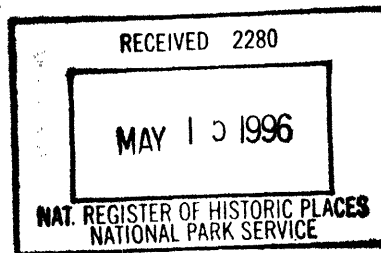


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

New Submission                       Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

THE HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES OF THE TOWN OF ORLEANS, JEFFERSON COUNTY, NY

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period of each.)

1. Penet's Square and Early Settlement, 1798 - 1817
2. John LaFarge and Town Development, 1817 - 1837
3. Rise in Agriculture, 1835 - c.1925
4. Commercial Prosperity and Civic-Mindedness, c.1837 - c.1900
5. The Railroad and Commercial Prosperity, 1871 - 1973
6. Twentieth-Century Transition, 1898 - 1995

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Linda M. Garofalini, Program Analyst  
organization NYSOPRHP date 11/20/95  
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city or town WATERFORD state NY zip code 12188-0189

Research & Documentation provided by: Claire Bonney  
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4057 Basel  
Switzerland

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

JW Adams  
Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation  
Signature of certifying official

27 Nov. '95  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

for Robert Sarge  
Signature of the Keeper

6/28/96  
Date of Action

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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**Historic Contexts:**

1. Penet's Square and Early Settlement, 1798 - 1817
2. John LaFarge and Town Development, 1817 - c.1837
3. Rise in Agriculture, 1835 - c.1925
4. Commercial Prosperity and Civic-Mindedness, c.1837 - c.1900
5. The Railroad and Commercial Prosperity, 1871 - 1973
6. Twentieth-Century Transition, 1898 - 1995

**Introduction**

The Town of Orleans, Jefferson County, New York, with its 28,922.5 acres, is a predominately rural, agrarian town located in the northwest section of the county. The town was formed from the town of Brownville in 1821 with portions of it taken off to form the towns of Pamela and Clayton in 1829 and 1833.<sup>1</sup> Orleans is bounded on the north by the St. Lawrence River with Canada beyond, and the town of Alexandria. To the east, south and west are the towns of Theresa, LeRay, Pamela, Brownville, and Clayton, respectively.

Orleans covers approximately 74.6 square miles of relatively flat, rolling terrain and has a population of 2,248.<sup>2</sup> The soil is clay and loam. As in much of Jefferson County, the Town of Orleans' prevailing winds are cold southwesterly ones blowing off Lake Ontario and making the weather side of structures the south side. The township is a long rectilinear shape with an appendage that extends northward to include the southwestern half of Wellesley Island, the largest American island in the St. Lawrence. The majority of the land on Wellesley Island lying within the town boundaries is unsettled and much is under the administration of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Four state parks are located within the township: De Wolf Point State Park, Waterson Point State Park and Wellesley Island State Park are located on Wellesley Island while Grass Point State Park is on the mainland. A large, unsettled portion of the southeastern edge of the town is part of the New York State Perch River Game Management Area and is characterized by marsh and wetlands around Perch Lake and the reservoir. Major transportation routes in the community include N.Y.S. Route 180, a north-south road, and County Route 181, an east-west road, which bisects the town at LaFargeville. Interstate Route 81 skirts the eastern edge of the town and has one exit servicing the central portion of the town. With

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1. J.H. French, *Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State*, Syracuse: R.P. Smith, 1869, p. 359. The boundary between the towns of Orleans and Alexandria has been changed twice.
  2. Jefferson County Planning Department, 1990 census.

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the exception of the interstate highway, current thoroughfares follow important nineteenth-century transportation routes which determined much of the community's historic development. Natural waterways in addition to the St. Lawrence and the Perch Rivers include the Chaumont River that has its source in the town and flows through LaFargeville.

Density is highest in the eight hamlets (LaFargeville, Stone Mills, Fishers Landing, Thousand Island Park, Omar, Collins Landing, DelaFarge Corners, Orleans Four Corners) throughout the town, with the largest settlements at LaFargeville (population 500), Stone Mills, Fishers Landing, and Thousand Island Park. Density decreases outside of these settlements to a rural agricultural landscape that characterizes the town. Hamlets are usually located at crossroads of transportation routes (land or water) and/or at sources of water power. As a result, all but one were settled by the mid-nineteenth century; only **Thousand Island Park** on the tip of Wellesley Island (listed on the National Register in 1982) was established in 1875.<sup>3</sup> More typically, the hamlets were small settlements that supplied the immediate needs of the surrounding farms. Each hamlet was likely to have a small store, perhaps with a post office, one or two churches, a schoolhouse, and one or two businesses such as a mill, a cheese factory, a wagon shop, or a blacksmith shop. There were also a few residences on small lots for workers in the area. The region has an abundant source of blue limestone lying very close to the surface and, as a result, many of the town's earliest structures were constructed of stone.

While **Thousand Island Park** is primarily a seasonal recreational settlement, LaFargeville has been and continues to be the permanent year-round focus of community activities. LaFargeville has the benefit of being on the main north-south routes through the town as well as being centrally located within the boundaries of the town. Most of the town's business is transacted here with the town clerk's office located on Main Street. The majority of the town's commercial establishments are located here, as well as the central schools. Due to its size, LaFargeville boasts many of the resources identified in the multiple property listing.

The hamlet of Stone Mills, at first called Collins Mills, was one of the first areas in the township to be developed due to the availability of water power from the Chaumont River. Peter Pratt (born Saybrook, Connecticut, 1776) and J.B. Collins built a stone grist mill here in 1819 or 1820 (demolished circa

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3. Laurie A. Nulton, *The Golden Age of the Thousand Islands*, Binghamton: Vail-Ballou, 1981, p. 15.

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1870)<sup>4</sup> and soon afterwards, a stone, up-and-down sawmill (no longer extant). These mills provided lumber and grain processing services to farmers in the southern part of the town at a time before LaFarge purchased most of the land in the region. Stone Mills grew on its own with a schoolhouse, **Stone Mills Union Church** (listed on the National Register in 1976), and the **Irwin Brothers Store** (listed on the National Register in 1983) constructed over the new few years. It was during this period that Elijah Horr built his large stone **Elijah Horr House** (individual component in multiple property listing) on the southern edge of the hamlet.

The hamlet of Omar, on Mullett Creek, originally known as Mudge's Mills, was "named from the personage of Dr. Johnson's allegorical tale in the English reader."<sup>5</sup> Omar's post office was established about 1840.<sup>6</sup> By 1890 the historian Hamilton Child could write of Omar that it had "one church, one hotel, a cheese factory, two general stores, two blacksmith shops, one shoe shop, one harness shop and about 100 inhabitants."<sup>7</sup>

North of Omar, where Mullett Creek flows into the St. Lawrence River, is Fishers Landing. Originally known as Port Orleans, the hamlet was founded about 1825 and became an important shipping center in the nineteenth century for Wellesley Island farmers' goods and produce.<sup>8</sup> With the advent of the railroad, shipping by boat declined and the community became a recreational settlement. The hamlet's name change reflected the change in local commerce. The settlement is now composed of small summer cottages and boat marinas and the population shifts from less than 100 people in the winter to over 500 in the summer.

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4. "Elijah Horr House," anonymous typescript in Stone Mill Agricultural Museum Collections; J.H. French, J.H. French, *Historical and Statistical Gazeteer of New York State*, Syracuse: R.P. Smith, 1869, p. 360, footnote 5; Edgar C. Emerson, *Our County and its People, a descriptive work on Jefferson County, N.Y.*, Boston History Company Publishers, 1898, p. 735. Pratt's stone cottage still stands, albeit in an altered state, on the east side of Route 180 between Gunn's Corners and Stone Mills.
  5. L.H. Everts and J.M. Holcomb, *History of Jefferson County, New York, 1791-1878*, Philadelphia: L.H. Everts, Co., 1878, p. 457
  6. Edgar C. Emerson, *Our County and its People, a descriptive work on Jefferson County, N.Y.*, Boston History Company Publishers, 1898, p. 729.
  7. Hamilton Child, *Geographical Gazeteer of Jefferson County, New York, 1684-1890*, edited by William H. Horton. Syracuse: The Syracuse Journal Company, 1890, 2 vols., p. 583.
  8. Ernest G. Cook, "North Country Visits," *Watertown Daily Times*, n.d.

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Between Fisher's Landing and Fineview, a hamlet that is an offshoot of Thousand Island Park, is **Rock Island** with its **Lighthouse** (listed on the National Register in 1978), one of six erected on the St. Lawrence River. Built in 1882, the lighthouse replaced the combination lighthouse/keeper's house of 1847 and was manned until 1941. The light keeper's modest vernacular Queen Anne shingled home (1882), a boathouse (1920), workshop (1882), and generator house (1900), which are the only structures on this small four acre island, bear witness to an area that was still economically dependent on water navigation.<sup>9</sup>

While Fineview is largely a seasonal settlement, the tiny hamlets of DelaFarge Corners and Orleans Four Corners are inhabited year-round. Orleans Four Corners is mentioned as a settlement by the historian J.H. French as early as 1860.<sup>10</sup> DelaFarge Corners and Orleans Four Corners both appear on the 1864 map as hamlets at busy crossroads. At that time the township was much more evenly sown with small farms than it is today when both of these hamlets have less than ten buildings each.

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9. "Historic Lighthouse Being Repaired," *Watertown Daily Times*, 28 June 1978 and *Seaway Trail Lighthouses, an illustrated Guide to the Historic Lighthouses along New York State's Great Lakes, Niagara and St. Lawrence Rivers*, DATE??.
10. J.H. French, *Historical and Statistical Gazeteer of New York State*, Syracuse: R.P. Smith, 1869, p. 360.

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Map of Orleans Township in 1864. From: S.N. and D.G. Beers and Assistants, *New Topographical Atlas of Jefferson County, New York*, Churchville, New York, 1975 (reprint of Philadelphia, 1864 edition).

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### Historic Contexts

#### 1. Penet's Square and Early Settlement, 1798 - 1817

The history of Orleans' development begins with the gift of a 64,000-acre tract of land by Oneida Indians to their friend Pierre Penet, a Frenchman from Nantes, in 1788. The ten-mile by ten-mile section extended from the mouth of French Creek at its northwest corner beyond the end of Perch Lake to the southeast and covered most of the area of the town of Orleans.<sup>11</sup> This land was exempted from sale when Macomb's Purchase, a more than 3.5 million-acre tract surrounding Penet's Square, was transacted with New York State land commissioners in 1791.

Beginning about 1806, Penet's Square was settled by squatters who quickly deforested the land to turn profits on lumber. *Spafford's Gazeteer* of 1824, reporting on the state of the Town of Orleans in 1820, wrote that "the population is unknown, as it was included in that of Brownville at the time of taking the last census. It is computed at 300. It being a new tract of country with few inhabitants, there is nothing to demand detail."<sup>12</sup> The historian J.H. French describes the squatters' "improvident waste of timber" and suggests that the

...slovenly clearings made by this lawless set promised little in the way of civilization: and their appearance, as they emerged from the swamps with an ox harnessed to a crotched piece of wood, laden with a trough full of 'black salts,' [i.e. potash] or, as they returned in like manner, with a sack of meal and a jug of whisky, was little calculated to inspire hope of speedy improvement. They had a kind of law among themselves in relation to land, and were accustomed to run 'possession lines' by lopping down bushes. 'Claims' were often sold and secured by quit claim deeds.<sup>13</sup>

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11. See Thomas F. Powell, *Penet's Square, Lakemont, N.Y.: North Country Books*, 1976.
  12. Hamilton Child, *Geographical Gazeteer of Jefferson County, New York, 1684-1890*, edited by William H. Horton. Syracuse: The Syracuse Journal Company, 1890, 2 vols., p. 582.
  13. J.H. French, *Historical and Statistical Gazeteer of New York State*, Syracuse: R.P. Smith, 1869, p. 359, footnote 4.

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The first point selected as the site for a village in Orleans was Rexford's Corners, named after the squatter Sabin Rexford who arrived in 1817, two miles south of the present LaFargeville.<sup>14</sup> The settlement had a store, a distillery, and an ashery, important for the manufacture of soap, prior to 1820. In 1825, however, the store, also used as town meeting house, burned and with it all records of the town.<sup>15</sup> Subsequent settlement moved north, clustering around Reuben Andrus' log cabin, built in 1816 at the site of the **LaFarge Land Office**, now the Orleans Hotel, (individual component in multiple property listing). Benjamin Page's log cabin was located at the site of the present **Charles Ford House** (individual component in multiple property listing). A store and a tavern, both opened in 1820. The first frame house was built by Peter Cook, whose son, Hial, became the highly skilled stone mason who built at least three of the buildings included in the multiple property listing (See Context #2. John LaFarge and Town Development, below).<sup>16</sup> By 1825, the Town of Orleans could boast of 3,541 inhabitants<sup>17</sup> and by 1850 LaFargeville had 300 inhabitants, two mills, two stores, and two churches.<sup>18</sup>

2. John LaFarge and Town Development, 1817 - c.1837

Historic architectural resources in the town of Orleans center around the enigmatic personality of John LaFarge (1786 - 1858). LaFarge, born in France, made his fortune running the blockade between France and England and with a West Indies trade firm he held in partnership with Pierre Penet.<sup>19</sup> LaFarge, apparently learning of the area from his now-deceased partner, began to take an interest in Jefferson County after the War of 1812. The area was much in

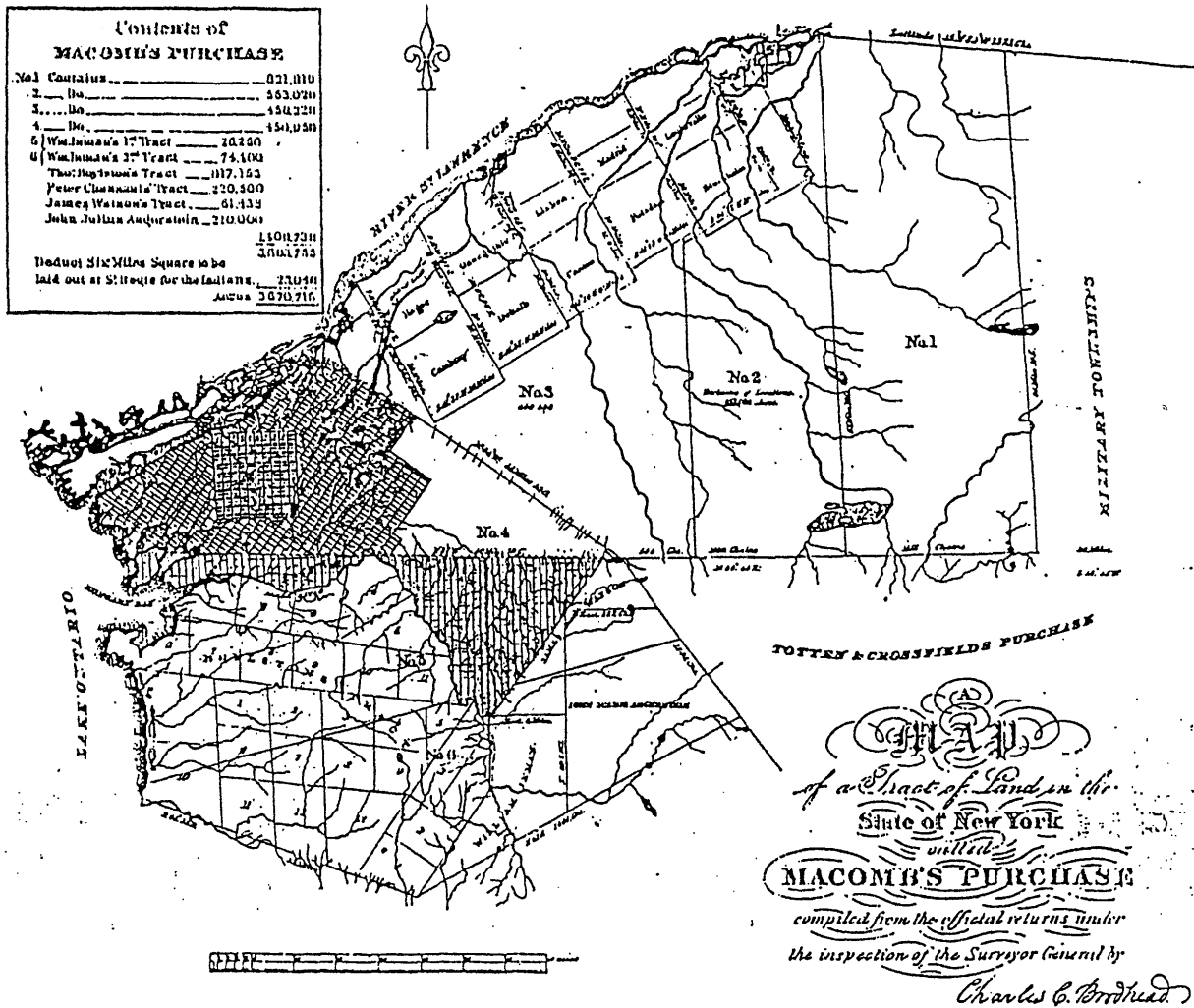
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14. Typescript of an article from Mrs. Ethel B.W. Darling's 1938 scrapbook, Orleans Historical Room, LaFargeville.
  15. L.H. Everts and J.M. Holcomb, *History of Jefferson County, New York, 1797-1878*, Philadelphia: L.H. Everts Co., 1878, p. 456.
  16. Hamilton Child, *Geographical Gazeteer of Jefferson Country, New York, 1684-1890*, edited by William H. Horton, Syracuse: The Syracuse Journal Compnay, 1890, p. 585.
  17. Edgar C. Emerson, *Our County and its People, a descriptive Work on Jefferson County, New York*, Boston History Company Publishers, 1898, p. 725.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 732, corroborated by John N. Rottiers' assessment roll book, kept during his term as town supervisor from 1842 - 1843, and now in the collections of the Jefferson County Historical Society, Watertown.
  19. See Claire Bonney, *French Emigre Houses in Jefferson County*, Zurich, 1985.



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Map of Macomb's Purchase and Penet's Square. Source: Edith Pilcher, Castorland, Harrison, N.Y.: Harbor Hill Books, 1985, p. 121.

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legal dispute before LaFarge began buying land in Jefferson County in 1817 and purchased part of the Square. From then until 1825, LaFarge continued to buy land with questionable titles in Penet's Square until he owned virtually all of it.<sup>20</sup> LaFarge moved in and the settlement of Log Mills was renamed LaFargeville on July 4, 1823.

In the annals of the North Country, LaFarge goes down as being a villain. Unclear land titles made him hated by squatters on his property who believed they held the rights to it and LaFarge's self-made background did little to endear him to his French neighbors, the near-royal Le Rays, in nearby LeRayville. Nonetheless, at age forty-seven LaFarge married a girl of nineteen and set up residence in what is now known as the **LaFarge Mansion** in 1833. His bride, however, felt alienated by local hostility and four years later, in 1837, she prevailed upon him to have the mansion sold. John LaFarge resettled his family on Long Island and did not return to the North Country. Of LaFarge's nine children, his son John LaFarge, born in 1835, became a famous 19th-century painter.

LaFarge left behind seven limestone buildings related to his estate: a **Land Office**, the **LaFarge Mansion**, an **Overseer's House**, a **Secretary's House**, **John Rottiers' House**, and two **Retainer Houses** (Biddlecom and Budlong houses), all individual or district components in the multiple property listing. During his stay he also commissioned the construction of amenities to attract settlers to the region including a gristmill and a new schoolhouse, both no longer extant, as well as donating land for several Orleans' churches and LaFargeville's **Grove Cemetery** (contributing component in the **LaFarge Historic District**).

LaFarge's contribution to the development of the township was significant despite the fact that his presence lasted only fourteen years. While his efforts failed to produce the cosmopolitan center he had hoped for, they did help spawn the prosperous agricultural community that Orleans became. His **Land Office**, now the Orleans Hotel, located squarely in the center of the town's largest village, survives as an important reminder of the town's early development and continues to function as a center for social activity in the town today.

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20. In 1821, 320 families petitioned the Attorney General to have their land titles straightened out. The Attorney-General ruled that the square belonged to John Duncan or his heir, who had bought 21, 000 acres from Penet, and that the rest still belonged to Penet, thus giving LaFarge free rein to buy it up. L.H. Everts and J.M. Holcomb, *History of Jefferson County, New York, 1797-1878*, Philadelphia: L.H. Everts Co., 1878.

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**3. Rise in Agriculture, 1835 - c.1925**

**a. Cheesemaking in the Town of Orleans, 1835 - 1925**

Much of the prosperity associated with 19th-century Orleans farmers can be attributed to the successful organization of cheese factories. The **Union Cheese Factory** (contributing component in the **Stone Mills Historic District**), now the only unaltered cheese factory in the town, was built in 1898.<sup>21</sup> It was a "yankee," or cheddar, cheese factory, as were most of the factories run by Anglo-Saxons in the town. Limburg cheese factories were run by immigrants from the Hesse-Darmstadt area of Germany who began arriving in the town in the years 1832 to 1840.<sup>22</sup> The last cheesemakers at the **Union Cheese Factory** were John and Belle Gailey Ebbly who made cheese until 1925 when a milk route was established and the farmer's milk was trucked to Watertown.

Cheesemaking in Jefferson County has a long tradition. The historian Hamilton Child relates that it was first established in 1834 by Mr. and Mrs. John A. Sherman of Watertown, who learned the craft from new neighbors who had come from Herkimer County. Desperately in need of money, the Shermans ignored the Herkimer woman's warning that while "the farmers of Herkimer County had all got rich from cheese-making, ... it had broken down all the wives and daughters with hard work."<sup>23</sup> On borrowed money, they purchased cows in Canada and walked them over the ice-covered St. Lawrence River in early spring. The first cheese made by the Shermans weighed 40 pounds. In time, the Shermans prospered and sent their cheeses on a 21-day journey by lake and canal to New York City, making a return of six cents on the pound and enabling them to pay for their cows within a year.

By 1861, there were nine cheese factories in the Town of Orleans, nearly half the number of those in Jefferson County.<sup>24</sup> By 1890 there were 98 cheese factories in Jefferson County (11 in the Town of Orleans) producing nine million pounds of cheese a year, three-quarters of it for export to foreign

21. Bessie Walldroff, *A Short History of Cheese Making*, Town of Orleans, 1982, unpaginated mimeographed manuscript, Town of Orleans Historical Room, LaFargeville. A former cheese factory, now converted into a studio, is located on Carter Street.
22. Hamilton Child, *Geographical Gazetteer of Jefferson County, New York, 1684-1890*, edited by William H. Horton. Syracuse: The Syracuse Journal Company, 1890, 2 vols.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
24. Bessie Walldroff, *A Short History of Cheese Making*, Town of Orleans, 1982

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countries.<sup>25</sup> These businesses were run by the whole family with children as young as ten years old being used to stir the curdling milk in the vats.

With the advent of the railroad in Watertown in 1859 and in LaFargeville in 1872, a large city market opened up for cheese. This led to the establishment of milk and cheese cooperatives. In 1874 the Watertown Produce Exchange, or "Cheese Board" as it was popularly known, was founded. This was a cooperative of 40 Jefferson County factories with one salesman from each factory who tried to secure the best prices on his cheese. By 1900, New York State was the first in the nation in cheese production.

As the population in cities increased, demand for fluid milk became greater and offered a better price than cheese.<sup>26</sup> By 1930 fresh milk could be shipped by train to New York City and cheese was only made in spring and summer when there was an excess of milk. With the advent of refrigeration, small cheese factories closed. The last small cheese factories in the town of Orleans went out of operation during the second World War. For example, the Sheffield family's cheese factory on Theresa Street in LaFargeville was sold to the Jersey Milk and Cream Company in 1936. In 1954 the Crowley Company purchased this business and 370 acres of land. In 1955 they made additions and improvements. Specializing in cottage cheese, yogurt, buttermilk, sour cream, and ice-cream, Crowley's is still today the largest employer in the town, employing 100 to 110 people.<sup>27</sup>

**b. Hay as a Cash Crop, 1871 - 1920**

As cheese factories began to close in the winter, selling hay in the fall and winter became a source of income for the farmers. At one time LaFargeville and Chaumont, a village located in the neighboring town of Lyme, shipped the most hay of any two railroad stations in this state.<sup>28</sup> Byron J. Strough,

25. Hamilton Child, *Geographical Gazetteer of Jefferson County, New York, 1684-1890*, edited by William H. Horton. Syracuse: The Syracuse Journal Company, 1890. 2 vols., p. 131 and p. 174.
26. Edith Brown, Ed., *Subjective History of the Town of Orleans*, produced by Town of Orleans Public Library from papers of the LaFargeville Evening Study Club, 1958-60. mimeographed and softbound.
27. Bessie Walldroff, "Town of Orleans," in Jefferson County Bicentennial Committee, Watertown, N.Y., *Jefferson County 1976*. Printed by Jefferson County ARC Print Shop, Watertown, 1976. No pagination.
28. Edith Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

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owner of the **B.J. Strough House** (individual component in multiple property listing), made money buying hay for resale.

Because of the relatively heavy soils and poor drainage in many portions of Jefferson County, alfalfa and corn did not do well. However, the soil and climate is ideal for growing timothy, a grass that can be cured in July without dust, and is an excellent hay for horses. Timothy hay, the standard of all tame grasses, derived its name from a man named Timothy Hansen, who introduced it in Maryland in 1720.<sup>29</sup> After railroads came to northern New York, it was possible to transport this timothy hay to New York City where horses provided the power for all kinds of transportation for both people and goods. Large barns were built in which to store the hay in summer. Before mechanized hay presses were invented, hay jumpers were hired to do the strenuous work of compressing hay. After the harvest was fully pressed, they left their marks or signatures and the year in which they worked on barn beams in many places in Jefferson County, among them the **Nathan Holloway hay barn** (contributing component in **Holloway Historic District**) near Omar. In winter the hay was pressed into heavy tight bales and shipped in boxcars to New York City. In some cases a farm could be paid for in two or three years if the demand for good horse hay was great. With the development of motor vehicles at the end of World War I, horses disappeared from New York City and with them the market for timothy hay. This resulted in an agricultural depression in the north country.

**c. Farming, 1835 -1900**

The prosperity enjoyed by Orleans' farmers from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century is clearly reflected in their farmsteads. The multiple property listing includes a group of representative examples of agricultural structures within farm complexes: dairy barns, hay barns, heifer barns, granaries, milk houses, pump houses, ice houses, and horse and buggy barns. Their number is a good reflection of the population statistics for Jefferson County listed by Franklin B. Hough in 1854 in which, out of a total population of 68,153 people, 11,002 were listed as farmers.<sup>30</sup> Most of the farmers in the town purchased their land from John LaFarge. Their first priority was to clear the land and get crops, mostly corn and grains, planted.

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29. Edith Brown, Ed., *Subjective History of the Town of Orleans*, produced by Town of Orleans Public Library from papers of the LaFargeville Evening Study Club, 1958-60, p. 151, and Stone Mills Agricultural Museum, permanent exhibition.
30. Franklin B. Hough, *History of Jefferson County of the State of New York*, Watertown, N.Y.: Sterling & Riddell, 1854, p. 361.

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As land was cleared, farmers burned trees to make potash, sold logs to sawmills, and cut lumber for the construction of houses and barns.

The first farmhouses in the town were log houses, none of which is extant today. The first modest frame houses were sometimes later incorporated as ells into larger, more expensive homes as farmers gained in prosperity and were able to produce a surplus of crops for sale. (This is the case in the **Charles Ford Farmhouse**, the **Frank Graham Farmhouse**, and the **Isaac Mitchell Farmhouse**, all individual components in the multiple property listing). Only one farmer, Elijah Horr, in the Town of Orleans was able to build an expensive farmhouse in stone (**Elijah Horr House**, individual component in multiple property listing). Farmhouses were usually located close to well-traveled roads to facilitate the transportation of goods to and from LaFargeville and other destinations. Unlike LaFarge, Town of Orleans' farmers built their outbuildings detached from the main house, either behind it or across the road. As a farmer prospered, additional land adjacent to the farm was acquired and cleared, and secondary buildings were constructed.

Stylistically, farmhouses in the town range from Georgian to Queen Anne with several good examples of Greek Revival. The **Nathan Holloway Farm**, the **O. Frost Farm** across from it (both contributing components in the **Holloway Historic District**), the **A. Newton Farm** in Omar, and the **Boardman Farm** in the **Stone Mills Historic District**, are examples of wood-frame vernacular Greek Revival farmhouses of a type that was popular at mid-century. Another good Greek Revival example that, due to its owner's resistance, could unfortunately not be included in the nomination is the Torpey Farm on the southeast corner of Route 180 and Route 12. The white frame house and hay barn are listed as being the property of Mrs. P. Door in an 1888 atlas.<sup>31</sup> Probably the geographer here misspelled Dorr, a name associated with cheese-making in the Town of Orleans.<sup>32</sup> Later farmhouses in the township all exhibit combinations of Victorian, Stick, and Queen Anne characteristics.

31. *Robinson's Atlas of Jefferson County, New York*. New York: E. Robinson, 1888.

32. See Bessie Walldroff, *History of Cheese-Making, Town of Orleans*, 1982, for information on John Dorr, who arrived in Jefferson County in 1830 and began making limburger cheese. Dorr's Dairy was still in operation in Watertown in the 1960s.

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#### 4. Commercial Prosperity and Civic-Mindedness, c.1837 - c.1900

##### a. Civic Development, c.1850 - c.1900

With the growing prosperity of its farmers at mid-century, the town of Orleans exhibited a burst of civic-mindedness resulting in the construction of schools, churches, and community buildings. The institutions connected with this architecture provided nearly all of the social life farmers and their families knew. The **Thousand Island Grange Hall** (individual component in multiple property listing), built circa 1890<sup>33</sup> and located in Omar, is a rare survivor of a fraternal social hall in the region. The grange was first organized as a self-help society in Jefferson County in 1873. Also known as the Patrons of Husbandry, it offered, among other things, fire insurance to its members at a low price.<sup>34</sup>

Although a schoolhouse, now no longer extant, for nine scholars had been organized in LaFargeville as early as 1821, no other schoolhouse was built there until 1851.<sup>35</sup> By 1888, however, the town had 18 school districts in which 19 teachers were employed for the education of 490 scholars.<sup>36</sup> Schools were built of red brick, stone, or wood and were used for prayer meetings at night. While the one-room schoolhouse now located at the Stone Mills Agricultural Museum has been moved there from a different site, two representative schoolhouses, the limestone **Carter Street Schoolhouse** and the clapboard **Buttermilk Flats Schoolhouse** (both individual components in the multiple property listing) built before the early 1850s, remain at their original locations.<sup>37</sup> Aside from these one-room schools, the limestone

33. The Thousand Island Grange is listed by Hamilton Child, *Geographical Gazeteer of Jefferson County, New York, 1684-1890*, edited by William H. Horton. Syracuse: The Syracuse Journal Company, 1890. 2 vols., p. 135, as being on Wellesley Island while Edgar C. Emerson, *Our County and its People, a descriptive Work on Jefferson County, New York*, Boston History Company Publishers, 1898, p. 252, gives its location as Orleans.
34. Hamilton Child, *Op. cit.*, p. 132-133.
35. Edgar C. Emerson, *Op. cit.*, p. 730, and Edith Brown, Ed., *Subjective History of the Town of Orleans*, produced by Town of Orleans Public Library from papers of the LaFargeville Evening Study Club, 1958-60, p. 75.
36. Edith Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 67.
37. Both schoolhouses appear in S.N. and D.G. Beers and assistants, *New Topographical Atlas of Jefferson County, New York*, Churchville, New York, 1875 (reprint of Philadelphia, 1864 edition).

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LaFargeville Union Free School, built in 1872 and used as a school until 1925, is also historically significant as an important landmark in the history of education of this rural community and represents the town's commitment to providing quality educational facilities for the population. However, the building has now been altered for apartment dwellings and due to loss of integrity cannot be included in the multiple property listing.<sup>38</sup>

**b. Religious Development, 1837 - c.1900**

As education began to be organized in the Town of Orleans so too did religious life which combined belief with social functions important to community life. An important historical development in the region with which the Town of Orleans is associated is the religious revival and church movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The post-Civil War period brought challenges to the organized church, such as the popular acceptance of Darwinism, industrialization, immigration, and rural isolation. The prosperity of the period also brought the financial means to construct new church buildings. Religious needs in the town up to this point were satisfied by circuit preachers holding services in people's homes. Most of the present congregations in the town were organized by the mid-nineteenth century, but few had church buildings. Rural circuit churches, at first designed in the modest Greek Revival style and later in the more Picturesque Victorian styles, were constructed. In 1837, Union churches were built in LaFargeville and in Stone Mills. The limestone **Stone Mills Union Church** (listed on the National Register in 1976) still stands intact and has been incorporated into the Agricultural Museum site. The **Union Church** was interdenominational and was used on alternating Sundays by Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, and others. Its land and much of the expense for its construction were donated by Elijah Horr, whose home, the **Elijah Horr House** in Stone Mills, is contained within the multiple property listing.<sup>39</sup> A controversy over the name of the church led to the construction of the wooden **First Methodist Church of Stone Mills** (contributing component in the **Stone Mills Historic District**) across the street in 1871.<sup>40</sup> Here, Frank Graham, whose home, the **Frank Graham Farm**

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38. Mimeographed pamphlet entitled *History of La Fargeville Union School 1821 - 1925*, presumably written by Bessie Walldroff, located in Town of Orleans Historical Room.
39. Anonymous, "Stone Mills, once bustling Hamlet, rich in its History," undated *Watertown Daily Times* article in the collections of the Stone Mills Agricultural Museum.
40. Bessie Walldroff, *The Methodist Church 1866-1966, Stone Mills, New York*, mimeographed pamphlet in Town of Orleans Historical Room, p. 2.



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(individual component in multiple property listing), was a generous donor. For the most part, however, religious tolerance in the Town of Orleans was very strong. **St. John's Roman Catholic Church** (individual component in multiple property listing), located on land donated by John LaFarge, was built in 1849.<sup>41</sup> As of 1841, there were also two German-language churches in the town or Orleans. However, the one extant testimony to German settlement in the region, the Evangelical Lutheran Church at Orleans Four Corners cannot be included in the multiple property listing due to extensive alterations. Also located on land donated by John LaFarge, its classic Greek Revival styling and design details, late even for this region, can be explained by the fact that the parishioners wanted a copy of an existing church in Clayton. The church reflects the attitudes of the German inhabitants of this area of the town and the Evangelical Lutheran movement, known as much for its individuality as for its progressiveness. (The other German-language church in the town, which is no longer extant, was the white clapboard German Methodist Church located on Dutch Gap Road.<sup>42</sup>) It is said that the first Christmas tree in the United States was put up in one of these churches and that Anglo-Saxons in the area were affronted by the Germans' heathen practice of worshipping trees.<sup>43</sup>

A major impetus to church construction in the region was the creation of **Thousand Island Park** (listed on the National Register in 1982), a large Methodist camp meeting ground on the southern tip of Wellesley Island. The Reverend John F. Dayan, a Methodist minister and Jefferson County native, began planning a religious retreat in the Thousand Islands Region in 1867. The basic concept of a religious campground had changed dramatically from the old one or two-day meeting in the back woods clearing that was filled with noise, confusion, and extreme emotionalism. This image began to change after the Civil War as the needs of the period were approached with more rational thought. The trend in camp meetings was to meet for an extended period and for a specific purpose. Chautauqua Institute, near Jamestown, New York, was organized as a summer center for training Sunday school teachers in a thoroughly Christian setting. As the Thousand Island Park idea evolved, its specific purpose was defined as encouraging social interaction between the people of the United States and Canada, which resulted in the island setting. During its first year, the 145-acre **Thousand Island Park** was a colony of tents surrounding a few permanent structures built by the Thousand Island Park

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41. Edith Brown, Ed., *Subjective History of the Town of Orleans*, produced by Town of Orleans Public Library from papers of the LaFargeville Evening Study Club, 1958-60, p. 34.
42. Bessie Walldroff, *The Methodist Church 1866-1966, Stone Mills, New York*, mimeographed pamphlet in Town of Orleans Historical Room, p. 11.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

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Association. The colony was soon transformed into a permanent village of Victorian Gothic and Queen Anne cottages and by 1880 there were over 200 of them.

The annual, summer religious meeting was inspiring to the region which was a quiet agricultural community for most of the year. The desire for a localized sanctuary for worship resulted in the construction of the many small churches throughout the region. More importantly, the property of the agricultural community provided the money to construct these churches. The prosperous farmers in the town contributed generously to the construction of local

churches.<sup>44</sup> The six churches in the multiple resource area, four of them Methodist, were built between 1870 and 1898. Three of them were constructed in LaFargeville, the largest hamlet, while the others represent the only church structures in other hamlets. Despite their modest form and styling, the nominated churches in the town are remarkably intact examples of the vernacular rural church architecture of that period. Other churches, such as the Lutheran Church at Orleans Four Corners (mentioned above) have lost substantial integrity in form, function and historic associations. The Baptist Church in LaFargeville, now divested of its steeple and painted blue, is currently serving as an antique shop while the white clapboard Union Church, also in LaFargeville, has been entirely sheathed in brown aluminum siding and gutted for its new function as a grocery store, diner, and gas station.

##### 5. The Railroad and Commercial Prosperity, 1871 - 1973

The Clayton and Theresa railroad was constructed through the northern part of LaFargeville from 1871 to 1873.<sup>45</sup> Many prominent town citizens supported this enterprise. Byron J. Strough, owner of the **B.J. Strough House** (individual component in multiple property listing), and L.S. Strough were perhaps the most extensive dealers and shippers in the region. Russell Biddlecom, owner of the Biddlecom House, one of the **LaFarge Retainer Houses**, (component in multiple property listing), was a stockholder who held the positions of

44. Edgar C. Emerson, *Our County and its People, a descriptive Work on Jefferson County, New York*, Boston History Company Publishers, 1898, p. 729.

45. Franklin B. Hough, *History of Jefferson County of the State of New York*, Watertown, N.Y.: Sterling & Riddell, 1854, p. 733

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secretary, treasurer, superintendent and director.<sup>46</sup> It was not only businessmen who were instrumental in bringing the railroad to town. Wealthy farmers also supported the enterprise. Nathan Holloway (whose home, the **Nathan Holloway Farm**, is a contributing component in the **Holloway Historic District**), was director and member of the finance committee of the corporation in 1878.<sup>47</sup> In 1885 the railroad consolidated with the Utica and Black River system. The railroad station in LaFargeville, now much altered and operating as an Agway feed and garden center, opened in 1872. In time, the railroad's function changed from the transportation of goods to the transportation of people. By the 1920s as many as 22 trains passed through LaFargeville daily in the summer. The trains made connections from the New York, Buffalo and Rochester areas carrying tourists to Clayton and the Thousand Islands. For five or six dollars, a round trip could be made from New York City to Clayton in one day and one of the stops was LaFargeville. Local histories relate the excitement surrounding the trains' arrivals and departures:

That 9:00 flyer at night, then at 9:15 another one, in the summertime were dreaded times for crossing the railroad track by horse and carriage folk...how exciting it used to be to see so many getting off a train from Buffalo at 7:30 in the morning to spend a day in Clayton or on the River, then to return on the 11:00 train.<sup>48</sup>

(Passenger rail service was discontinued in LaFargeville in 1959. Freight train service ended in 1973.)

With the growth of commercial prosperity and transportation facilities, LaFargeville saw its heyday. Architecturally, farm building in the township waned while buildings for a service sector, not directly linked to agriculture, became more important. Former farm property was developed into the **Maple and Clayton Street Historic Districts** (components in the multiple property listing) in the late nineteenth century, resulting in rows of

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46. L.H. Everts and J.M. Holcomb, *History of Jefferson County, New York, 1797-1878*, Philadelphia: L.H. Everts Co., 1878, p. 461; Edith Brown, Ed., *Subjective History of the Town of Orleans*, produced by Town of Orleans Public Library from papers of the LaFargeville Evening Study Club, 1958-60, pp. 59-60, and Hamilton Child, *Geographical Gazetteer of Jefferson County, New York, 1684-1890*, edited by William H. Horton. Syracuse: The Syracuse Journal Company, 1890, p. 488.
47. Everts and Holcomb, *Op. cit.*, p. 462.
48. Edith Brown, Ed., *Subjective History of the Town of Orleans*, produced by Town of Orleans Public Library from papers of the LaFargeville Evening Study Club, 1958-60, p. 62.

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gracious homes, for the most part in the Queen Anne style familiar to Orleans' residents from Thousand Island Park. When a fire swept through the village in 1898 destroying most of its commercial property, a new building boom was initiated resulting in the construction of a downtown area along Main Street with many Italianate flat-front woodframe shops and businesses with apartments located above them. However, due to loss of integrity, these buildings, among them the LaFargeville Post Office, with its intact pressed tin interior, cannot be included in the nomination. Thus the **Central Garage** (individual component in multiple property listing) on Clayton Street, a rare example of the use of pressed tin to sheath both the inside and the outside of the building, is the only commercial property resulting from this boom that is included.

#### 6. Twentieth-Century Transition, 1898 - 1995

Despite the rise in tourism, as late as 1930 Byron Strough's granddaughter, the popular author Helen Lawrenson Brown (who also lived in the **Bryon J. Strough House** between jaunts in Europe), characterized her fellow North Country residents as primarily prosperous and conservative, grain and dairy farmers.<sup>49</sup> Although the Town of Orleans retained its agricultural base, tourism gradually began to replace farming as an economic mainstay. During this period four State Parks were created in the Town of Orleans: DeWolf Point and Waterson Point State Parks in 1898, Grass Point State Park in 1926, and Wellesley Island State Park in 1951. The parks, totaling 2,720.9 acres, are visited annually by 272,000 people.<sup>50</sup> The Thousand Islands Bridge, crossing the northern tip of the the Town of Orleans, opened in 1938. The bridge connects the U.S. mainland with Canada via Wellesley Island, the largest American island in the St. Lawrence. The opening of the bridge, coupled with the construction of the Interstate Route 81 beginning in 1960, resulted in an increase in automobile tourism and a decrease in rail passengers. Route 81 and the bridge provided direct auto access to Wellesley Island and the portion of the town that was historically reached only by ferry. Thus shipping, too, traditionally occurring on waterways, later carried out by rail, became increasingly dependent on the road system.

Increased tourism and changes in attitude resulted in a breakdown of the religious fervor that gripped the Town of Orleans at the end of the nineteenth century. By the end of World War II, most of the residents of **Thousand Island**

49. Helen Lawrenson Brown, *Stranger at the Party*, Random House, 1975, p. 13. Brown was also the author of *Latins are lousy Lovers* and *Whistling Girl*.

50. Jefferson County Bicentennial Committee, Jefferson County 1976, Watertown, N.Y. Printed by Jefferson County ARC Print Shop.

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**Park** (listed on the National Register in 1982) were no longer practicing Methodists, but twentieth-century summer recreationists who arrived at Wellesley Island to enjoy boating and swimming.

Since the 1969 opening of Stone Mills Agricultural Museum (formerly the **Stone Mills Union Church** listed on the National Register in 1976) with its highly popular annual summer crafts fair, the 1980 opening of the New York State Seaway Trail, with the inclusion of LaFargeville on a Seaway Trail Loop, and the refurbishing of the **Rock Island Lighthouse**, the Town of Orleans has been able to revitalize and expand some of the tourist business and is gradually building up its coastal and inland resources.

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#### **F. Associated Property Types**

1. Buildings for John LaFarge, 1825 - 1837
2. Farmsteads, 1835 - c.1925
3. Civic/Public Buildings/Properties, 1850 - c.1900
4. Residential and Commercial Buildings, 1890 - c.1910
5. Historic Districts, 1835 - c.1910

#### **Introduction**

The majority of buildings in the Town of Orleans are scaled-down, rural adaptations of the tastes and building traditions of popular American building styles, although there are few examples of large, architecturally sophisticated buildings. The influence of a broad range of national styles is evident throughout the town, including Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and early-20th century revival styles. Vernacular, eclectic and transitional interpretations of building techniques and styles predominate, with few standard textbook examples of the major styles. The nomination includes only a small percentage of Orleans' entire collection of architecture; only those that are intact, significant resources which reflect the historical development of the town and meet the registration requirements for National Register listing have been selected for nomination. No historic industrial resources (other than related farm buildings and a cheese factory) survive intact.

There were many small quarries in the town but the use of stone as a building material diminished after the Civil War. The use of wood as a building material predominates throughout the town, with the majority of residences executed in wood and sheathed with clapboard siding. However, a number of residences were sheathed with modern siding in the mid- to late-20th century.

#### **1. Buildings for John LaFarge, 1825 - 1837**

##### **Description**

This property type is defined as buildings commissioned by the French emigrant to the Town of Orleans, John F. LaFarge. LaFarge's architectural influence in the Town of Orleans began with the construction of his **Land Office** (individual component in multiple property listing) in LaFargeville in 1825. The seven buildings built for LaFarge and his employees, some of them constructed by the stone mason Hial Cook (1811-1890), are all late-Federal limestone buildings with Greek Revival details. Cook was born in Rodman, a community in southern Jefferson County, raised in LaFargeville and learned the mason's trade apprenticing for Alexander Cummings of Watertown. He returned to LaFargeville in the early 1830's to work on the **LaFarge Mansion** and the **Overseer's House** (contributing components in **LaFarge Historic District**). Cook's buildings all

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have a similar form that consists of a two-story, rectangular, upright main block with a gabled roof and wings and ells off the sides or rear. However, the most distinguishing feature of his work is the regularity and uniformity of the stone block throughout the building. The blocks are smaller and more linear than the typical building blocks found in the vernacular stone buildings in the region. The uniformity allows buildings to be free of structural quoins and Cook chose not to use them for decorative purposes either. The form and craftsmanship vary greatly from the more typical vernacular stone building tradition of varied block size, random coursing, and uncoursed rubble construction. They have a crispness, clarity, and sparseness that today seems modern.

It seems probable that LaFarge designed his own buildings, based on what he had seen in France, and used American pattern books of the period for interior details. A painting of the first mansion (not extant) built for LaFarge in the neighboring Town of Theresa c.1825 reveals similarities to the later larger **LaFarge Mansion** in the Town of Orleans. The first mansion, however, with its large attached barn, appears to have had its roots in the French vernacular tradition. Seven years later, when work on the second **LaFarge Mansion** began, LaFarge chose a more stately Federal design with flanking wings, a pattern that was repeated in homes built for his employees. LaFarge's architectural activity in the Town of Orleans ended in 1837 when he moved to New York City.

LaFarge's buildings all exhibit Federal massed plans with a rather narrow central staircase typical of the area. The **LaFarge Mansion**, like the **Irwin Brothers Store** in Stone Mills (listed on the National Register in 1983) and the **Elijah Horr Farmhouse** (individual component in multiple property listing), has double stone walls ensuring long-lasting endurance. In both the **Land Office** and the **LaFarge Mansion**, metal tie rods were employed from the outset to create more stability. Cellar kitchens, such as those found in homes built for LaFarge's neighbor James Le Ray (Le Ray Mansion and Vincent Le Ray House, both listed on the National Register, 1974 and 1973 respectively), appear in both the **Land Office** and the **Overseer's House** but not in the other LaFarge houses. Beveled windows, a characteristic of many old homes in Jefferson County, appear on the ground floor of the **Land Office** and on all floors of the **John Rottiers House** (individual component in multiple property listing) and the **LaFarge Retainer Houses** (components in multiple property listing) but not in the other LaFarge buildings. While the **Land Office** and the main part of the **LaFarge Mansion**, 1832-33, and the **Secretary House** (contributing component LaFarge Historic District), 1832, were heated by fireplaces, the **Overseer's House**, **John Rottiers House**, and the Mansion's servants' wing were heated by coal burning stoves shallowly inset and surrounded by mantelpieces. Stoves, at the time a modern heat-saving invention, were also used in the **LaFarge Retainer Houses** in LaFargeville.

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### Significance

John LaFarge's buildings are significant in their association with his person (See Section E, Historic Context #2) as well as in their design and construction in that they present a unified group of buildings illustrating a transition from a native French understanding of what a farm building should be to an American one. French influence on American architecture is popularly perceived as having occurred only along the Mississippi River and in the New Orleans area. The outstanding quality of their stonework, construction, and interior details make them of interest as to the flights and limits of New York State architecture in the early-19th century.

### Registration Requirements

Since, in both a local and a national sense, these buildings are so unique, all extant buildings, outbuildings and associated landscape features built for John LaFarge have been chosen for nomination. Those that are in very poor condition are included for their archaeological potential to yield important information on the early-19th century French influence on American architecture, building techniques and landscape design.

## 2. Farmsteads, 1835 - c.1925

### Description

Buildings on Town of Orleans' farmsteads generally date from the mid-19th century (there are a few earlier examples) and exist or once existed on large tracts of farmland of more than 100 acres. Farmhouses and barns tend to form building groups surrounded by shade trees adjacent to the highways. Some subdivision of farmland has occurred along the highways, resulting in small building lots occupied by smaller, single family residences. Many of the individual components in the nomination are or were farms or farm buildings at some time and are important reminders of the agricultural heritage of the town.

The many extant outbuildings - hay barns, carriage barns, heifer barns, hen houses, ice houses, milk houses, and pump houses point to farms used over generations. A transition from a Federal type of stone building similar to those built by John LaFarge, to wooden Federal buildings, to the Greek Revival style eventually evolved into Queen Anne style farmhouses, common to both wealthy farmers and to townspeople not directly dependent on agriculture, at the turn-of-the century. These later homes seem to have taken their stylistic direction from the nearby **Thousand Island Park** (listed on the National Register 1982) homes of wealthy summer residents. Typical character-defining landscape features of these farmlands include large pastures and crop fields with irregular stands of deciduous trees. Original stone walls, hedges, and fences are rare.



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#### Significance

The nominated farmsteads in the Town of Orleans are significant as intact examples of their respective stylistic eras, ranging from Federal to Greek Revival to Queen Anne. Their changing styles reflect national stylistic trends as well as the ability of well-to-do farmers to create stylish yet functional homes and outbuildings and thus also mirror the town's firm roots in an agricultural society. These farmsteads are also significant as a property type which reflects the town's historic farming practices and their evolution throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Dairy farming was historically, and remains today, the mainstay of the agricultural community. Its importance can be seen in the relatively large number of dairy and hay barns included in the nomination. Granaries and milk houses, also included in the nomination, are part and parcel of the dairy business. Several of the farmsteads nominated, most notably the **A. Newton Farm** in Omar, include some or all of these integral features and are still in use today. A number of the farmsteads have acquired additional significance due to the historic associations with the families who owned them and their political and economic influence in the town; sometimes, as in the case of the **Isaac Mitchell Farmstead** (component in multiple property listing) for over a period of several generations.

#### Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for nomination, a farmstead must retain a rural agricultural setting and the forms, floor plans, and materials that evoke its period of construction and the agrarian life of the time. It should also retain a substantial degree of stylistic integrity as well as property type integrity. Only those farmsteads that have retained their historic (within the period of significance assigned to the farmstead) agricultural setting and outbuildings which reflect the forms and functions associated with the early-19th through early-20th century farming industry in the Town of Orleans have been selected for nomination. Some alterations - such as new windows and window frames, asphalt shingle roofing, and synthetic siding - should not preclude nomination if the above requirements are fulfilled.

### 3. Civic/Public Buildings/Properties, 1835 - c.1900

#### Description

The rise in prosperity in the Town of Orleans from the mid-19th century to the turn-of-the 20th century led to the organization of community services. Buildings in this property type are evidence of construction done by the community in an effort to improve its own welfare. The **Union Cheese Factory** (contributing component in **Stone Mills Historic District**) and the **Thousand Island Grange** (individual component in multiple property listing) were both communal works intended to improve profits and gain benefits for farmers. The schoolhouses, churches, and cemeteries included in the multiple property listing are evidence of the community emphasis placed on education and religion, especially Methodist, in the area.

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Architecturally, the late-19th century church in America was characterized by grand-scale, intricate and picturesque massing, dynamic contrasts, textural richness, and opulent detail. There was a sharp break from convention, a restless originality, an eclectic daring. The examples found in Orleans reflect this national trend, but on a far more modest and vernacular level. During this period, vernacular architecture tended to develop at an eclectic pace and in an idiosyncratic manner, while taking leads from contemporary pattern books of traditional forms. While the churches in the multiple property listing embody the distinctive characteristics of a variety of 19th century styles, they are also intact reminders of the social history of the community and the religious fervor that gripped it at the turn of the century, being strongly influenced by nearby **Thousand Island Park** (listed on the National Register in 1982).

Cemeteries have also been included in this property type. For the most part, cemeteries in the Town of Orleans are privately and/or town-owned and not affiliated with any particular church. The two historic cemeteries in the town, **Grove Cemetery** (included in the **LaFarge Historic District**) and **Stone Mills Cemetery** (included in the **Stone Mills Historic District**), are both noteworthy for their historic associations as well as for their landscape features and funerary art.

The stark Federal lines of the **Carter Street Schoolhouse**, the **Buttermilk Flats Schoolhouse**, the **Thousand Island Grange**, and the **Union Cheese Factory** all attest to the lingering presence of that style in the town. Well constructed and practical, without much detailing, these buildings seem an honest expression of a pioneering self-improving force and a will to survive in an extreme climactic area.

#### Significance

The nominated civic/public properties are significant in their representation of the ability of this predominantly rural community to fend for and improve itself through its self-initiated institutions and to keep pace in its public buildings with national architectural trends throughout the 19th century. All of the buildings were built by the community with an eye to bettering the quality of their own lives. Above and beyond the main reasons for which they were built, churches, schools, and agricultural cooperatives in the Town of Orleans also fulfilled important social functions in this isolated area. Historically, the churches and cemeteries have been intertwined with the lives (and deaths) of many prominent members of the Orleans' community who donated money or time to their construction and repair. Built for varying religious denominations - Methodist-Protestant, Methodist-Episcopal, and Catholic - they are a testimony to both the religious fervor of the Town of Orleans' residents and to their high level of tolerance for personal religious choice according to conscience.

The civic/public properties nominated are also architecturally significant as largely intact examples of their respective eras and styles as executed in a rural agricultural community. The surprisingly long presence of the Federal

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style for utilitarian buildings up to the turn of this century indicates conservative taste and parsimony within a solid building tradition that has allowed them to preserve a high level of architectural integrity to this day. The careful details of woodwork and cladding adorning these small country churches in the town executed in Greek Revival, Gothic Revival and Queen Anne reflects the important role played by religion in the 19th century. Lovingly tended over generations, the churches still display a relatively high level of architectural integrity.

#### Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for nomination, civic and public buildings/properties must retain an intact setting and the forms, floor plans, materials and stylistic integrity that evoke their period of construction and the civic-mindedness of their time. They should be built by the Town of Orleans' community for their own communal use as commercial, social, educational or religious institutions. In an effort to enhance the beauty of the buildings (e.g. with replacement of original windows with stained-glass, and to weatherproof and heat them through the addition of synthetic siding) some changes have occurred in these buildings over the years of their use. As long as these changes have not altered the original architectural intention of the buildings, they should not preclude their nomination.

#### 4. Residential and Commercial Buildings, 1890 - c.1910

##### Description

Stylistically, residential and commercial buildings built in the late-19th to early-20th century in the Town of Orleans range from late Federal to eclectic Classic Revival and Arts-and-Crafts style. With one exception, these buildings are located in LaFargeville, the Town of Orleans' largest settlement and traditional hub, the center of which burned in 1898. Properties nominated in this property type include one commercial building, several individual residences and two large residential districts, the **Clayton Street Historic District** and the **Maple Street Historic District**, both in LaFargeville which represent intact areas of largely Queen Anne homes.

##### Significance

The 19th and 20th-century residential and commercial properties nominated are significant for their stylistic representation of architecture typical to their respective periods and styles in a rural setting. The buildings represent Federal, Queen Anne, and Classical Revival styles tailored for small town residents in their relatively modest size and restrained ornamentation backed by solid craftsmanship. Their high level of architectural integrity, with relatively few changes wrought, adds to their significance. Buildings within this property type are also significant for reflecting the Town of Orleans' transition from a farming community to one based on third-sector trades, a trend that is still continuing today. The buildings represent a class of people no longer fettered by the need to work the land themselves but one that could enjoy the benefits of the Town of Orleans' affluent

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agricultural base while not actually employed in it. Thus, the **B.J. Strough House** (individual component in the multiple property listing), built for the influential B.J. Strough who traded in hay, is indicative of the wealth that could be accrued by basing a business on the late-19th century farming success in the Town of Orleans. The **Central Garage**, the only commercial building within the multiple resource area to be nominated, represents a business one step further away from farming activities that was based on repairing farm and recreation vehicles and farmhouse plumbing.

#### Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for nomination, 19th and 20th-century commercial and residential buildings must retain an intact setting and the forms, floor plans, materials and stylistic integrity that evoke their period of construction and the societal transition that was then initiated, from a purely agricultural community to one that could afford trades based upon its profitable returns.

### 5. Historic Districts, 1835 - c.1910

#### Description

Historic districts in the multiple property listing are geographically and historically unified entities in that they are sets of inter-related contiguous properties which reflect architectural trends as well as the historical development of the Town of Orleans. Stylistically, historic districts nominated cover the range from Federal to Queen Anne styles and cover a variety of property types. Contextual information on specific property types within each district can be found in the preceding property type discussions. Actual acreage covered by the districts varies greatly, ranging from the LaFarge Historic District which encompasses approximately 450 acres to the Maple Street Historic District with approximately 15-20 acres. The number of contributing buildings per district ranges from 9-18.

The **LaFarge Historic District** is a collection of limestone Federal residences with distinctive wooden Greek Revival details dating from the first half of the 19th century and built for John LaFarge. The wooden outbuildings to the homes, including barns, a hen house, and an ice house, combine to preserve a sense of the original usage of these homes as outposts for well-to-do gentlemen farmers, their employees and business associates. A number of ruins and unidentified landscape features associated with LaFarge are also included within the district (for their archaeological potential), as is the cemetery begun by LaFarge in 1835.

The **Stone Mills Historic District** is a collection of Federal and Greek Revival buildings of mixed usage documenting several aspects 19th century life in the hamlet. It includes a Greek Revival church, a farmhouse with intact outbuildings, a cemetery, and a collective cheese factory in late-Federal style.

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The **Holloway Historic District** comprises three stylistically and historically inter-related farmsteads in Greek Revival and Queen Anne style. The outbuildings to the farmsteads combine to form an image of 19th century agricultural life in the Town of Orleans.

Two late-19th century residential districts, the **Clayton Street Historic District** and the **Maple Street Historic District**, both in LaFargeville, are comprised of intact concentrations of largely Queen Anne residences.

Significance

The historic districts chosen for nomination in the Town of Orleans are historically and architecturally significant as rare-grouped survivors in an area now being encroached upon by mobile and modular homes. Their presence provides a material and visual link to the Town of Orleans' past while also representing the larger national trends of their distinctive periods. For example:

The **LaFarge Historic District** is highly significant as it contains examples of extremely well-built Federal homes with Greek Revival details on a structural and stylistic level far exceeding most of the Town of Orleans' other architecture. Of added significance is the district's connection with the enigmatic Frenchman John LaFarge (See Section E, Context #2) who had the buildings built in the hope of creating a prosperous northern New York community that never came to fruition. The cemetery, begun by LaFarge in 1835 and continuously enlarged and embellished by Town of Orleans' citizens since then, is also included in the district. Building ruins and unidentified landscape features associated with the LaFarge era within the district are significant for their archaeological potential to yield important information about the French influence on early-19th century American architecture, landscape design and lifeways.

The **Stone Mills Historic District** is architecturally and historically significant for the high level of integrity of its late-Federal and Greek Revival architecture and for its variety of property types ranging from religious to community to agricultural, which collectively preserve an intact image of 19th century life in the hamlet.

The **Holloway Historic District** is significant as a rare-surviving collection of 19th century farmsteads illustrating, on the one hand, the change in farmers' architectural tastes from one generation to the next from the Greek Revival house built for the Holloway father to the Queen Anne house built for the Holloway son and, on the other hand, a collection of farmhouses along with their outbuildings and agricultural settings that retains a high level of both architectural and functional integrity.

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The **Clayton Street Historic District** and the **Maple Street Historic District**, both featuring largely intact Queen Anne residences, are significant for their architecture as well as for reflecting the pivotal late-19th century socio-economic trend of land parceling that occurred as large farms in Orleans were sectioned off for the construction of residential property.

Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for registration, buildings in historic districts must reflect a unified, cohesive historic entity. Since the sum of a district is greater than its parts, allowances can be made for minor changes to individual buildings and/or non-intrusive infill which in no way compromise the district's historic integrity. An historic district must retain integrity of setting as well as the forms and materials that evoke its period of significance and the community activities and historic associations connected with it.

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### **Geographical Data**

The multiple property listing for The Historic and Architectural Resources of the Town of Orleans, Jefferson County, NY includes all the area within the incorporated township of Orleans, Jefferson County, NY.

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Section H: Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods, page H-1

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#### **H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

The historic resources of the community were identified by a comprehensive architectural and historical survey of the entire township conducted in 1980. The survey was sponsored by the St. Lawrence-Eastern Ontario Commission with assistance from a Historic Preservation Fund grant from the New York State Historic Preservation Office. The survey was conducted by Peter Phillips and Patti Bailey, graduate students in the Preservation Planning program at Cornell University, and consisted of a windshield survey of the township supplemented by research in local and regional historical collections. The survey was done under the guidance of the State Historic Preservation Office. Approximately 32 scattered individual properties were determined to warrant further investigation and were recorded on New York State Building/Structure Inventory Forms. In 1986, St. Lawrence-Eastern Ontario Commission hired a consultant to prepare a National Register Nomination form for the community. The initial survey was verified and evaluated by New York State Historic Preservation staff and John Harwood, the historic preservation consultant hired to prepare the form. Historic documentation based on local and regional history collections, archives of the town and Watertown libraries, newspapers, city directories, maps, photographs, and personal interviews, was prepared by the consultant under the direction of staff. Lack of funding prevented the full execution of this survey.

In the Fall of 1994 Linda M. Garofalini of the New York State Historic Preservation Staff and Jan Maas of the St. Lawrence-Eastern Ontario Commission undertook a reconnaissance trip to determine which of the buildings surveyed were still eligible for nomination. Their deletions, additions, and reconfigurations led to the development of a new scope of work with the inclusion of five small historic districts. A grant from the Agricultural Museum, Stone Mills, Town of Orleans, and funding from the Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation enabled architectural historian Claire Bonney to finish the survey in the Summer of 1994. Bonney reconsidered and reevaluated all buildings and structures in the town that had been previously suggested. Property type statements were developed after all field work covering the area had been studied. Historic maps, atlases, photographs, and written accounts of the county's development were consulted and extensive interviews with present home owners were conducted, resulting in the addition of one property that had previously been overlooked. Function, style, and historical period all played a role in the development of the property type statements. Requirements for integrity were based on National Register criteria and on a knowledge of the building's historic use and significance. The resulting time period for the nomination covers the years between 1825 and 1921.

The evaluation of the resources by the staff and the State Board for Historic Preservation yielded 57 individual properties scattered throughout the town, including 22 farmhouses, 23 residences, six churches, two schools, one commercial building, one social hall, one land office, and one cooperative cheese factory. A total of 109 contributing features are included in the multiple property type nomination. According to the information currently available, they are the only properties in the town that possess sufficient architectural and/or historical integrity to be included as components of the multiple resource area nomination. It is hoped that more research at a later date can be combined with information from



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nomination. There are four properties currently listed on the National Register in the Town of Orleans: Thousand Island Park Historic District, Rock Island Lighthouse, the Irwin Brother's Stone Store, and the Stone Mills Union Church.

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## THE HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES OF THE TOWN OF ORLEANS, JEFFERSON COUNTY, NY

Section I: Major Bibliographical References, page I-1

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**THE HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES OF THE TOWN OF ORLEANS, JEFFERSON COUNTY, NY**  
Name of Multiple Property Listing County and State

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**NOMINATIONS INCLUDED WITH INITIAL DOCUMENT**

Methodist Episcopal Church, Hamlet of Omar, Town of Orleans  
(Omar-Fisher's Landing Methodist Church)

Thousand Island Grange, Hamlet of Omar, Town of Orleans

Carter Street Schoolhouse #21, Town of Orleans

Elijah Horr House, Hamlet of Stone Mills, Town of Orleans

Methodist-Protestant Church at Fisher's Landing, Hamlet of Fisher's Landing, Town of Orleans

LaFarge Land Office, Hamlet of LaFargeville, Town of Orleans  
(Orleans Hotel)

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Hamlet of LaFargeville, Town of Orleans

LaFargeville United Methodist Church, Hamlet of LaFargeville, Town of Orleans

Buttermilk Flat Schoolhouse No.22, Town of Orleans

St. John's Catholic Church, Hamlet of LaFargeville, Town of Orleans