and reform work of Gerrit Smith (1797-1874).

Gerrit Smith was a figure of national prominence in politics and social reform movements including temperance, abolition and the Underground Railroad, and women's rights. Gerrit Smith ranks as one of the five top abolitionist leaders in New York, along with James G. Barney, Alvan Stewart, Beriah Green, and William Goodell, all frequent visitors to Peterboro. Gerrit Smith is recognized as one of the most significant national figures in the Underground Railroad and abolition movements.⁴³

⁴² Decker, *Kriemheld Herd*.

⁴³ Sorin, G., *The New York Abolitionists, A Case Study of Political Radicalism. Contributions in American History* 11. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1971), 25. Tyler-McGraw, M. and K. R. Badamo, *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States Theme Study*. (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1998).

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 34**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

A controversial and complex figure within the history of mid-nineteenth century America, Smith was described as “majestic in personal appearance. ‘Tall, magnificently built and proportioned, his large head [was] superbly set upon his shoulders [so that] he might have served as a model for a Greek God in the days when men defied beauty and worshiped it.’” He also was noted for his “disarmingly gracious temperament and affectionate disposition, the epitome of the earnest Christian.” Smith was an “excellent public speaker, gifted with a melodious voice and an attractive presence.” Perhaps his only flaw was a “devil of uneasiness” that drove him to join too many causes, weakening his resolve on any one issue. Clearly, his mental breakdown after John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry illustrates the passion of his convictions towards anti-slavery.

The Peterboro estate served as Smith’s place of business and principal residence during much of his career, and was inextricably connected to his involvement with the Underground Railroad. Smith’s use of his estate as an Underground Railroad Station and as the headquarters for numerous aspects of his efforts in abolition and other social reform movements have been discussed above. Since Smith emphasized the local conditions of reform, his estate in Peterboro served as the center of his activities. Smith put his reform ideals into practice in Peterboro through the manual labor school, the Free Church of Peterboro, the temperance hotel, resettling formerly enslaved individuals and giving them work at his estate, and helping to find employment for other refugees that passed through Peterboro.

The estate also served as an important gathering place for abolitionists interested in discussing the issues of the day and planning political action.⁴⁴ Any list of the individuals who visited Gerrit Smith reads like a who’s who of nineteenth century American history, and includes Harriet Tubman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her husband Henry, Frederick Douglas, James Barney, Charles Sumner, William Loyd Garrison, Jermaine Lougen, Samuel Ward, Beriah Green, and John Brown. John Brown visited Peterboro and stayed with Gerrit Smith, supposedly while planning Brown’s fateful raid on Harper’s Ferry, which Smith probably helped fund.⁴⁵

As the primary locus of Gerrit Smith’s activities, his estate’s surviving buildings, open spaces and archaeological resources are of great significance in understanding Smith’s role as a businessman, philanthropist, and social reformer of national repute. One of Smith’s obituaries, published in the *New York Times* on the following day, claims that:

The history of the most important half century of our national life will be imperfectly written if it fails to place Gerrit Smith in the front rank of the men whose influence was most felt in the accomplishments of its results. Without official participation in politics, beyond a single session in Congress, he was active and powerful in forming the public sentiment that controlled politicians.

⁴⁴ Milton C. Sernett, “Common Cause” quotes Mary S. Bull’s contemporary description of Smith.

⁴⁵ Renehan, E. J., *The Secret Six: The True Tale of the Men Who Conspired with John Brown* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 35**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

With the exception of a brief period in the 1840s and his temporary residence in Washington D.C. during his single term in Congress, Gerrit Smith's Estate in Peterboro represented his home, place of business, and center of his reform-oriented endeavors for 55 years.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 36**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Campbell, A. E.

1931 Gerrit Smith. *Mohawk Valley*, pp.11.

Case, R.G.

1961 Civil War Scrapbook: Syracuse was Vital Link in Underworld Railroad. *Syracuse Herald-American*. Syracuse, New York, 1961.

Collison, Gary

1998 Revisiting the Underground Railroad. *CRM* (4):7-10

Conrad, E.

1943 *Harriet Tubman*. Associated Publishers, Washington, D.C.

Crawford & Stearns

1994 The Peterboro Land Office Condition Assessment. Prepared for: Town of Smithfield, Peterboro, New York.

Dann, N. K.

1995 Underground in Peterboro: The Significance of Peterboro, New York as a Station on the Underground Railroad. Unpublished manuscript.

Decker, F. N.

1923 *Kriemheld Herd: A Chapter in Holstein History*. Frank Norton Decker, Syracuse, New York.

Dyson, Z.

1918 Gerrit Smith's Efforts in Behalf of the Negroes in New York. *Journal of Negro History* III(4):354-359.

Ernenwein, R. P.

1970 *The Borough of Peter*. Heritage Press, Sherburne, New York.

Fordham, Monroe, editor

1989 The African American Presence in New York State History: Four Regional History Essays. New York African American Institute, Albany, New York.

Friedman, L. J.

1980 The Gerrit Smith Circle: Abolitionism in the Burned-Over District. *Civil War History* XXVI(1):18-38.

Frothingham, O. B.

1878 *Gerrit Smith: A Biography*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 37**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Hammond, L. M.

1872 *History of Madison County*. Truir, Smith & Co., Syracuse.

Harlow, A. V.

1939 *Gerrit Smith: Philanthropist and Reformer*. Henry Holt and Company, New York.

Haskins, J.

1993 *Get on Board: The Story of the Underground Railroad*. Scholastic Books, New York.

Hern, Chester G.

1996 *Companions in Conspiracy: John Brown & Gerrit Smith*. Thomas Publications, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Kammen, Carol

1998 The UGRR and Local History. *CRM* (4):11-13.

McKivigan, John R. and Madeleine Leveille

1985 The "Black Dream" of Gerrit Smith, New York Abolitionist. *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* XX(2):51-76.

McKivigan, John R. and Madeleine Leveille McKivigan

1984 "He Stands Like Jupiter": The Autobiography of Gerrit Smith. *New York History* 65:188-200.

Renehan, E. J.

1997 *The Secret Six: The True Tale of the Men Who Conspired with John Brown*. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia.

Sernett, Milton C.

1986 *Common Cause: The Antislavery Alliance of Gerrit Smith and Beriah Green*. *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* XXI(2):55-76.

Sernett, Milton C.

1989 On Freedom's Threshold: The African American Presence in Central New York, 1760-1940. In *The African American Presence in New York State History*, edited by M. Fordham. New York African American Institute, Albany, New York.

Shively, Charles

1971 *The Collected Works of Lysander Spooner*. M&S Press.
[Http://www.lysanderspooner.org](http://www.lysanderspooner.org).

Smith, J. H.

1880 *History of Madison County, New York*. D. Mason & Co., Syracuse, New York.

Smith, M. M.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 38**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1963 Smiths are Backbone of Peterboro's Past. In *Syracuse Post-Standard*, Syracuse, New York.

Sorin, G.

1971 *The New York Abolitionists, A Case Study of Political Radicalism*. Contributions in American History 11. Greenwood Publishing Corporation, Westport, Connecticut.

Sperry, E. E.

1924 *The Jerry Rescue, October 1, 1824*. Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, New York.

Stanton, E. C.

1971 *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897*. Schocken Books, New York.

Tyler-McGraw, M. and K. R. Badamo

1998 *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States Theme Study*. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

Wagenen, J. V.

1927 The Story of Gerrit Smith. In *American Agriculturalist*. vol. Dec 3.

Ward, Geoffrey C.

1995 Terror, Practical and Impractical. In *American Heritage*. September 1995.

Wellman, Judith

n.d. "John B. and Lydia Edwards." In *The Underground Railroad in Central New York: A Research Guide*. "http://www.oswego.edu/Acad_Dept/a_and_s/history/ugrr/edwards.html.

Woodbury, J.

1923 Peterboro Village of Long Years Ago. In *Madison County Leader*.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 39**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register.
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark.
 Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University (Syracuse University Library)
 Other (Specify Repository): Smithfield Historian's Office, Kirkwood, NY

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 7.78 Acres

UTM References:	Point	Zone	Easting	Northing
	1	18	444090	4757381
	2	18	444091	4757283
	3	18	443994	4757198
	4	18	443892	4757198
	5	18	443876	4757304

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Gerrit Smith Estate contains lots 15.1, 15.12, and 15.13 in the Town of Smithfield, hamlet of Peterboro. The property is bounded by Oneida Creek at the north; eastern and southern sections of David Brown's lot to the east; The north side of Main Street at the south; and the east side of Nelson Street to the west. These boundaries are illustrated on the attached map.

Boundary Justification:

The three lots described above comprise the historic core of the Gerrit Smith Estate and contain the only extant physical remains associated with Smith's use of and occupation of the estate between 1819 and 1874. The boundary separates surviving portions of the estate grounds from properties not historically associated with the estate and former estate lands to the east which no longer retain integrity.

SMITH, GERRIT ESTATE**Page 40**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: LouAnn Wurst, Ph.D.

Address: Department of Anthropology
SUNY C at Brockport
Brockport, NY 14420

Telephone: (716)395-5706

Research performed by: Melody Mitchell
Department of Anthropology
Syracuse University
Syracuse, NY 13422

Katie Marion, intern
National Park Service/ Washington Office
History Division
P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127
202-343-3793

Date: September 21, 2001

Edited by: John H. Sprinkle, Jr.
National Historic Landmarks Survey
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Telephone: 202/343-8166

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY