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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
FUNCTIONS, ARCHITECTURAL SERVICE

835

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Alasa Farms

other names/site number Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx

#### 2. Location

street & number 6450 Shaker Road [ ] not for publication

vicinity Alton (town of Sodus) [ X ] vicinity

state New York code NY county Wayne code 117 zip code 14413

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [ X ] 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 as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [ X ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [ X ] locally. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Rebecca Purpont DBHPO*

*8/14/09*

Signature of certifying official/Title: Director, Division for Historic Preservation

Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register [ ] see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register [ ] see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain)

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

*[Signature]*

*10/16/09*

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
<u>15</u>	<u>3</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>      </u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>      </u>	structures
<u>17</u>	<u>3</u>	objects
		<b>TOTAL</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

NA

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling (Shaker houses)

RELIGION: religious facility (Shaker settlement)

DOMESTIC: single dwellings

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: storage, agricultural field, animal facility, agricultural outbuildings

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwellings

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: storage, agricultural field, animal facility, agricultural outbuildings

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Early Republic: vernacular Shaker architecture

Other: mid-19<sup>th</sup>, late 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century vernacular farm buildings

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation various, mostly stone

walls mostly frame with wood siding  
roof various, mostly asphalt shingles

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetAlasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton Vicinity, Wayne County, NYSection 7 Page 1Description

Alasa Farms is located on Shaker Road, about three miles north of the hamlet of Alton, in the predominantly rural town of Sodus, Wayne County. The approximately 710-acre farmstead straddles Shaker Road at its intersection with Shaker Tract Road and Red Mill Road, about one mile southwest of the western shore of Sodus Bay near present-day Hunter's Point. The farm is, for ease of discussion, divided into four quadrants delineated by north-south Shaker Road and east-west Shaker Tract and Red Mill Roads. Most of the historic buildings are clustered together in the southeast quadrant on the east side of Shaker Road and the south side of Shaker Tract Road. Two other buildings are located directly across the street on the west side of Shaker Road in the southwest quad, while fields, orchards, and/or wooded areas comprise the northwest and northeast quadrants. A stream runs north-south through the western half of the farm; a mill complex was once located where this stream crosses Red Mill Road. The majority of the nominated buildings and structures date to the early twentieth century; they are mostly agrarian related outbuildings and support structures that are of frame construction. Alasa Farms also includes two remarkably intact ca. 1833-34 residential buildings: large, multi-family housing units built by the Sodus Bay Shakers (i.e., an official branch of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming). In summary, the nomination includes the following intact, historic components:

1. Two large frame houses, built by the Shakers in 1833-34: the Main House (originally called the Church House) and the Deacon's House
2. Three gambrel-roofed frame barns: a large one for horses (1925-26), a large one for cows (late 19<sup>th</sup> century with ca. 1930 expansions and improvements), and a slightly smaller, multi-purpose dairy barn (also ca. 1930)
3. A ca. 1840s board and batten barn with built-in corncrib
4. A pony barn (pre-1926, possibly late 19<sup>th</sup> century)
5. A granary (1932)
6. A house built in 1926 for bachelor farmhands
7. Farm office, ca. 1930, which began as a garage in 1926
8. An in-ground swimming pool and adjacent pool house, both ca. 1926
9. Two single-family tenant houses (both ca. 1909), probably built for the families of the farm foremen.
10. Two small sheds, one for ponies and one for goats (exact date of construction unknown, but clearly 50+ years old)
11. A well with pump

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Also included within the boundaries of the nominated farmstead are two modern, non-contributing houses and a garage (1970s). These relatively small, frame houses are set far back from view on the north side of Red Mill Road in the far northwest quadrant of the farmstead. (See continuation sheets for photographs of these buildings.)

The focal point of the farm is the Main House, a two-story, gable-roofed frame building on a slightly raised, random ashlar foundation. It was erected in 1833-34 by members of the Sodus Bay Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, a branch of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming (i.e., Shakers), which was a religious sect founded on the principles of communal living, hard, manual labor, ardent worship and celibacy. The dwelling features an asymmetrical, four-bay-wide front (west) façade with a slightly off-center front door. Typical of Shaker architecture of the period, it is a restrained, vernacular building with minimal ornamentation: simple corner boards articulate the superstructure, plain wood trim surrounds door and window openings, and understated returns mark the eaves of the gable roof. Many original twelve-over-eight, double-hung sash windows survive intact. The apexes of the north and south gable ends feature two rectangular attic windows flanked by two much smaller rectangular windows; this is a hallmark of Shaker architecture, as other ca. 1830s dwellings in this part of New York would more likely have had rounded or elliptical fans or windows in their gable ends. An early 20<sup>th</sup> century, hip-roofed, screened-in porch (ca. 1935) spans the front façade. The porch replaced a much smaller, hip-roofed entrance portico. Attached to the rear (east) of the main block is a one and one-half story, gable-roofed wing (ca. 1840s) with board-and-batten siding. Behind this wing is an attached, gable-roofed garage (ca. 1935).

A surprising amount of Shaker era fabric survives on the building's interior. A small foyer is just inside the paneled "cross-and-Bible" front door. A narrow hallway leads to the rear (east) of the building, where the main staircase provides access to the second story. The staircase features a finely crafted, ash newel post and a simple balustrade of cherry wood. Of particular note are the Shaker-era plates above many of the doors that indicate the number of their respective rooms, and several pegs for hanging items.

Across Shaker Road to the west and several hundred yards southwest of the Main House is the Deacon's House, also built by the Shakers in the 1830s. The fenestration in the apexes of the gable ends is similar to the fenestration seen on the main house. An early twentieth century, hip-roofed porch spans the front façade. A gambrel-roofed, multi-

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purpose barn with vertical board siding (ca. 1930s), is located immediately south of the Deacon's House. It replaced an older, gable-roofed frame barn.

The focal point of the farm buildings is a massive, L-shaped, gambrel-roofed Jamesway (a.k.a., James Way) horse barn that was built in 1925-26, after the original, late nineteenth century barn was destroyed by fire. The James Manufacturing Company of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, like the Loudon Barn Company of Fairfield, Iowa, was a leader in promoting progressive farming techniques, especially in terms of buildings and equipment, during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Typical of early twentieth century farm architecture, the horse barn features balloon framing sheathed with vertical board siding. The cavernous hay mow is sheltered by a gambrel roof supported by soaring wooden trusses that provide expansive, unobstructed floor space designed to store large amounts of hay. Access to the mow is provided on the gable ends of the building, where large openings in the apexes of the gable ends accommodated the transfer of hay from carts by means of horse-powered (later mechanized) lifts and tracks. The original fixed tracks, along which the hay carriers moved, are still in situ in the ridge of the roof, although the "trucks" themselves, i.e., the containers that carried the bundles of hay, have been lost. A remarkable amount of ca. 1920s fabric survives intact in the horse barn's interior. A few technological upgrades do appear, but most are in the form of additions or overlays, rather than complete replacements. Because Alasa Farms was established as a model farm, the owner chose to install state-of-the-art features and equipment in the horse barn, such as a modern ventilation system. Time-saving, and therefore cost-saving measures, included built-in feeding troughs that could be filled directly from the mow above. A one-story, shed-roofed wing extends southward from the east end of the main block of the barn. Two small sheds, currently one for goats and one for ponies, are located southeast of the south end of the shed-roofed wing.

The second major outbuilding on the farm is the L-shaped, gambrel-roofed cow barn, which is located on the south side of Shaker Tract Road several hundred yards north-northeast of the main house and horse barn. Although parts of the barn are believed to date from the late nineteenth century, in its present condition it is a state-of-the-art, ca. 1930 Jamesway barn. Up in the hay mow, the tracks that once transported trucks/carts of hay still survive, as do all of the original cow and calf stalls and virtually all of the vast expanses of tongue and groove wainscoting on the walls and ceilings. The automated drinking cups that supplied water when the cows pushed levers with their noses are gone, as is the mechanized litter removal system (although the waste trenches are still there).

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Several pieces of equipment bear the name "Lick," and the interior air vents are embossed with "Jamesway." Like the massive horse barn, the cow barn features metal ventilators on the ridge of the roof. The one-story, gable-roofed wing attached to the south end of the main barn houses pigs.

The oldest farm building in the complex is the 1840s board-and-batten barn with built-in corncrib. (It may originally have been a hog shed, but for clarity and ease of discussion, it will be called the board-and-batten barn.) It had been thought that the barn may have dated to the Shaker era (1830s), but that is not likely. It is located right behind (east of) the main house. The one and one-half story barn is built into a steep hill, revealing two full stories at the rear (east) elevation. Its gable roof is oriented on an east-west axis. At the moment, the barn houses the "Shaker Museum," which is open to the public on a limited basis.

Immediately southeast of the board-and-batten barn is what is now called the pony barn, a small, gable-roofed frame building on a north-south axis. Immediately north of and perpendicular to the board-and-batten/corn crib is the long, low, one-story, gable-roofed granary (1932). The one-story, hip-roofed bachelor farmhands' house is located west of (in front of) the horse barn. It was built in 1926 after a fire destroyed the ca.1830 Shaker Meeting House on the site.

South of the main house is the office, which was built in the late 1920s as a garage, but was completely remodeled in 1930. It is a small, hip-roofed frame building sheathed with vertical board siding. The interior is filled with period built-in oak features (e.g., drawers, cabinets, swinging doors, customer counters, etc.), a massive oak lawyers' double-desk, and a variety of historic business equipment (scales, cash registers, etc.) The remnants of the original truck scale are visible outside the front door. Although now in-filled, the outline of the old measuring device indicates the spot where empty trucks were weighed on the way in, and full trucks—mostly full of fruit from the farm's expansive orchards—were weighed on the way out to determine the price of the purchase.

Of particular note is the historic, in-ground swimming pool and adjacent pool house (both ca. 1925). The concrete-lined pool holds 300,000 gallons of water, most of which is pumped up from Second Creek on the western edge of the farmstead. A visitor to Alasa Farms wrote in his 1927 memoir of the trip: "Mr. Strong has built a large out-door swimming pool adjoining the Manor House." Although the primary function of the pool was to serve as a fire pond after the 1925 destroyed the aforementioned Shaker Meeting House, it immediately became (and still is) the favorite after-chores

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spot for hot, tired, and dusty farmhands. The one-story, hip-roofed pool house is sheathed with novelty siding, and contains separate men's and women's changing rooms and latrines.

Lastly, there are two ca. 1909 tenant houses located on the east side of Shaker Road, south of the farmhands' house and across the street from the Deacon's House. They are vernacular frame cottages with gabled roofs, clapboard siding, hip-roofed front porches, and minimal decoration. Simple wood trim around doors and windows survives, as do many original 2/2 double-hung sash windows.

The only non-contributing features of the nominated farmstead are two small, frame, gable-roofed houses and a gable roofed frame barn. They are located in the far northwest corner of the farmstead and are barely visible to passersby. Because they are landlocked within the farmstead itself, it is not possible to exclude them from the nomination.

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Significance

Summary

Alasa Farms is significant as a remarkably intact collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century agrarian architecture, complemented by an expansive working farm, in the predominantly rural town of Sodus near the west shore of Sodus Bay. Of particular significance are the two oldest buildings on the property, the Main House and the Deacon's House, both of which date to 1833-34: they are extremely rare surviving examples of Shaker architecture in America. Alasa Farms also includes a full array of farm-related support buildings and structures, all of which are virtually intact to their dates of construction between ca. 1840 and ca. 1940. Together, the still-farmed land and all of the historic buildings—mostly clustered together on the east side of Shaker Road near its intersection with Red Mill and Shaker Tract Roads—are significant under Criteria A and C in several areas, including religion, social history, agriculture, and architecture. Three discreet themes and periods are represented at Alasa Farms.

The first, and arguably the most important, layer of historic and architectural significance derives from two large, ca. 1833-34 communal housing units built by members of the Sodus Bay Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, a branch of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, which was a religious sect founded on the principles of communal living, hard, manual labor, ardent worship and celibacy. The United Society of Believers—a splinter group of Quakers—is commonly known as the Shakers; the sect was established in England in the 1680s and brought to America in 1774 by "Mother" Ann Lee. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were approximately two dozen Shaker communities widely scattered across America's Northeast, Eastern Seaboard, and Midwest regions. Today, only one Shaker community is believed to exist; it is located in Maine.

The second layer of significance is under Criterion A in the area of social history: between 1844 and 1846, the farm was home to the Sodus Bay Phalanx<sup>1</sup> of the Fourier Society, a social movement in America in the 1830s and 1840s that was devoted to establishing utopian societies based on communal living. In upstate New York in the mid-1800s, Fourierists in general, and the Sodus Bay Phalanx in particular, were ardent supporters of abolitionism and women's rights. The Phalanx joined forces with the numerous Quakers in the Finger Lakes region of the state and became a leading force during the Antebellum period of radical social activism.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sodus Bay Phalanx was an offshoot of the Rochester Confederation of [Fourierist] Associations.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

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### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location
- C** a birthplace or grave
- D** a cemetery
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Narrative Statement of Significance:** See continuation sheets

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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See attached continuation sheets

### 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 Building Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Alasa Farms, Inc. Alton, NY

### Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Social History

Religion

Architecture

### Period of Significance:

1833-34 - ca. 1930s

### Significant Dates:

1833-34; 1844-46; 1920s/30s

### Significant Person:

NA

### Cultural Affiliation:

NA

### Architect/Builder:

unknown

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property approximately 710 acres

**UTM References: Zone 18**

See continuation sheets

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

See continuation sheets

**Boundary Justification:**

See continuation sheets

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**11. Form Prepared By:**

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name/title Nancy L. Todd, Program Analyst

organization Division for Historic Preservation

date July 2009

street & number Peebles Island, Box 189

telephone (518) 237-8643 x 3262

city or town Waterford

state NY zip code 12188

**Additional documentation provided by:**

Dr. Judith Wellman, Principal, Historic New York (Fulton, NY); Appendix I, Sodus Bay Phalanx  
Cheri Roloson, Founder and Farm Manager, Cracker Box Palace, Inc., Alton, NY

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Property Owner** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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The third layer of significance is under Criteria A and C in the areas of architecture and agriculture. During the mid-1920s and the 1930s, under the tutelage of its progressive and well-to-do owner, Alvah Griffin Strong, Alasa Farms was a model farm devoted to *avant garde* agrarian practices. Several of the farm's barns and other support buildings/structure and much of Strong's equipment—especially time- and labor-saving devices installed inside the barns—were supplied by or patterned after prototypes introduced by companies like the James Manufacturing Company of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, and the Loudon Barn Company of Fairfield, Iowa. As such, Alasa Farms was a harbinger of large-scale, agribusinesses that soon proliferated across America.

The first and third themes are discussed at length in the following narrative. A detailed discussion of the second theme is found in Appendix I, which is a verbatim copy of a report prepared in 2008-09 by Dr. Judith Wellman.<sup>2</sup> This latter report, although touching on both the first and third themes embodied at Alasa Farms, is primarily devoted to the Phalanx's abolitionist and women's rights activities. As such, the report constitutes one small component of a recent county-wide survey that Wellman prepared as part of her on-going study of *Historic Resources Associated with the Freedom Trail, Abolitionism and African American Life in Central New York*.<sup>3</sup> This latter context study is now listed in the New York State Historic Register of Historic Places (2004) as a Multiple Property Documentation Form and is pending listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Since then, numerous resources have been listed in the State and National Registers, either as individual properties or as historic districts, in parts of Onondaga, Oswego, Cayuga, and Seneca Counties. It is hoped that many of the Wayne County sites related to the *Freedom Trail, the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African Americans in Central New York* soon will be proposed for National Register listing.

<sup>2</sup> Principal, Historic New York, Fulton, New York.

<sup>3</sup> Financial support for portions of this multi-year, on-going project has been provided by the Preservation League of New York State.

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**Layer 1: The Sodus Bay Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming (Shakers)**

Prior to settlement by pioneers of European descent, the area that later became Wayne County was occupied by Native Americans, particularly members of the Iroquois Confederacy. In 1779, General Sullivan effectively eliminated most of the settlements that the Six Nations of the Confederacy had established in central New York because many Native Americans had supported the British during the Revolutionary War. The land rights of any remaining Native Americans were similarly eliminated (or, at the very least, ignored), thus opening up central and western New York for settlement by settlers during the Early Republic Era of the new nation. A series of speculative purchases of vast tract of land, e.g., the Phelps and Gorham Purchase, ultimately resulted in the settlement of the region by white pioneers. At some point during the very late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century, Judge John Nicholas, originally of Geneva (Ontario County), New York, purchased approximately 1,300-1,450 acres of wilderness along the west and south shores of Sodus Bay (Lake Ontario).<sup>4</sup> Nicholas built a grist mill on Second Creek, near the western edge of his holdings, where the creek crosses present-day Red Mill Road. The Alton-Sodus Road (later Route 14) bounded the western edge of his property; according to local tradition, he may have built a cobblestone dwelling on this road. It is also believed that he built a small group of buildings on the site of the current Alasa farm complex, perhaps to provide housing for his mill workers and/or farmhands, although there is no specific evidence that Nicholas ever pursued anything more than small-scale farming.

In 1823, the Judge's widow sold the entire tract to a branch of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, which was a religious group—at the time, based in New Lebanon, Columbia County, New York—that was founded on the principles of communal living, manual labor, ardent worship, and celibacy. The United Society, a splinter group of English Quakers, originated in England in the 1680s under the leadership of Jean Cavalier, who was a French refugee who had been persecuted for his religious beliefs. Two of Cavalier's "prophets," James and Jane Wardley (who originally were of the Quaker faith), believed that when Christ returned, the Savior would be a woman. The Wardleys and others came to believe that Ann Lee, born in Manchester (England) in 1736, was that Savior. Lee grew up in a working class family and, as a girl, worked in a local textile mill. She joined the United Society of Believers in 1758; four years later she married Abraham Standerin, a blacksmith. Between 1762 and 1766, Lee lost

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<sup>4</sup> The exact acreage is unknown, as several sources report conflicting numbers. For ease of discussion, this narrative will use the figure of 1,400.

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all of her four children in infancy; she came to believe that God was punishing her for her sinfulness, particularly in the form of greed, selfishness, and lust. She embraced the philosophies of the United Society, and propounded spiritual salvation and enlightenment via the communal living, withdrawal from "modern" society, and celibacy.

In 1774, Lee and nine of her most devoted followers left England and established the first United Society of Believers in the present-day town of Colonie in Albany County (near the present-day Albany Airport). Known most commonly as the Watervliet and/or Niskayuna Shakers, the Albany-area community flourished until Lee died in 1784. A portion of the group relocated to New Lebanon (Mount Lebanon), where a new society was established. The Mount Lebanon Society served as the Shakers' "headquarters," from whence elders and missionaries were sent out to proselytize Shaker principles in hopes of creating Shaker communities all across America. By 1795, there were eleven Shaker communities in America; by the mid 1800s, there were about two dozen Shaker settlements throughout the Northeast, Southeast and Midwest regions of the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Virtually self-contained and essentially self-sufficient, the Shakers raised their own livestock, grew their own crops, manufactured their own highly innovative tools and equipment, built their own sturdy, simple buildings, and crafted their own furniture and domestic arts. Some Shakers augmented their incomes by selling seeds packaged in tiny packages (an "invention" of the Mount Lebanon Shakers), corn brooms, furniture (Mount Lebanon Shaker were famous for their finely crafted chairs), and surplus fruit or other produce.

Impressed with Wayne County for its highly arable land, which was particularly conducive to the cultivation of fruit trees, elders from Mount Lebanon purchased the land being offered by Judge Nicholas's widow in 1823. Three years later, under the leadership of Richard Pelham of Ohio, the Sodus Bay Shakers were "gathered," i.e. officially established. By 1827, the society boasted 88 members. The first thing the Shakers did was build a meeting house, which was formally dedicated on July 17, 1830. (Local tradition suggests that they first lived and worshipped in buildings erected in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century by Judge Nicholas.) Like Quaker meeting houses of the period, the ca. 1830 meeting house of the Sodus Bay Shakers was a large, utilitarian, gable-roofed frame building distinguished by two main entrances on its front (west) façade. Based on the principle of celibacy, Shaker men and women lived, worked, and worshipped in gender-segregated spaces. Thus, the men had an entrance to their half of the meeting house and the women had an entrance to their half of the edifice.

<sup>5</sup> To date, remnants of fifteen of these communities are listed on the National Register.

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After the completion of the meeting house in ca. 1830, the Shakers erected barns, shops, sheds, a schoolhouse, and, by 1834, at least three large houses. They continued to operate the grist mill on Second Creek built by Judge Nicholas, adjacent to which they built a saw mill and a blacksmith shop. All three of those manufacturing enterprises served not only the Shakers themselves, but the farmers in the region as well. All three of these buildings are long gone; information has not yet been gathered to justify the archeological significance of the sites under Criterion D.

In 1834, Isaac N. Youngs, a Shaker artist, musician, historian, and clock-maker from New Lebanon, drew a sketch of the Sodus Tract in 1834. He specifically noted that it was a "slight" sketch, thereby suggesting it was a rough and general rendering as opposed to a highly detailed, fully accurate portrayal of each and every building/structure in the village. Most importantly, it shows how Shakers organized their settlements in "families," i.e., separate mini-complexes, each of which contained a communal, dorm-like house and each of which, to varying degrees, contained its own support structures.

At the Sodus Bay Tract, there were three "families." The complex (as seen in the 1834 sketch) contained three separate houses, which were the "centers" of each mini-complex of support buildings. The "Church House," now called the Main House, was built ca. 1833-34; it was located a few hundred yards north of the meeting house. The "2<sup>nd</sup> House" was located on the north side of present-day Shaker Tract Road, across the street from the current, ca. 1930 cow barn. The "East House" was located at the northeast corner of the Tract. These houses accommodated men and women (not necessarily related by blood) who co-habited in gender-segregated portions of each dwelling. Each house at the Sodus Bay settlement may have sheltered between 40 and 60 people; during its heyday, the Sodus Bay Shakers numbered nearly 150. Of these three dwelling units, only the Church House, now called the Main House, survives. It is a remarkably intact, rare surviving example of Shaker architecture. It embodies the following features that characterize the type and period: in general, Shaker buildings are sturdy, simple, utilitarian buildings of strong, practical construction. Shakers used the finest buildings materials available (hard woods and/or bricks and stone), which were finely crafted for functionalism rather than style. Unlike many Federal style dwellings of the period in this section of Upstate New York, the Main House at the Sodus Bay village was (and still is) notable for its informal symmetry and lack of ornamentation. It lacks delicate, curvilinear elements such as louvered, elliptical fanlights in the gable ends and arched doorways embellished with attenuated pilasters, sidelights, and/or transom lights that distinguished many other Federal era dwellings in the Finger Lakes Region of the state. Instead, the Main House features small rectangular windows in its gable ends and a plain, six-paneled front door with simple wood trim.

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The Main House is especially significant because it contains some remarkably rare, relatively intact interior features. Most notable are the Shaker-era plates above many of the doors that indicate the number of their respective rooms, and several rows of pegs for hanging items. Most Shaker buildings contained dozens, if not scores of lines of pegs—some were used to hang up chairs in communal dining halls (or rooms in general) so that the floors could be easily swept or scrubbed on a daily basis. Both Shaker men and women wore hats/bonnets; scores of pegs were needed upon which to hang these hats/bonnets. To this day, these pegs are a hallmark of Shaker craftsmanship. Based on the fact that the house has only one staircase, it is presumed that the men and women were segregated by stories rather than halves of the building. This staircase features a simple, yet elegant, ash newel post and a plain, yet finely crafted, balustrade of cherry wood. Also believed to date from the Shaker era is the large bell atop the rear wing of the main house; this bell is believed to have been used to call the Shakers to worship, meals, and other communal activities.

A fourth house, the Deacon's House, is also believed to have been built by the Shakers in the early to mid-1830s. Youngs's 1834 sketch of the Sodus Tract does not depict this house, which was (and still is) located on the west side of Shaker Road southwest of the Main House. While it is possible that Youngs simply did not include it (his map was, after all, a "slight" sketch), it is equally possible that the Deacon's House was not built till late 1834, or even as late as 1836. Regardless of its exact date of construction, it is so remarkably similar to the Main House that it was undoubtedly built by the Shakers.

The heyday of the Sodus Bay Shakers was in the early to mid-1830s. In the region at large, they were renowned for their marketing of fruit, agricultural seeds, and salted fish (from Sodus Bay). Local farmers were also grateful for access to the Shakers' grist mill, saw mill, and blacksmith shop. But the heyday was short-lived: in 1836, a group of developers were planning to construct a feeder canal between the Shakers' land on Hunter's Point and the Erie Canal. Rather than acquiescing to the possibility of living next to such a radically modern (and notably rowdy) transportation system, the Shakers uprooted themselves completely and moved to Groveland, in the Genesee River Valley in Livingston County, where they established a new settlement. By 1838, the last Shaker had left the Sodus Bay Tract.

Sadly for Wayne County, the feeder canal never materialized. By 1844, the Shakers' abandoned holdings were put up for auction and acquired by the Sodus Bay Phalanx, a group of Fourierists (see theme #2, below). Perhaps one of the best records of the Shaker Bay Tract is found an article in an 1843 newspaper that described what the subsequent owners had purchased:

The contemplated purchase [from the proprietors of the Shaker Tract at Sodus Bay] contains 1,400 acres of good land, 300 of which are under good improvement, with an excellent orchard of about 20 acres of grafted fruit trees of the best kind, all of which are in a thrifty condition: also, a grist-mill, which is somewhat out of repair, together with a

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saw-mill -35 feet head of water. There will be sufficient water, when properly used; to perform all the business necessary for the Association, except in a very dry season, when perhaps there will be only sufficient to run the grist-mill and some other light machinery. To supply this deficiency, there are those who are willing to furnish a steam engine, should it be desired. On the whole, it is one of the most beautiful places we have ever beheld; and it is, beyond doubt, the best location that can be found in Western New-York. It has an excellent harbor, and other important-advantages. There is an abundance of wood on the premises, which could be disposed of to the steam boats on Lake Ontario and the funds thus procured, might be used to liquidate the installments as they became due...The bay is one of the best and safest harbors on the western lakes, and abounds with the best of fish; fishing might be made not only a pleasing pastime, but a very lucrative business.<sup>6</sup>

### **Layer 2: The Sodus Bay Phalanx**

As discussed in depth in Dr. Wellman's 2009 report on the Sodus Bay Phalanx (Appendix I), Alasa Farms is additionally significant under Criterion A in the area of social history. In 1844, the Sodus Bay Phalanx, a group of utopian Fourierists, moved right into a ready-made community comprised of at least two of the Shakers' four large, communal dwellings, the meeting house, and all (or at least many) of the Shakers' farm buildings, crop fields, and orchards, etc. The former Shaker Tract provided a perfect home for this group of idealists whose goal was social harmony via communal living, unconstrained individual development, and good works. Ironically, in contrast to the Shakers, one of the Fourierists' basic philosophies was that true happiness and enlightenment could be derived from indulging in human passions.

Fourierism was propounded in America by Arthur Brisbane (1809 – 1890), who embraced the social theories of Frenchman Francois Marie Charles Fourier (1772 – 1837). Fourierism flourished in America during the Antebellum Era; the most well-known Fourierist utopian society was Brook Haven in Massachusetts. Fourierists believed that society ought to be re-organized into phalanges, e.g., groups of 1,600 people who would live and work in peace and harmony as each person contributed his fair share of labor and talents and, in return, received his fair share of rewards and security.

Not surprisingly, Fourierists were attracted to New York State's Burned-Over District, where religious revivalism during the second quarter of the nineteenth century had created an atmosphere of social activism—especially in terms of anti-slavery and women's rights

<sup>6</sup> Rochester Republican, Aug 8, 1843; downloaded from [www.FultonHistory.com](http://www.FultonHistory.com)



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movements. Members of the Sodus Bay Phalanx were intimately associated with local Quakers; together, the two groups were ardent and radically active proponents of abolitionism and equal rights for all.

The Phalanx was short-lived: by 1846, the financially bankrupt Fourierists were evicted from their farmstead. However, the Fourierists themselves did not disappear from the area: many simply joined (or partnered with) already established Quaker meetings (e.g., the Farmington Meeting in nearby Ontario County). Even though members of the Phalanx built no buildings of their own during their tenure on the property, the site is still eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A for its association with the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Fourierist Movement in New York.

**Layer 3: Alasa Farms, a large-scale, early twentieth century “model” farm**

After the Sodus Bay Phalanx left in 1846, it appears that the former Shaker complex was vacant until 1868, when the farmstead was acquired by DeWitt Parshall of nearby Lyons. Subsequently, one of Parshall's daughters married into the Chamberlain family and the farmstead soon became a large and prosperous private enterprise, regionally renowned for its fruit and prize livestock. The Chamberlains are believed to have improved the farm by either upgrading or replacing some of the old Shaker outbuildings, but they retained most (or all) of the four houses. At the very least, they maintained the original Shaker meeting house, the former Church House (now Main House), and the Deacon's House. It is not known when the Shakers' "2<sup>nd</sup> House" and "East House" were lost. In ca. 1909, Chamberlain built two, single-family tenant houses, located just south of the Shaker meetinghouse. By the end of their tenure, the Chamberlains had expanded their holdings to approximately 1,670 acres.

In 1924, the 1,670-acre farmstead was acquired by Alvah Griffin Strong, the well-to-do grandson of Henry A. Strong, former president of the Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester. He named his holdings "Alasa" Farms, using the first two letters of his own name and the full first name of his business partner, Asa McBride. A disastrous fire in June 1925 completely destroyed the ca. 1830 meeting house and the Chamberlains' large horse barn (adjacent to and east of the meeting house). On the site of the old barn, Strong promptly built a new and improved Jamesway horse barn, utilizing a variety of progressive construction techniques and equipment. On the site of the meetinghouse, Strong built a one-story, hip-roofed building to house bachelor farmhands. By 1930, he had also completely remodeled the Chamberlains' late nineteenth century dairy barn into a "modern" facility, as propounded by agribusiness entrepreneurs such as the James Manufacturing Company and the Loudon Barn Company. He also built a granary, a creamery, and an ice house. Strong used the ca. 1833-34 Deacon's House and Chamberlain's two ca. 1909 tenant houses to accommodate married farm workers.

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In terms of significance under Criteria A and C in the areas of agriculture and architecture, the focal points of Strong's late 1920s/early 1930s building campaign were (and still are) the horse and cow barns, both of which retain a remarkably high degree of interior and exterior integrity. As a building type, they embody the distinctive characteristics of early twentieth century barns, most notably their massive gambrel roofs supported by soaring trusses. In particular, the horse barn is—like other large barns of the period—of balloon frame construction, a building technique that employed relatively cheap, power-sawn lumber; this method of construction replaced the slower and more costly practice of heavy timber framing common during the nineteenth century. At ground level, the lack of cross beams and/or heavy supporting timbers facilitated the storage of more and/or larger pieces of machinery and equipment. The opening up of large expanses of unobstructed space in hay mows was a great improvement over the cramped mows in the upper levels of nineteenth-century, gable-roofed barns: much more hay could be stored in gambrel-roofed mows. Both of Strong's barns retain their original hay-carrier system: a fixed track along the underside of the roof ridge carried hay from one end of the mow to the other after a horse-drawn pulley system (later mechanized) lifted the hay up from a cart at ground level. (Although still in situ, the track is no longer used.) Incorporated into the framing of the buildings are Jamesway ventilation systems: wooden shafts draw fouled air from the ground floor up through the truss work and out through the roof via metal cupolas. Numerous windows at or slightly above ground level provide ample fresh air and natural light that, like adequate ventilation, ensured the health and welfare (and, therefore, output) of the cows.

Other features and/or equipment designed to increase the well-being of the animals included modern metal stalls and stanchions, far more sanitary and easier to clean than the old-fashioned wooden stalls popular during the nineteenth century. Each cow had her own water cup designed to release water when she pushed a lever with her nose; not only did this system provide fresh water as needed on an individual basis, it also eliminated the unsanitary features of the old-fashioned common trough. (The cups no longer survive). To increase the comfort and efficiency of his farm hands, Strong installed hanging feed/mineral and litter carts that ran along fixed tracks in front of and behind the cows, respectively, in order to reduce the time and effort needed to feed and clean up after the animals. In the horse barn, Strong installed individual hay feeders in each horse's private stall: hay from the mow was (and still is) dumped down a chute directly into each feeder.

By the mid-1930s, Alasa Farms was a highly productive "progressive farm," regionally renowned for its Shorthorns (milk cows), orchards (especially apple orchards), Shetland ponies, purebred canines (Whippets, St. Bernards, Newfoundlands, and Alaskan Huskies), poultry products, and timber (oak, chestnut, basswood, and poplar). Strong's four-mile stretch of waterfront along Sodus Bay provided numerous opportunities for fishing, ice harvesting, and recreation.

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During the mid- to late twentieth century, Strong's heirs, including his daughter and his grandson, subdivided and sold off about 1,000 acres of their original 1,670-acre purchase from the Chamberlains. Some of the parcels were relatively large and continue in agricultural use today. Along the shore of Sodus Bay, much of the land was carved into tiny parcels on which seasonal camps were built. In 1977, two parcels on the north side of Red Mill Road just west of Second Creek were sold off; the subsequent owners built modern houses on these two parcels. Because they are essentially land-locked within the nominated farmstead, and because the land was always associated with nominated resources, both parcels are included in the present nomination. And, although the houses are considered non-contributing, they are so far away from the complex of historic buildings that they in no way compromise the overall integrity of the farmstead.

Thus, in its present condition, Alasa Farms is historically and architecturally significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of agriculture and architecture. Not only does it tell the story of farming in general in Wayne County, but it also illustrates the history of progressive, model farms, large-scale agribusiness based on modern technology, in the Finger Lakes Region of New York State. While other barns, barn complexes and/or expansive farms are found throughout the region, few survive essentially intact to the level displayed at Alasa: there are no post-1930s buildings at all, and none of the older buildings has suffered more than extremely minor alterations.

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*Sodus Bay Phalanx*  
by Dr. Judith Wellman, Principal, Historic New York (Fulton, N.Y.)

**Between 1844 and 1846, members of the Sodus Bay Phalanx lived at the Sodus Bay Shaker Tract, after the Shakers removed to Groveland in Livingston County. The Phalanx was a utopian community of abolitionists and woman's rights activists, many of whom were Quakers.**

Fourierist communities were established in the 1840s on the basis of ideas promoted by Charles Fourier, French reformer, who argued that if humans shared goods in common and chose their own work freely, the world would reflect and contribute to the harmony of the spheres. Albert Brisbane promoted these ideas through the pages of the *New York Tribune*, and abolitionists and women's rights advocates translated them into action. Notable Fourierist communities included Brook Farm, a transcendentalist community near Dedham, Massachusetts. The longest-lived Fourierist community, Red Bank, in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, incorporated a school taught by abolitionist and woman's rights advocates Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld, and Sarah Grimke. Children of reformers such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Henry Brewster Stanton and Gerrit and Ann Smith attended this school. Several Fourierist communities attracted Quaker abolitionists, including Community Place, part of the Society for Universal Reform in Skaneateles, New York.<sup>7</sup>

We have no complete list of those who lived in the Sodus Bay Phalanx. From a variety of sources, however, we know that Quakers affiliated with Farmington Quarterly and Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends (from Rochester and Farmington Monthly Meetings) were key members of the Sodus Bay Community. They included the Fish family (Benjamin Fish, Sarah Fish, and children, including Catharine Fish Stebbins and Mary Fish); John W. Hurn and Sarah Griffen Hurn and children; Lorenzo Mabbett and Anna Griffen Mabbett and children, and Eliab W. Capron. All were core members of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. Many were also committed women's rights activists. These Quakers viewed their residence here as part of the wholeness of their lives and vision, and they used their community life to help promote abolitionism, women's rights, and equal access to property.

Benjamin Fish (June 2, 1797-December 3, 1882) from Rhode Island and Sarah Davids Bills Fish (September 11, 1798-November 11, 1868) from New Jersey were Quakers. When they came to New York State, they moved first to Farmington (in 1817). At the time of the split

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Improvement and Reform 1842-46* (Indiana University Press, 2005).

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between Hicksite and Orthodox Friends in 1828, they became Hicksites and moved to Rochester. In 1844, they moved to Sodus Bay Phalanx and finally back to Rochester (in 1847). In 1848, they joined the new meeting of reform-minded Congregational Friends, formed at Farmington. The whole family worked for peace, equal suffrage for African Americans and women, prison reform, temperance, and Indian rights. Benjamin was a nurseryman by trade. Opposed to war, he was fined and imprisoned for refusing to take part in militia training. Sarah and Benjamin Fish had five children. Daughters Catharine and Mary devoted also worked publicly for abolitionism. Catharine signed the Declaration of Sentiments at the Seneca Falls women's rights convention.<sup>8</sup>

From April 1844 to April 1847, the family lived in the Sodus Bay Phalanx, where Benjamin Fish was president until 1846. Family stories suggest that when Catharine married Giles B. Stebbins, a Unitarian from Massachusetts, on August 17, 1846, Benjamin Fish was released from his position as president because his daughter had married out of the community.<sup>9</sup> The whole family became mainstays of temperance, abolitionism, and women's rights. At the beginning of the teetotal temperance movement in 1840, Sarah Fish never served wine in her house again. They became core members of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, when it was organized in 1842. At its first annual meeting in 1843, Benjamin Fish became a member of the nominating committee and a counselor. Sarah D. Fish was corresponding secretary and a member of both the business and executive committees. Daughter Mary Fish served on the executive committee. In 1844, both Benjamin and Sarah D. Fish were appointed counselors. In December 1847, four members of the Fish family, plus Catharine's husband Giles B. Stebbins, took part in a "great anti-slavery meeting" of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society held in Rochester. Catharine A. Stebbins, Benjamin Fish, Mary B. Fish, and Sarah D. Fish were all on the Executive Committee.<sup>10</sup> With other Quaker women, Sarah D. Fish and her daughters Catharine and Mary helped organize women's antislavery fairs in December 1847 and again in 1848. In 1850, Benjamin Fish was chair of this group's seventh annual meeting. As Frederick Douglass noted, the Fish family worked closely with key Underground Railroad activists in

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<sup>8</sup> Ambrose Shotwell, *Our Quaker Forefathers and Their Posterity* (Lansing, Michigan: Robert Smith and Company, 1895-97). Fish genealogy prepared by Charles Lenhart.

<sup>9</sup> "Catharine Fish Stebbins," from "Stories in Stone: Famous People in Mount Hope Cemetery," [www.fomh.org/stories](http://www.fomh.org/stories); *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, September 17, 1846; Helen Fish, from Lorraine Marie Latte, "The Sodus Bay Phalanx," Hoffman essay, 1956, 7.

<sup>10</sup> *North Star*, January 7, 1848.

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Rochester, including Frederick Douglass, Amy and Isaac Post, and Asa and Huldah Anthony.<sup>11</sup>

The Fish family also became early converts to the spiritualist movement. Started by Margaret and Catharine Fox in Hydesville, New York, just east of Rochester, spiritualism attracted many Quaker abolitionists, including the Posts, Fishes, and E.W. Capron.<sup>12</sup>

A meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Syracuse in 1852, attended by the Fish family, gives a sense of the social and reform context in which they lived and worked. British abolitionist George Thompson spoke, and afterwards, the Fish family attended tea at the home of Samuel J. May, pastor of the Unitarian Church of the Messiah. Giles B. Stebbins later described the party, combining African Americans and European Americans, women and men, abolitionists in upstate New York with national leaders from Boston and Philadelphia, in his *Upward Steps of Seventy Years*:

Edmund Quincy, with the grace of his old-time courtesy, Sojourner Truth with her quaint and striking ways, George Thompson, full of life and heart, Abby Kelley Foster, earnest and attractive, Charles L. Remond, his dark face lighted up, his fine eyes radiant, Garrison, beaming with enjoyment, and his admirable wife, Frederick Douglass, noble of aspect and eloquent, in private as in public, Benjamin Fish, my wife's father, a tall Quaker-like figure, his genial face lighted up with appreciative pleasure, Samuel May, Jr., steadfast as the Leicester hills of his Massachusetts home, James Miller McKim, smiling and serene, a gifted English lady, who greatly enjoyed the evening with him, Charles B. Sedgwick, an eminent Syracuse lawyer, a true man, and Mrs. Stebbins and myself were of the company in the house.

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<sup>11</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 28, 1843. *The North Star*, December 3, 1847; "Address Of Anti-Slavery Women Of Western New York," *North Star*, March 24, 1848; November 10, 1848; February 6, 1851.

<sup>12</sup> Isaac Post, 1850; Giles B. Stebbins, *Upwards of Seventy Years* (New York: John W. Lovell, 1890), [http://books.google.com/books?id=TC2JQXBv\\_AQC&printsec=titlepage&client=safari](http://books.google.com/books?id=TC2JQXBv_AQC&printsec=titlepage&client=safari); Ann Leah [Fish] Underhill, *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism* (New York: T.R. Knox, 1885), [http://books.google.com/books?id=fIo5AAAAIAAJ&dq=leah+underhill+missing+link&printsec=frontcover&source=bn&hl=en&ei=PGqPSbuJIpmatwzfz8OGrCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&resnum=4&ct=result#PPA105,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=fIo5AAAAIAAJ&dq=leah+underhill+missing+link&printsec=frontcover&source=bn&hl=en&ei=PGqPSbuJIpmatwzfz8OGrCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=4&ct=result#PPA105,M1);

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At the tea-table what flow of fine humor softening the earnestness of speech, what grace and ease, naturalness and fraternity! It was indeed "the best society."<sup>13</sup>

Catharine Ann Fish Stebbins (born in Farmington, August 17, 1823) became a major reformer in her own right. As a young girl in her early teens, she gathered signatures on antislavery petitions. She and her sister kept an anti-tobacco pledge on the parlor table, which they asked young male visitors to sign. Educated in Quaker schools, she later taught in the Rochester Public Schools and became secretary of the Rochester Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>14</sup>

Catharine Fish Stebbins' marriage and her work in the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society and with women's antislavery fairs led her directly into the organized woman's rights movement. In 1848, she attended the first women's rights convention held in Seneca Falls, New York, where she signed the Declaration of Sentiments. She continued to be active in the women's rights movement for the rest of her life, acting as secretary of the second women's rights convention held in Rochester and the statewide convention in Albany in February 1854.

Catharine A. F. Stebbins and Giles B. Stebbins moved to Michigan about 1849 and lived in Detroit for many years. There, they kept up their reform work. Catharine became a founding member of the National Woman Suffrage Association, serving on its Executive Board and giving congressional testimony. In 1871 and 1872, she unsuccessfully tried to vote in Michigan, earning her only grudging acknowledgement from the election official that "Mrs. Stebbins would have all the required qualifications of an elector, but for the fact of her being a woman."<sup>15</sup>

In 1876, Catharine Fish Stebbins signed the women's Declaration of Rights read by Susan B. Anthony at the Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia. Later that month, she wrote a letter from Michigan to an anniversary celebration of the Seneca Falls convention: "We are grateful to remember many women whose clear insight and reason pronounced in the outset that a woman's

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<sup>13</sup> Giles B. Stebbins, *Upward Steps of Seventy Years*, 90-91.

<sup>14</sup> Frances Willard and Mary Livermore, *A Woman of the Century*, 1893, 681.

<sup>15</sup> "Catharine Fish Stebbins," Frances Willard and Mary Livermore, eds., *A Woman of the Century* (Buffalo, Chicago New York: C.W. Moulton, 1893), 681-82, [books.google.com/books?id=zXEEAAAAYAAJ&printsec=titlepage&client=safari](https://books.google.com/books?id=zXEEAAAAYAAJ&printsec=titlepage&client=safari); "Catharine Fish Stebbins: Mt. Hope Cemetery, Stories in Stone," [www.fomh.org/stories.php?subaction=showfull&id=1121213934&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=4&](http://www.fomh.org/stories.php?subaction=showfull&id=1121213934&archive=&start_from=&ucat=4&)

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soul was as well worth saving as a man's; that her independence and free choice are as necessary and as valuable to the public virtue and welfare; who saw and still see in both, equal children of a Father who loves and protects all." When Elizabeth Cady Stanton published the *Woman's Bible* in 1898, she invited Catharine Fish Stebbins to be one of the editors. That same year, Catharine sent "an interesting descriptive letter" to the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.<sup>16</sup>

Both Catharine Fish Stebbins and Giles B. Stebbins sent a letter of endorsement for Sojourner Truth's autobiography, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*. Catharine's reflected a summary of her life's vision: "Dear Sojourner," she wrote, "Love is the light, life, and central attraction of the universe, and will, if men yield to it, bring selfishness and misrule into harmony and law. May you ever feel its blessings." Giles wrote simply, "With earnest best wishes, your friend, Giles B. Stebbins."<sup>17</sup>

Catharine Fish Stebbins and Giles B. Stebbins had two daughters, Mary Wendelline, who died in 1859, age three, and an infant who died in 1861.

Other members of the Sodus Bay Phalanx, most of them Quakers, were also active abolitionists. At a meeting of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society in February 1845, for example, in the middle of the worst snowstorm since 1839, three men from Sodus Bay Phalanx—Lorenzo Mabbett, John W. Hurn, and Robert Palmer—walked forty miles to the convention. All three took an active part in the convention. Lorenzo Mabbett was appointed chair and elected a vice-president for the following year. John W. Hurn served as chair of the business committee and was elected a counselor (along with Benjamin Fish and Sarah D. Fish, also from Sodus Bay). Hurn also gave "a most eloquent, bold, and appropriate address." "Though a very young man," noted the minutes, Hurn "has looked deep into the cause of Slavery everywhere and of all kinds. The address was unanimously adopted, not even a vote against it by our Liberty party friends."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>"Catharine Fish Stebbins: Mt. Hope Cemetery, Stories in Stone," [www.fomh.org/stories.php?subaction=showfull&id=1121213934&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=4&](http://www.fomh.org/stories.php?subaction=showfull&id=1121213934&archive=&start_from=&ucat=4&); *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1, 591; "The National-American Convention of 1898," *History of Woman Suffrage, 4: 1883-1900*, 299, transcribed by Women and Social Movements.

<sup>17</sup> [http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/digs/wwm97268/@Generic\\_BookTextView/5328;pt=2858](http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/digs/wwm97268/@Generic_BookTextView/5328;pt=2858)

<sup>18</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 6, 1845. Lorenzo Mabbett's name is also spelled "Mabbit." For consistency, I have used Mabbett here.



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These men were linked by sibling ties as well as by marriage. John W. Hurn and Lorenzo Mabbett married two sisters, Sarah Griffen Hurn and Anna Griffen Mabbett. A third sister, Huldah, married Asa Anthony, who kept an important Underground Railroad station in Monroe County near the home of Daniel and Mary Anthony, parents of Susan B. Anthony. Frederick Douglass listed Asa Anthony, along with Benjamin Fish, among the "good and true men of Rochester" who "cheered on and supported" him in his work for equal rights. Most likely, he would also include Huldah Anthony and Sarah D. Fish among his supporters.<sup>19</sup>

**Mabbett Family**<sup>20</sup>

Anna Griffen (Mar 15, 1813-Aug 31, 1902) married Lorenzo Mabbett (Mar 17, 1811-May 27, 1850) on July 5, 1832. Her younger sister Sarah (June 16, 1816-Apr 12, 1890) married John W. Hurn. Presumably, both couples moved to Sodus Bay Phalanx in 1844.

When Sodus Bay Phalanx dissolved, Lorenzo and Anna Mabbett moved to Collins, New York, and transferred their membership from Farmington Monthly Meeting to Collins Monthly Meeting of Friends.<sup>21</sup>

On September 14-15, 1847, Mabbett chaired a large antislavery convention in Buffalo, declaring himself to be a Liberty Party man, believing that the Constitution was an antislavery document.<sup>22</sup>

In Collins, they were active workers in the Underground Railroad. In 1849, Lorenzo Mabbett was in regular correspondence with Frederick Douglass, who published a letter from Mabbett describing an incident with two freedom seekers and his wife Anna, highlighting both the connection with Seneca Indians and the use of Quaker garb as a disguise:

A few hours since Anna G. Mabbett was seen upon one of our back roads with a

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<sup>19</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times*, 269-70, [www.docsouth.edu](http://www.docsouth.edu).

<sup>20</sup> Research on both Mabbett and Hurn families by Charles Lenhart.

<sup>21</sup> Vital Records of Friends, New York Yearly Meeting, James Hazard File, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, <http://www.swarthmore.edu/fhl.xml>.

<sup>22</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 21, 1847.

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horse and wagon containing besides herself a fugitive slave and his wife, all in women's attire. The slave was about to commence school on the Reservation with the Indians, when his friends learned that the base ministers of Slaveocracy were on his track and close upon him, but being put upon the route to Canada--and not in this instance the right route--he is safe. . . . The people of this place and vicinity are giving such indications of their love of Liberty, that we may safely conclude the time is near, if not already at hand, when this region of Western New York will be a safe retreat for the poor panting fugitive.<sup>23</sup>

On May 27, 1850, Lorenzo Mabbett died, age 40, in Concord, Erie County, New York.<sup>24</sup>

### Hurn Family

John W. Hurn (February 8, 1823-August 26, 1887) was born in 1823 in Norwich, England. In early 1845, while he was living at the Sodus Bay Phalanx, Hurn toured western New York as part of a biracial team of lecturers (including African Americans William Wells Brown and J.B. Sanderson and European American Giles B. Stebbins), before attending the February 1845 meeting of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. At the 1846 meeting, he was listed as a "distinguished speaker" who gave an "animated speech."<sup>25</sup>

By September 1846, the Hurns (along with four other families, including Sarah's sister Alice and her husband James Angus, from Wayne County) had left Sodus Bay for Mitchell, in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, where they joined several families from the Town of Caroline, New York (near Ithaca) in a Fourierist community modeled on Sodus Bay. After the death of their infant child on September 9, 1846, Sarah Hurn taught the community school. John and Sarah corresponded regularly with Amy Post in Rochester. In 1846-47, these eleven families petitioned the legislature for incorporation as the Spring Farm Phalanx. Their petition was unsuccessful, and several families, including the Hurns, left.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *North Star*, September 29, 1849.

<sup>24</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 27, 1850.

<sup>25</sup> *National Anti-Standard*, February 20, 1845; January 22, 1846.

<sup>26</sup> "History of the Town of Mitchell," Sheboygan Press, April 29, 1927, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~sheboygan/news14.htm>; Nancy Hewitt, "Origin Stories: Remapping First Wave Feminism," Proceedings of the Third Annual Gilder Lehrman

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By January 1850, the Hurns were living in the Town of Gates, near Rochester, close to Alice's father (Gershom Griffen) and sister Huldah Anthony, where John edited the *Rochester Daily News*. In January and February 1850, he published several articles on the new spiritualist movement.<sup>27</sup>

By 1859, the Hurns had moved to Philadelphia. Perhaps they moved as early as 1854, when Sarah Hurn relinquished her membership in Farmington M.M. of Friends.<sup>28</sup>

In Philadelphia, John Hurn worked as a telegraph operator. When John Brown attacked Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859, authorities were certain that Frederick Douglass bore some responsibility. The sheriff of Franklin County, Pennsylvania, telegraphed the sheriff in Philadelphia, requesting him to arrest Douglass. He did not count on the abolitionist sympathies and personal friendship for Douglass of the Philadelphia telegraph operator, John W. Hurn. Many years later, Hurn remembered the event. "Yes, sir," he told a reporter from the *Philadelphia Record*, "I am the man who saved Fred. Douglass' life when "Old John Brown" was captured at Harper's Ferry." And further:

I suppressed a dispatch addressed to the sheriff of Philadelphia, instructing him to arrest Douglass, who was then in that city, as proofs of his complicity in the memorable raid were discovered when John Brown was taken into custody. . .

At that time I was a telegraph operator located in Philadelphia, and when I received the dispatch I was frightened nearly out of my wits. As I was an ardent admirer of the great ex-slave, I resolved to warn Douglass of his impending fate, no matter what the result might be to me. The news had just been spread throughout the country of the bold action of John Brown in taking Harper's Ferry.

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Center International Conference at Yale University, October 25-28, 2001,

□ <http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:50rDNirj9ucJ:www.yale.edu/glc/conference/hewitt.pdf+%22John+W+Hurn%22&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=4&gl=us>; Nancy Hewitt, "Amy Post: 'Of whom it was said, "being dead, yet speaketh,"' *University of Rochester Library Bulletin* XXXVII (1984).

<sup>27</sup> 1850 federal census; Griffen Genealogy by Charles Lenhart; Eliab W. Capron, *Modern Spiritualism: Its Facts and Fanaticisms, Its Consistencies* (Boston: B. Marsh, 1850), reprint Ayer, 1976, [http://books.google.com/books?id=uzUsxuavKbUC&pg=PA391&lpg=RA1-PA392&ots=vsW\\_id1Vji&dq=%22John+W+Hurn%22#PPA11,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=uzUsxuavKbUC&pg=PA391&lpg=RA1-PA392&ots=vsW_id1Vji&dq=%22John+W+Hurn%22#PPA11,M1).

<sup>28</sup> Hazard database, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore.

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Everybody was excited and public feeling ran high. Before the intelligence came that Brown had been captured, the dispatch I have mentioned was sent by the sheriff of Franklin [C]ounty, Penn., to the sheriff of Philadelphia, informing him that Douglass had been one of the leading conspirators, and requesting that he should be immediately apprehended.

Though I knew it was illegal to do so, I quietly put the dispatch in my pocket, and, asking another operator to take my place, started on my search for Fred. Douglass. I went directly to Miller McKim, the secretary of the contraband, underground, fugitive railway office in Philadelphia, and inquired for my man. Mr. McKim hesitated to tell me, whereupon I showed him the dispatch and promised him not to allow it to be delivered within three hours. I told him I would not do this unless he agreed to get Mr. Douglass out of the states. This he readily assented to, for it was his business to spirit escaped slaves beyond the reach of the authorities. I returned to the telegraph office and kept a sharp lookout for similar dispatches. None arrived, however, and when the allotted time expired I sent the belated message to its destination.

In the mean time those intrusted [sic] with my secret saw Mr. Douglass and urged him to leave the town as quickly as possible. He was loath to do so at first, but the expostulation of his friends overcame his objections, and in an hour he left on a railroad train. He reached his home in Rochester, New York, in safety, destroying the compromising documents, and then packed his gripsack and started for Canada. It was fortunate for him that he left so soon as he did, for immediately after his departure from Rochester his home was surrounded by officers.<sup>29</sup>

Douglass had been planning for some time to go on a lecture tour of Great Britain. His departure was not, therefore, due solely to the dangerous atmosphere following John Brown's capture. But Hurn's intervention certainly facilitated Douglass's safe passage to Canada and then to England.

In the 1860s, John W. Hurn became a photographer. Several of his most famous photos dealt with reformers. One, taken at the Longwood Meeting of the Friends of Human Progress (the former Congregational Friends), included abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Thomas

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<sup>29</sup> James M. Gregory, *Frederick Douglass The Orator* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Willey & Co., 1893), 46-48, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/gregory/gregory.html>. Thanks to Christopher Densmore for finding this. *Baldwinsville Gazette*, August 3, 1882, fultonhistory.com.

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M'Clintock (abolitionist, woman's rights activist, Clerk of Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends from 1838-43, and one of the founders of the Congregational Friends in 1848), who had lived in Waterloo, New York, from 1836-1856. John W. Hurn participated in this meeting in 1866 and 1867. Hurn photographed Lucretia Mott several times, including in front of her home, "Roadside."<sup>30</sup>

The George Eastman House in Rochester owns several of John W. Hurn's photographs, including several of his family members, as well as images of Abraham Lincoln (c. 1860), Frederick Douglass (c. 1865), Ulysses S. Grant (c. 1869), Lucretia Mott (c.1870), Susan B. Anthony (c. 1870), Edwin Booth (c. 1865), Cyrus W. Fields (c. 1870), and Thaddeus Stevens (c. 1870). Hurn also photographed Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Mary Livermore, Lucy Stone, and Wendell Phillips. Cornell University has copies of these prints. The Library of Congress also owns a Hurn photograph of Douglass, taken in the mid-1860s.<sup>31</sup>

By the 1880s, Sarah and John W. Hurn were living with other reformers in Vineland, New Jersey. Sarah Hurn was listed as a participant in the National American Woman Suffrage Association's annual meeting in 1886.

John W. Hurn died in Vineland of cancer on August 26, 1887. Hurn "possessed an exceptionally bright intellect," noted his obituary, and he was "a ready and able writer and speaker." He was a "prominent abolitionist," a telegraph operator in both Rochester and Philadelphia and then a photographer in Philadelphia. Sarah Hoxsie Griffen outlived her husband

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<sup>30</sup> Two copies of this photograph are in Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore. Information on Hurn's participation in Progressive Friends Meeting from Christopher Densmore. For more information on Longwood, see <http://undergroundrr.kennett.net/index.html>; Swarthmore College, <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/friends/mottpicindex.htm>; Bryn Mawr, [http://triptych.brynmawr.edu/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/Friends&CISOPTR=469&REC=1](http://triptych.brynmawr.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/Friends&CISOPTR=469&REC=1)

<sup>31</sup> Thanks to Charles Lenhart for compiling a lengthy list of Hurn's photographs (from which these examples have been extracted) and to Joe Struble, for providing a list of Hurn's photographs at the George Eastman House, Assistant Archivist, Photo Collection. Lindseth Collection, Woman Suffrage, Cornell University. Photo of Frederick Douglass at Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-24165, <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/detailsKeyword.php?keyword=Hurn&recordCount=2&heRecord=1>

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by three years. She died in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, on April 12, 1890.<sup>32</sup>

### Eliab W. Capron

Eliab W. Capron (January 1, 1820-1892) was a member of the Sodus Bay Phalanx, as well as a newspaper editor, radical Garrisonian abolitionist, spiritualist, and women's rights advocate. His disownment from Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends (Hicksite) in 1844-46 contributed to the cataclysmic disruption among Quakers that led ultimately to the formation of the new yearly meetings of Congregational Friends (later Progressive Friends and Friends of Human Progress). And his career as a writer, newspaper editor, and speaker reflected both the advantages and economic costs of making reform and moral issues the centerpiece of his life.

Eliab Wilkinson Capron was born on January 2, 1820, probably either in Cayuga County or Skaneateles, New York, the son of David Capron (1797-1837) and Mary B. Knight Capron (July 19, 1800-c. 1873). By November 1817, Mary B. Knight Capron had married David Capron and joined Scipio Monthly Meeting of Friends (south of Auburn, near Sherwood, New York). David's father (and Eliab's grandfather) Welcome Capron, also lived near Scipio.<sup>33</sup>

David and Mary Knight Capron had five children, Elizabeth (1820-1890), Eliab W. (1820-1880), Mary (1828-1830), Charles Henry (1830-after 1858), and Mary S. (1834 to before 1858). At the time of the Hicksite-Orthodox separation of Friends in 1828, they joined the Hicksites. They lived in Skaneateles and belonged to Sempronius Preparative Meeting of Scipio Monthly Meeting of Friends.<sup>34</sup>

By 1835, the Caprons were either visiting or had moved to the area around Farmington, New York, where they took tea with Quaker Hannah Pierce in June 1835. By March 17, 1836,

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<sup>32</sup> John W. Hurn, Obituary, *Evening Journal*, August 27, 1887. Copy in George Eastman House. Transcribed by Charles Lenhart.

<sup>33</sup> This section on Eliab W. Capron is based on the extraordinary cooperative research efforts of several people over several years. It compiles research from Nancy Austin, Michael J. Cuddy, Christopher Densmore, Charles Lenhart (who transcribed most of these articles and found many more), Sally Millick, Elizabeth Moger, Lawrence Rainey, Tanya Warren, and Judith Wellman. All of these people should be considered joint authors, although any mistakes are mine alone.

<sup>34</sup> Research in records of Scipio and Farmington Monthly Meetings by Elizabeth Moger, reported in Moger to Christopher Densmore, December 2, 1982.

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they transferred their membership to Farmington Monthly Meeting of Friends, where they attended Williamson Preparative Meeting, just north of Farmington. In 1837, David Capron died in Williamson, and Mary B. Capron moved to Auburn, transferring her own membership and that of Eliab W. and Charles Henry back to Scipio Monthly Meeting. As her husband's executrix, Mary Capron advertised for creditors to list their claims, auctioned off her husband's property, and sold a parcel on lot 47 with "a convenient dwelling house, a small cultivated garden, and some fruit trees, and shrubbery" in Auburn to help pay his debts.<sup>35</sup>

With two of her children (Eliab W. and Charles Henry), Mary B. Woodward again transferred her membership from Scipio Monthly Meeting to Farmington, where they were all received as members of Farmington Monthly Meeting on February 15, 1838. In 1839, Mary Capron married a non-Quaker, William Woodard (also spelled "Woodward"). She successfully appealed to retain her own Quaker membership, however. In March 1846, Mary B. Woodward moved back to Scipio with her son Charles Henry. Scipio Monthly Meeting accepted them both officially in March 1848. She moved to Burlington (Pennsylvania) Monthly Meeting in 1860 and back to Farmington in 1866. By 1870, Mary Woodard, age 70, was living near Farmington meeting, in the Town of Macedon, next door to an African American family headed by Isaiah

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<sup>35</sup>Hannah Pierce Diary, June 1-7, 1835, <http://www.geocities.com/lenaweemi/diary.html>. On December 18, 1837, Mary B. Durfee and Elihu Durfee, Clerks of the women's and men's meetings of Farmington M.M. of Friends, wrote "To Scipio Monthly Meeting of Friends. Dear Friends: Mary B. Capron having removed and settled in Auburn within the limits of your Meeting requests our certificate for herself & her two minor Children Eliab W. and Charles Henry. Upon enquiry nothing appearing to obstruct we recommend them to you as members of our religious society." Noted in "Register of Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Removals for Farmington M.M. (H), 1828-1867. Research by Elizabeth Moger. Newspaper notice signed by Mary B. Capron, May 8, 1837, and printed in *Lyons Argus*, n.d.; *Lyons Argus*, January 19, 1839, *Auburn Journal and Advertiser*, August 22 and September 19, 1838, <http://www.fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>. Frederick Holden, *Descendants of Banfield Holden* (Boston: George C. Rand and Avery, 1859); *Sempronius Meeting of Friends: A Historical Sketch of the First Religious Society in the Town of Moravia, Cayuga County, 1804-1838*. Research on Eliab Wilkinson Capron is complicated because three people had the same name, two cousins and their uncle. The three youngest children of Welcome Capron and Cynthia Wilkinson Capron were named David (April 16, 1797-1837), Laban (b. December 17, 1801), and Eliab W. Capron (October 28, 1804-July 2, 1826). David and Laban Capron each named one of their sons Eliab Wilkinson Capron. Laban's son (1827-1918) attended Union College, became a medical doctor, and lived in Macedon, New York. See genealogies by Charles Lenhart and Tanya Warren. Thanks also to Lawrence Rainey for his research.

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Foster, age 61, barber. His daughter (or wife) Mary, age 35, and Jane Hazel, age 75 (perhaps his mother-in-law) lived with them, as did Charles Tailor, age 16, another barber, born in Canada.<sup>36</sup>

Capron's relationship with Friends proved to be tempestuous. As radical abolitionism broke apart the Society of Friends, Capron sided with the American Anti-Slavery Society against many established Quaker leaders. The case of Isaac Hopper, New York City Quaker abolitionist, editor, and Underground Railroad supporter, proved a turning point. When Griffith Cooper, abolitionist, catalyst for Indian concerns, and (according to Lucretia Mott) "one of our most radical ministers" supported Hopper, Farmington Monthly Meeting "released" Cooper as a minister in October 1842.<sup>37</sup>

In the face of such conflict, Capron spoke up. On October 28, 1842, when Capron was only twenty-two years old, he wrote a public letter from Walworth, New York (just north of Farmington) to William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the *Liberator*, describing in detail the debate among Farmington Monthly Meeting of Hicksite Friends about the request of Palmyra Preparative Meeting to open the meetinghouse to lecturers on temperance and abolition. Garrison published this letter on December 9, 1842, under the title "Friends in Commotion." One "prominent Friend" in Indian affairs (probably Griffith Cooper) drew a parallel between the support of Friends for Indian rights and their refusal to endorse radical abolitionism:

Friends, said he, let me ask, why this great difference between a red man, and a black man? Why is it a crime to admit those into our houses, who are pleading the cause of the slave, while we admit those who plead for the Indian? . . . . A short time since, when my Indian brothers were likely to be robbed of their property, by a powerful and unprincipled company of speculators, their chief and WARRIORS were invited into our houses, to tell of their wrongs, and plead for their brethren; Friends were not then told to 'keep in the quiet'— to 'keep out of the mixture.' No— if not in word, it was in deed— AGITATE, AGITATE! Let all people know their wrong; spread their evidence before every body. We have struggled for four

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<sup>36</sup> Hazzard Index, Swarthmore College; U.S. census 1870. Thanks to Elizabeth Moger and others for this research.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes of Farmington Monthly Meeting, September 22, 1842, October 27, 1842; Lucretia Mott to Richard and Hannah Webb, March 23, 1846; Griffith M. Cooper to Philip E. Thomas, October 27, 1845, all quoted in A. Day Bradley, "Progressive Friends in Michigan and New York," *Quaker History* 52 (1963), 97. Thanks to Christopher Densmore for his work on Farmington Monthly and Quarterly Meeting and its importance to antislavery.



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years to relieve our red brethren. We have circulated petitions to be signed, as well out of the Society as in it; we asked— and received names for these petitions from all kinds of religious and political parties, civil and military officers. Did Friends tell us then to 'keep in the quiet' — to 'keep out of the world by mixtures'? Some Friends had said that it was all done in the Society, but this was not so.— We pulled the wires, and these 'worlds people' danced to them. Now, Friends, what was all this for? Why, for the very thing abolitionists are now pleading for, namely—universal rights to all men.

You may as well undertake to get rid of death, as to get rid of the subject of slavery," concluded Cooper. "Our refusal to move on this subject is a reproach upon the name of Friends."<sup>38</sup>

On month later, in November 1842, radical abolitionists throughout western New York met in Rochester to organize the new Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. This was part of the American Anti-Slavery Society commitment to organize one hundred new antislavery associations. In the late summer and fall of 1842, they sent lecturers throughout the Northeast, including Abby Kelley, outspoken former Quaker abolitionist. Several Quakers accompanied Kelley in her tour, including Thomas M'Clintock, from Junius Monthly Meeting, who was also Clerk of Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends; George and Margaret Pryor, Junius; and Jacob Ferris, member of Galen Preparative Meeting of Friends.<sup>39</sup>

After the Rochester meeting, William Lloyd Garrison himself gave several lectures. One of them was in the Orthodox Quaker meetinghouse in Farmington. "Very few Quakers were present," noted Garrison, "owing to a strong prejudice against us." Although Quakers in the immediate area may not have turned out for Garrison's speech, several Farmington Quakers subscribed to Garrison's paper, the *Liberator*. At least twenty of the thirty-four vice-presidents and members of the executive committee of the new Western New York Anti-Slavery Society

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<sup>38</sup> Eliab W. Capron to William Lloyd Garrison, *Liberator*, December 9, 1842. Christopher Densmore, "The Dilemma of Quaker Anti-Slavery: The Case of Farmington Quarterly Meeting, 1836-1860," *Quaker History* 82:2 (Fall 1993): 85-86.

<sup>39</sup> For more on this trip, see Judith Wellman, *Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Women's Rights Convention* (Urban, Illinois: Illinois University Press, 2003).

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were Quakers from Farmington Quarterly Meeting.<sup>40</sup>

In 1843, Capron (then living in Williamson, New York) worked as assistant postmaster in Walworth, New York. In that position, he committed his skills as a writer and organizer to the abolitionist cause. On February 10, 1843, the *Liberator* printed a letter from Capron entitled "Friends in the 'Quiet.'" In it, Capron described a Quaker meeting he had attended in Rochester, in which Sarah Underwood, Quaker minister who had recently returned from the South, criticized "hireling ministers," and, by implication antislavery lecturers. Jacob Ferris, from Galen Preparative Meeting, rose to defend a Christian's duty to work for the poor ("all was quiet"), for temperance ("All quiet"), and against slavery (when "commotion became very apparent"). Naming names, Capron described the resulting comments in detail. "I am astonished," said Ferris. "Is this the Society of Friends, that attempts to put down a MEMBER because he speaks against the sin of slavery?" Capron's conclusion was that, if Ferris had been a minister, he would have been allowed to speak, but "that one who wore neither a shad belly nor a broad brim nor occupied a high seat, should get up and talk, was intolerable, and must not be allowed."<sup>41</sup>

Other articles published by Capron that year included "The Good Work Goes Bravely On," printed in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on July 27, 1843. In November 1843, Capron wrote a letter to William Hosmer, editor of the *Northern Christian Advocate*, a Methodist newspaper published in Auburn, criticizing Hosmer for failing to deal openly with the ideas of John Collins, Abby Kelley, and Stephen Foster. At the same time, he wrote another note, criticizing postmasters for opening mail that had been closed with an antislavery seal. In December 1843, Capron became a secretary of the first annual meeting of the Western New-York Anti-Slavery Society in Rochester, listing his residence as Walworth.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>*Liberator* subscription list, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library; William Lloyd Garrison to Helen E. Garrison, November 21, 1842, No. 47, Garrison Papers, III (1973): 108-110.

<sup>41</sup> Reference to Capron's address in *Liberator*, January 6, 1843, asking the *Voice of Freedom* to change Capron's address from Walworth to Williamson. "Friends in the 'Quiet,'" *Liberator*, February 10, 1843. The heading for this letter was Rochester, January 24, 1842, but it most likely should be 1843. Thanks to Chris Densmore for originally finding this and several other Capron letters.

<sup>42</sup>E.W. Capron, "Methodist Cowardice," and "Who Is the Guilty One?" (signed Asst. P.M.), Walworth, October 30, 1843, and November 1, 1843, published *Liberator*, November 10 and November 17, 1843. Thanks to Christopher Densmore for these. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*,

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When Farmington Monthly Meeting decided to prohibit abolitionist speakers in the meetinghouse, Capron was so profoundly disturbed that he repudiated his membership. On February 20, 1844, he wrote a letter to Farmington Friends, asserting that "after long, earnest, and careful deliberation," he could "no longer, consistently, remain a member of your Society." He sent a copy to the *Liberator*, which published it on March 15, 1844, and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, which published it on March 28, 1844. He was "impelled to take this step," he explained, because Friends stood "directly in the way of efforts now making to liberate THREE MILLIONS OF OUR BRETHREN, who are held in bondage as chattel slaves." Friends refused to promote temperance. They sustained "the great system of murder, butchery, and blood, carried on by this military government," by promoting political and military solutions to problems. They recognized "a man-made ministry as having a privilege about others, to speak in your houses." They also set rules and threatened to excommunicate members who disagreed with these. "Because I have seen it my duty to bear a testimony against slavery, war, intemperance, priestcraft, and sectarianism," Capron concluded, he had encountered "the mortifying truth, that I was in unity with a Society that sanctioned all these evils." Although he had "long remained a member, hoping to see the Society progress to a better, purer, nobler position," he now believed that sectarian organizations could not move forward, and he requested "that you consider me no longer a member of your Society."<sup>43</sup>

The story was not over, however. Historians Christopher Densmore and Elizabeth Moger outlined subsequent events in detail. A committee from Farmington Monthly Meeting (comprised of Hugh Pound and Sunderland P. Gardner) visited Capron. Farmington Monthly Meeting received the committee's report on March 23, 1844, and agreed to "return his request." On April 25, they recorded that Capron's case again came under consideration, and the meeting recommended that his request be "retained by the Clerk until further investigation." On May 23, 1844, Farmington Monthly Meeting received from Macedon Preparative Meeting a report that Capron had so far "deviated from the good order and principles of Society" that he denied the possibility of miracles, the virgin birth of Jesus, and the divine call of Moses. He also supported the publication of libelous accusations against Friends. Based on these accusations, Farmington M.M. appointed a second committee (Elihu Durfee, Thomas Lakey, Lewis Willetts, Orin Smith, and Reuben Eves) to meet with Capron. The committee reported on September 26, 1844, that

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December 28, 1843. Thanks to Charles Lenhart and Christopher Densmore for references to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. Identified by Christopher Densmore.

<sup>43</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 28, 1844. Christopher Densmore discussed this case and other contemporary issues in Farmington meeting in "The Dilemma of Quaker Anti-Slavery: The Case of Farmington Quarterly Meeting, 1836-1860," *Quaker History* 82 (Fall 1993): 80-91.

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Capron affirmed these theological beliefs but denied that he had libeled the Society of Friends. Most surprising, Capron wished to retain his membership. Nevertheless, Farmington Monthly Meeting disowned Capron. On October 24, Job Dennis and William Burling informed Capron of the decision of the monthly meeting. Capron appealed his case to Farmington Quarterly Meeting. On April 2, 1845, the committee of the Quarterly Meeting (consisting of Daniel Freeman, Azaliah Schooley, Benjamin Tripp, Johnathan Wilbur, John R. Robinson, and Elias DeGarmo) recommended that the decision of Farmington M.M. be reversed. Quarterly Meeting asked the "advice and assistance" of Genesee Yearly Meeting. Meeting in Farmington from June 9-14, 1845, Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends appointed a large committee (George Dunlop, John Merrit, Samuel Hughs, John Watson, Jacob Zavits, Elijah Shotwell, Elijah Quinby, and Washington Weekes) to investigate. On July 1, 1845, Farmington Quarterly Meeting took the advice of the Yearly Meeting committee and sustained Capron's disownment from Farmington M.M. Once more, Capron appealed his case to Genesee Yearly Meeting. On June 18, 1846, Genesee Yearly Meeting, under Sunderland P. Gardner, Clerk, confirmed the judgments of Farmington Monthly and Quarterly meetings.<sup>44</sup>

In 1844, Capron's resignation from Farmington Monthly Meeting reflected major changes in his entire life. By April 1844, Capron, along with other Quakers, had moved to a utopian community in Skaneateles, affiliated with the Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform. By June 1844, he had moved again to a Fourierist community, the Sodus Bay Phalanx, also supported by many Quakers, housed in former Shaker buildings at Sodus Bay. From September 1844 to January 1846, he was writing for a utopian newspaper called *The Communitist*.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Research by Elizabeth Moger and Christopher Densmore. Moger to Densmore, November 29, 1982. Emails from Densmore, March 5, 1981, and January 2, 2008. Densmore, "The Dilemma of Quaker Anti-Slavery: The Case of Farmington Quarterly Meeting, 1836-1860," *Quaker History* 82 (Fall 1993): 80-91. James Hazzard Index, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, and minutes Farmington Monthly and Quarterly Meeting of Friends, Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore. Farmington Monthly Meeting minutes also on microfilm, Wayne County Historian's Office. Minutes also recorded in Farmington Quarterly Meeting, July 1, 1846, and Farmington Monthly Meeting, November 26, 1846.

<sup>45</sup> For more on the Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, see Thomas D. Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-46* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). References to Capron include *The Communitist*, December 11, 1844; March 12, 1845, and May 7, 1845, and the *Regenerator*, March 8, 1847. Thanks to Christopher Densmore and Nancy Austin for noting these references. Reference to his residence at Sodus Bay comes in an announcement for his marriage to Rebecca M. Cooper, *National Anti-*

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Capron had reasons beyond their shared interest in reform to take a special interest in the work and words of Griffith Cooper. In June 1844, Capron (aged twenty-four) married Rebecca Cooper, daughter of Griffith and Elizabeth Cooper, while he was living at Sodus Bay Phalanx. On July 4, 1844, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* carried a short announcement: "Married. On Wednesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> ultimo, by themselves, Eliab W. Capron, of Sodus Bay Phalanx, to Rebecca M. daughter of Griffith M. Cooper, of Williamson, New York." <sup>46</sup>

Eliab and Rebecca Capron may have moved to Rochester by 1845, where Capron tried a variety of occupations. As general agent for the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, he most likely wrote the notice carried in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on February 20, 1845, announcing a series of antislavery lectures by "J.B. Sanderson and G.B. Stebbins, of Massachusetts, and W.W. Brown and J.W. Hurn, of this State." Notably Sanderson and Brown were African Americans and Stebbins and Hurn were European Americans. "Friends of the slave, arouse!!" wrote Capron. "Let Western New-York be redeemed! For the last year but little has been accomplished. Let it be made up by renewed effort the year to come!" <sup>47</sup>

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*Slavery Standard*, July 4, 1844, the *Wayne Sentinel*, and the *Palmyra Register*, June 18, 1844, discovered by several people.

<sup>46</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 4, 1844. Also in the *Wayne Sentinel* and *Palmyra Register*, June 18, 1844, transcribed in Fred Q. Bowman, *10,000 Vital Records of Western New York, 1809-1850* (Baltimore: General Publishing Company, 1985). Thanks to Charles Lenhart and Lawrence Rainey for these citations.

<sup>47</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 20, 1845: "CONVENTIONS IN WESTERN NEW-YORK.

Mass conventions will be held in the following places in Western New-York, and will be attended by J. B. Sanderson, and G. B. Stebbins, of Massachusetts, and W. W. Brown, and J. W. Hurn, of this State. At Syracuse, Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 25th and 26th. Port Byron, Wednesday and Thursday, March 5th and 6th. Seneca Falls, Wednesday and Thursday, March 12th and 13th. Northville, Cayuga County, Wednesday and Thursday, March 19th and 20<sup>th</sup>. The above named individuals will attend and hold meetings in different places in the county where mass meetings are to be held, and the friends in the county will please make arrangements for the meetings in their different localities. Friends of the slave, arouse!! Let Western New-York be redeemed! For the last year but little has been accomplished. Let it be made up by renewed effort the year to come! Send in your contributions to aid the Society in carrying on the great work we have undertaken, for without money our movements will of necessity be embarrassed.

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Capron also began his editorial career in 1845, editing a newspaper called *The Circumstance*. There is only one known extant issue, dated December 20, 1845 (I: 5).<sup>48</sup>

Capron may also have worked as a grocer. The 1845-45 Rochester city directory listed E.W. Capron as a grocer at 61 Buffalo Street, boarding at 245 Buffalo Street. The index of Rochester newspapers in the Rochester Public Library also listed E.W. Capron as working in (or owning) a plough factory. It is possible that he was connected with Slocum Howland, Quaker abolitionist in Sherwood, New York, who marketed the cast iron plough patented by his brother-in-law, Jethro Wood. It is also possible that he took over the business of M.D. and T.H. Coddling, who invented a machine for "dressing out plough beams and handles."<sup>49</sup>

By 1846, the Caprons had moved to Auburn, New York, where they lived until 1850. An advertisement in the *Auburn Journal and Advertiser*, December 16, 1846 (written November 11), noted that E.W. Capron operated the Eclipse Stove Store at 84 Genesee Street, in the Exchange Block, where he sold "the best assortment of STOVES ever brought to Cayuga County, consisting of Cooking, Parlor-Cook, Air-tight Parlor, and Hull Stoves. . .," among them "the celebrated ECLIPSE STOVE, the best stove in use, as testified to by more than two thousand witnesses."<sup>50</sup>

In May 1847, Eliab and Rebecca advertised part of their house on North Street (perhaps the same one that had belonged to Eliab's father):

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We need your help. Will each contribute their mite to sustain and carry forward the good cause? Eloquent and able advocates are in the field, and must be sustained. Those who wish to contribute will have their contributions duly acknowledged through the Standard, by sending them to Henry Bush, Treasurer, Rochester, or to E. W. CAPRON, Gen'l Agt. Of Western N. Y. A. S. Soc, Rochester, N. Y. Feb. 13th, 1845." Thanks to Charles Lenhart for this reference.

<sup>48</sup> *The Circumstance*, December 20, 1845, University of Rochester.

<sup>49</sup> Directory research by Charles Lenhart, who reported that there was no Capron entry for Rochester in either the 1844 or 1847 city directory.  
<http://www.libraryweb.org/rochcitydir/images/1845/1845a-c.pdf>. *Rochester Republican*, April 14, 1846; "A New Labor Saving Machine," *The Circumstance*, December 20, 1845.

<sup>50</sup> *Auburn Journal and Advertiser*, December 16, 1846 (dated November 11),  
[www.fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html](http://www.fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html). Charles Lenhart discovered this and other articles from [fultonhistory.com](http://www.fultonhistory.com).

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TO LET, TO A SMALL FAMILY, without children in a part of the subscriber's dwelling Home on North street Hill. In pleasantness of location it is surpassed by few if any. There is an ample supply, and variety of fruit and good garden ground Apply to THOS. M. SKINNER or to Auburn, May 4, 1847, E.W. CAPRON.<sup>51</sup>

Struggling hard to make a living, Capron did not neglect his reform commitments. March 18, 1847, he published a lengthy article in *The National Era*, an antislavery newspaper in Washington, D.C., arguing that the U.S. Constitution did not condone slavery. On April 15-16, 1847, Capron organized three antislavery meetings, held in the City Hall in Auburn. Frederick Douglass and Charles L. Remond spoke. Douglass credited E.W. Capron, that "vigilant friend of freedom," with making such a success of their work. On October 7, Capron wrote an article for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on another abolitionist meeting that he helped organize in Auburn, again featuring Frederick Douglass and Charles L. Remond as speakers. On May 19, 1848, Douglass published an essay by E.W. Capron. Entitled "Godly Slaveholders," the essay told an anecdote about the local Baptist minister, who opposed abolitionist lectures.

The deacon said "there is this Garrison, and this darky [Frederick Douglass] that lectured here, are as great infidels as ever lived." The only answer I gave to this, was in the following conversation between us: "Are you acquainted with Garrison?" "No." "Did you ever read any of his writings?" - "No." "What do you know about him?" "O! I've heard about him." "Do you call any believer in the Bible an infidel?" "Yes." "Did you hear Douglass when he was here?" "No I would not go." "Did you ever hear him?" "No." "Did you ever read any of his writings?" "No." "What do know about him?" O! I hear what every body says!" This a deacon, who lives in sight of our great Theological Seminary and has had as good a chance as others to receive all the influence for good, which has emanated from it for many years. I again ask: - If this is christianity, and infidelity the reverse, who would not be infidel?<sup>52</sup>

At some point, Eliab W. Capron began to edit a reform newspaper in Auburn, *The*

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<sup>51</sup> It is also possible that this was the home of Thomas Skinner, and Capron was acting as a real estate agent. *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, May 5, 1847. In June, 1847, John Shepard advertised for a lost wallet, "a small Calfskin Pocketbook, fastened with a Clasp," containing, among other items, a note for \$12.50 from E.W. Capron. *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, June 10, 1847, <http://www.fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>.

<sup>52</sup> "Our Anti-Slavery Tour," *North Star*, April 21, 1848; "Godly Slaveholders," *North Star*, May 19, 1848; *National Era*, March 18, 1847.

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*National Reformer*. In this capacity, he was one of three newspaper editors who attended the first woman's rights convention in the nation, held in Seneca Falls, New York, on July 19-20, 1848. (The others were Frederick Douglass, editor of the *North Star*, and Nathan Milliken, editor of the *Seneca County Courier*.) On August 3, Capron published an editorial, calling the women's rights convention:

one of the most interesting conventions of this conventional age. [It] forms an era in the progress of the age...it being the first convention of the kind ever held, and one whose influence shall not cease until woman is guaranteed [sic] all the rights now enjoyed by the other half of creation—Social, Civil, and POLITICAL.<sup>53</sup>

Rebecca Capron also took an active part in reform. In December 1847, she wrote to Sarah L. Kirby Hallowell in Rochester, asking for clearer directions about how to make shirts and lace caps for the Rochester antislavery fair. The following year, she became one of the sponsors of the fair herself. Along with other Quakers, she signed the "Address of Anti-Slavery Women of Western New York," requesting help for the next antislavery fair to be held in Rochester in December 1848.

We ask for the aid of men and of women; - we call on the old and the young, the farmer, the mechanic, and the merchant. We ask all and every one to give us their help; to devote what they can spare, either of money or of the fruits of their labor, to the work of restoring men and women to themselves, to their manhood, to the rights and blessings with which they were endowed by our Creator. . . . We ask the females in the adjoining towns and country around us, to get up sewing circles, and prepare such articles as will be most saleable, and to come, furnish tables, give us their company, and help us, not only in selling those things thus prepared, but in convincing the public mind of the necessity of our perseverance and fidelity, and thus be helpers in hastening the day of emancipation.<sup>54</sup>

At the end of the antislavery fair, the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society held its

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<sup>53</sup> Eliab W. Capron, *National Reformer*, August 3, 1848, [www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/vc006196.jpg](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/vc006196.jpg)). Other editorials included Frederick Douglass, *North Star*, July 28, 1848; Nathan Milliken, *Seneca County Courier*, July 21, 1848.

<sup>54</sup> Rebecca M.C. Capron to Sarah L. Kirby Hallowell, December 7, 1847, Post Family Papers, University of Rochester; *North Star*, March 24, 1848; November 10, 1848, and elsewhere; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 16, 1848.



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annual meeting, on December 25, 1848, in Concert Hall, Rochester. E.W. Capron became a member of the Executive Committee and took part in a discussion of the rights of free people of color, affirming that "colored friends" deserved the same respect in social life as others.<sup>55</sup>

In January 1849, both Eliab W. and Rebecca Capron signed the call to a general reform convention, to be held in Walworth, New York, inviting "persons of all classes and denominations" to discuss "some of the vital, radical questions which are now disturbing the great deep of the public mind." People should come prepared to discuss at least one of the following questions, they suggested:

1st. Are human governments of Divine appointment? 2d. What are the relations of Christians to such governments? 3d. Is any kind of war right? 4th. What is a gospel or Christian church? 5th. What is Christian fellowship? 6th. Is the Christian ministry of Divine appointment? 7th. Have all men an inalienable right to so much of the earth's surface as shall secure to them a comfortable homestead? 8th. Does an equality of rights exist between men and women in respect to all their social, political and religious relations? 9th. Are man's abilities coextensive with his obligations? 10th. do Christians at the present day differ from primitive Christians, as it respects their gifts, privileges and obligations? 11th. Is slavery always and everywhere a sin?<sup>56</sup>

Although Rebecca Capron had not signed the Declaration of Sentiments at the Seneca Falls convention, she spoke out for women's rights. At a meeting in Auburn, she gave a talk to a "Society," apparently a reform society of local women, which she had belonged to since its inception. She used the opportunity "to carry out a long-settled determination, that of showing without fear to the good people of Auburn what my ideas were of the position and habit of most of these women . . . . Contrary to my expectations, the very ones who I supposed would denounce my ideas the most severely were the ones who first suggested the idea of offering it for publication." No published account of this speech has so far been found, however.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "Fifth Annual Meeting of the Western N.Y. Anti-Slavery Society," *North Star*, December 29, 1848.

<sup>56</sup> *North Star*, February 23, 1849.

<sup>57</sup> Rebecca M.C. Capron to Amy Post and Sarah Hallowell, April 19, 1850, Post Family Papers, University of Rochester.

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Ever ready to exploit new opportunities for making a living, Capron also announced a new business in 1849, at 95 Genesee Street, helping soldiers retrieve pensions and bounty lands: "Soldiers Attention! TO ALL SOLDIERS of the United States or relatives of Soldiers entitled to Pensions or Bounty Lands, for services in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the late War with Mexico, or any services for the-United States, in or out of the Army or Navy."<sup>58</sup>

At the same time, E.W. Capron found a new cause, spiritualism. Kate and Maggie Fox, from Hydesville, New York, claimed to be able to communicate with the world of spirits by conveying rappings, one for "yes," silence for "no." Capron, along with many other Quakers and eventually thousands of people across the country, was convinced that this was a new scientific advance. On Wednesday, November 14, 1849, he hosted the first public demonstration of the Fox sisters' abilities, at Corinthian Hall, Rochester. Capron gave a lecture on the history and origins of these mysterious rappings. He explained that he had come to Rochester: at the special insistence of the spirits themselves: "he was very unwilling to engage in any such undertaking," he said, "and went home; that the spirit or whatever it was, followed him to Auburn, and rapped to him in his own house; that it spelt out the words 'You had better go there.' 'Go where?' said he. The reply speedily was, 'You had better go to Rochester.' So he was not disobedient, but came." Capron then asked the Fox sisters to demonstrate. Committees were appointed to investigate the phenomenon. In spite of considerable skepticism, no one could perceive that the Fox sisters were untruthful. On November 23, 1849, "J.D." published a description of this meeting in the *North Star*.<sup>59</sup>

The story of these rappings immediately reached far beyond Rochester and far beyond a relatively small audience of abolitionists. On November 29, 1849, Capron and George Willets wrote an article for the *New York Daily Tribune*. Entitled "Singular Revelations: Communications with Spirits in Western New York" and reprinted many times, it introduced spiritualism to a broad public audience, far larger than abolitionist newspapers could have reached. Capron wrote again for the *North Star*, on December 21, 1849, defending himself against what he perceived to be "J.D.'s" accusations of fraud. "I will say," he concluded, "that I can conceive of no one who is better prepared to judge of the spirit of an 'old Bachelor' than 'J.

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<sup>58</sup> *Cayuga Chief*, November 1, 1849.

<sup>59</sup> *North Star*, November 23, 1849.

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D.,' having, for some years occupied that 'whimsical fidgetty' position himself. <sup>60</sup>

By January 1850, the phenomenon of communications with the spirits had engaged the interest of people all across the country. Capron republished his article in the *New York Tribune* in pamphlet form, as *Singular Revelations: Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communion with Spirits, Comprehending the Rise and Progress of the Mysterious Noises in Western New York* (Auburn, New York: Finn & Rockwell, 1850). A second edition appeared the same year, printed in Auburn by Capron and Barron. National publications reviewed it. Other newspapers continued the story. On January 12, 1850, Capron published a letter to the editor in *The Spirit of the Age*, arguing that this "unexplained but fast-spreading phenomena" has three main characteristics: "the sounds, the display of intelligence superior to the persons who hear them, and the absence of all collusion or deception." On February 19, 1850, Capron wrote to Kate and Margaret's mother, asking her to let the girls go with them to New York City, to give demonstrations at the homes of A.J. Davis (an architect), Orson Fowler (a phrenologist), and others. <sup>61</sup>

In June 1850, Capron attended the annual meeting of Congregational Friends. In June 1848, the reform-minded half of Genesee Yearly Meeting walked out, unable to resolve their long-standing differences with the conservative quietists. In October, they met again at Farmington from a separate Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends. Beginning in June 1849, they held annual meetings at Junius Monthly Meetinghouse, in the Town of Waterloo, New York. In 1850, E.W. Capron served on a committee with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lydia Ann Jenkins, and Charles Lenox Remond to write an Address to the Women of the State of New York, based on Stanton's earlier article, "Woman," in the *Lily*, January 1850. <sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *New York Daily Tribune*, November 29, 1849, republished in *Providence Morning Mirror*, December 3, 1849. Thanks to Lawrence Rainey and Charles Lenhart for finding these. *North Star*, December 21, 1849.

<sup>61</sup> "The Mysterious Knocking," *Spirit of the Age*, January 12, 1850; Joseph Rodes Buchanan, "The Great Mystery: Abolitionists Heed the Rappings," *Buchanan's Journal of Man*, April 1850: 562-568, <http://216.239.39.104/search?q=cache:ys5SLPpptkKJ:www.spirithistory.com/myst.html+Eliab+Capron+Auburn&hl=en>. Other articles included *Rochester Daily Democrat*, January 16, 1850; *New York Daily Tribune*, January 18, 1850. E.W. Capron to Mrs. Rutan Fox, February 19, 1850, *Post Family Papers*, University of Rochester. Thanks to Lawrence Rainey for finding these.

<sup>62</sup> Ann Gordon, ed., *Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*,

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The economic situation for Eliab W. and Rebecca Capron in Auburn remained precarious. By January 1850, Eliab had left both his job as editor of the *National Reformer* and his partnership in the business of finding pensions and bounty lands for soldiers. In April, Rebecca wrote to fellow reformers Amy Post and Sarah Hallowell that:

we are contemplating going west the first of next month, probably to Michigan. We go hoping to find what we have not lately had, that is business to make us feel that we are doing right by ourselves and others. The thought is rather painful to me. . . I would much prefer staying in New York or going east. They remained in Auburn through early June, when the Friends of Human Progress listed E.W. Capron's residence as Auburn, N.Y.<sup>63</sup>

Help came from an unexpected source. The *Providence Mirror*, which had published one of Capron's articles in the fall of 1849, offered Capron the job of editor. Rebecca Capron had already established ties in Providence, when, in January 1850, she became president of the newly-organized Providence Physiological Society, whose secretary and main speaker was woman's rights advocate Paulina Wright Davis. Capron began his editorial work June 28, 1850. When the U.S. census taker visited the Caprons in September 1850, 30-year-old Eliab and 28-year-old Rebecca were living in Providence, Rhode Island, in a commune that included 25-year-old Hunting Rowe, Cornelius Rowe, Simon Westfall, and Nicholas Hicks (all listed in the census with occupations of "newspaper vending)," along with Helen Rowe, 19-year-old sister of Hunting and Cornelius Rowe, and a young Irish woman named Ann Leach. On September 23, 1850, the Sheriff of Cayuga County, New York, announced that the Capron's house and lot in Auburn would be sold in November at a sheriff's sale.<sup>64</sup>

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<http://64.233.161.104/search?q=cache:8Zh-XfaEk9kJ:ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/ecswomnotes.html+%22Eliab+W.+Capron%22&hl=en>

<sup>63</sup> Rebecca M.C. Capron to Amy Post and Sarah Hallowell, April 19, 1850, Post Family Papers, University of Rochester; Christopher Densmore, compiler, Friends of Human Progress (Waterloo, New York): Participants at Annual Meetings, 1849-1871,

[http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/archives/exhibits/old/urr/FHP\\_WATERLOO.HTML](http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/archives/exhibits/old/urr/FHP_WATERLOO.HTML)

<sup>64</sup> U.S. Census, 1850; *Cayuga Chief*, October 5, 1850. Found by Charles Lenhart. Thanks to Nancy Austin for information on Rebecca and Eliab W. Capron in Providence, email, February 17, 2009, and for copies of the *Mirror*.

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By that time, however, the Caprons were busy with their new life in Providence. On October 21, 1850, E.W. Capron printed an article in the *Mirror* on the Fugitive Slave Act. The issue on October 23 noted that "we are going to Worcester," and, indeed Capron was already in attendance at the first national women's rights convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he was elected to the Business Committee. Friends from Farmington Monthly Meeting were there to greet him. Joseph Hathaway was President pro tem of the Worcester meeting, and Pliny Sexton, of Palmyra Preparative Meeting, accompanied him. In 1851, both Rebecca and E.W. Capron were elected members of the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society. In June 1852, E.W. Capron was elected a vice-president of the Industrial Congress, meeting in Washington, D.C. He was still working with the Industrial Congress in 1855, when he was elected a vice-president at its annual meeting in Rochester. In October 1852, E.W. Capron attended the state convention for the New York State Women's State Temperance Society, meeting in Seneca Falls.<sup>65</sup>

By July 1852, Capron had received "notice to quit" as editor of the *Mirror*, because of his opposition to Franklin Pierce in the presidential election. The Caprons spent the next few years in various places—New York City in 1853, Philadelphia in 1856, and Macedon, New York, in 1859. By 1860, they were in West Chester, Pennsylvania, where Capron became editor of the *Chester County Times* and then, after 1864, of the *West Branch Bulletin*. The 1860 U.S. census listed Capron as forty years, old, worth \$1000, an "editor" by occupation. He lived with 35-year-old Rebecca and their four-year-old daughter Evelyn, as well as with his mother, Mary Woodard, and seventeen-year-old Sarah Smith, African American, who worked as a domestic. In his capacity as editor of the *Chester County Times*, Capron published on February 11, 1860, for the first time anywhere, Abraham Lincoln's brief autobiographical statement. "There is not much of it," said Lincoln, "for the reason, I suppose, that there is not much of me." The building at 28 W. Market Street, West Chester, Pennsylvania, still stands. Capron's Republican stance helped him win a position as assistant clerk of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives by 1862.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joselyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage 1* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881), 878, <http://www.alexanderstreet6.com/wasm/wasmrestricted/doctext/S10010054-D0009.htm>; <http://www.assumption.edu/whw/old/Proceedings%20of%20the%20Woman's.htm%20>; *North Star*, November 27, 1851; *National Era*, June 10, 1852; *North Star*, October 29, 1852; *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, June 22, 1855.

<sup>66</sup> Eliab W. Capron to William Henry Seward, July 14, 1852, March 2, 1853; June 26, 1856; June 24 1859, William Henry Seward Papers, University of Rochester Library. Thanks to Lawrence

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On February 16, 1864, Rebecca M. Capron, only thirty-nine years old, died of pneumonia. Eliab W. Capron took his daughter Evelyn, then eight years old, back to Williamson, New York, to visit her family home. While he was there, he took the opportunity to pay a call on his fellow newspaper editor at the *Commercial Press* in Pultneyville, New York. He was "a fine fellow, as well as an intelligent man," reported the *Press*. On September 21, 1865, E.W. Capron married for the second time. His new wife was Agnes Cooper, daughter of William C. Cooper of Philadelphia. The 1870 U.S. census listed E.W. Capron, as "editor of paper," with \$5000 worth of property, living with his wife Agnes, aged 30 (twenty years younger than E.W.) and their daughter Evelyn, aged fourteen.<sup>67</sup>

In 1869, Capron had merged the *West Branch Bulletin* with the *Gazette* to form the *Gazette and Bulletin*. He left this position in 1872 to edit a new (and short-lived paper) called *The Epitomist*. The following year, 1873, Capron moved to Oneonta, New York, to edit the *Chenango Telegraph*. While he was editor of this paper, Capron took an active role in community life, becoming president of the Norwich Handel and Hayden Society and giving lectures to the lyceum.<sup>68</sup>

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Rainey for finding these. Capron to William Lloyd Garrison, November 28, 1860, Garrison Papers, Boston Public Library. Thanks also to Lawrence Rainey for references to Capron in John F. Meginness, ed., *History of Lycoming County* (Chicago: Brown, Rnk, & Co., 1892), 381-84; Chester County Community Foundation, <http://www.chescocf.org/Lincoln%20and%20the%20Lincoln%20Building/lincoln%20build%20bro2.pdf>; "The Next Surveyor General," *Semi-Weekly Dispatch*, February 18, 1862. Rebecca Capron's obituary in the *Village Record*, February 23, 1864, noted that she was the wife of E.W. Capron, "late editor of the *Chester County Times*."

<sup>67</sup> *Village Record*, February 23, 1864; *Commercial Press*, August 1864, October 1865, found by Allyn Hess Perry, Wayne County GenWeb, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nywayne/williamson/oldpulteneyvillnews11.html>.

<sup>68</sup> John F. Meginness, ed., *History of Lycoming County* (Chicago: Brown, Runk, & Co., 1892); Aaron Jared Dietrick, *Historical Sketches of the Bench and Bar of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania*, , <http://74.125.95.132/search?q=cache:LG8GfrJtFLAJ:www.lycolaw.org/history/sketches/15a.htm+E+W+Capron+Norwich&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us>, also <http://www.lycolaw.org/history/sketches/15a.htm>

*Rochester Union Advertiser*, May 4, 1872; *Albany Evening Journal*, February 22, 1873; *Utica*

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In 1877, Capron, noted as “a gentleman of wide journalistic experience,” bought a share in the *Fulton County Republican* and became its new editor. Although he had a slight stroke in July 1878 (when he was only fifty-eight years old), he had recovered enough to act as secretary of the Republican district convention, held in Gloversville in September. By 1880, the Caprons had moved to Haddonfield, New Jersey, probably to be near relatives. E.W. and Agnes Capron lived in their own house; and E.W. listed his occupation as “retired editor.”<sup>69</sup>

The last known reference to Eliab W. Capron’s public activity was at an anniversary celebration, held at the home of Amy Post, of the first public introduction of the Fox sisters. Capron had been the master of ceremonies in November 1849, and he played the same role in 1883.<sup>70</sup>

Capron may have lived until 1892. “Elijah W. Capron,” a 72-year-old man, died in New York City on April 18, 1892. He may be, in reality, Eliab W. Capron—writer, editor, public speaker, and former Quaker who devoted his entire career to the abolition of slavery, woman’s rights, utopian communities, and equal distribution of wealth.<sup>71</sup>

Primary Sources

*The Liberator*, December 9, 1842  
“Friends in Commotion”  
Accessible Archives

WALWORTH, N.Y. 10th mo. 28th, 1842

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*Morning Herald*, August 9, 1873; *Utica Daily Observer*, April 9, 1875; *Utica Morning Herald*, March 3, 1876, <http://www.fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>. Thanks to Charles Lenhart for these references.

<sup>69</sup> *History of Fulton County*, 198, <http://www.threerivershms.com/johnstownvillage.pdf>; *Utica Weekly Herald*, July 9, 1878; *Utica Morning Herald*, September 18, 1878; 1880 U.S. census.

<sup>70</sup> “Looking Backward, Forty-Five Years Ago Today-1883,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, November 14, 1928, [fultonhistory.com](http://fultonhistory.com).

<sup>71</sup> New York City Deaths, 1892-1902 Record, Ancestry.com. Thanks to Charles Lenhart for this research.

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FRIEND GARRISON:

Knowing that thee takes a deep interest in all that is calculated to effect the great cause of universal liberty and equal rights, I hasten to give thee a history of the proceedings of our Farmington Monthly Meeting of (Hicksite) Friends.

At the previous monthly meeting, a proposition came up from Palmyra preparative meeting, to have the monthly meeting appoint a committee, to take into consideration the subject of opening the meeting-houses for temperance and abolition lectures.— Some weighty friends were for treating this, after the manner that anti-slavery petitions are treated in Congress— i.e. reject it entirely, or send it back to the preparative meeting, where it originated. But they found some bold spirits, who were not to be intimidated by the old admonition to 'keep in the quiet,' and, after a warm discussion of about three hours duration, the subject was laid over to the last monthly meeting. It was supposed, by many, that at the meeting yesterday, they would proceed to the appointment of a committee, without any discussion; but, in this, they were mistaken— for the spirit of pro-slavery always stands in its own light— they always plead their cause best when they say nothing. But no sooner did the clerk announce that the subject of the committee was next in order, than one Friend expressed his opinion, that it was not a fit subject for a committee, and that the monthly meeting ought not to receive such a proposition. Of course, this called forth a reply; and thus commenced a debate, which gave very significant evidence that some had get out of the quiet. During this discussion, the cloven foot of pro-slavery was very clearly revealed. One Friend, who has been very active in Indian concerns, and is now a member of the Indian committee, took the old pro-slavery ground in good earnest. 'Now, Friends, said he, 'I think we had better drop this exciting subject; we have a great sympathy for the slave; it is not against him that we shut our doors, but against abolitionists. We all know that their masters could not liberate them if they would; and if they could, they would be in a deplorable condition.' He went on, at considerable length, to show that the primitive Friends were christian slaveholders, and that when we denounced slaveholders as no christians, the primitive Friends must come under the head of anti-christians. This of course, he thought sufficient reason why the Friends should say nothing against slavery. Some accused the abolitionists of trying to get a picked committee. Another prominent actor in the Indian affairs proposed 'that as the abolitionists had been accused of trying to get a committee, (here he was interrupted with 'your kind of abolitionists')— 'well, then, our kind of abolitionists understand it, Friends, as our kind of abolitionists are accused of trying to get a picked committee. I propose that our opponents appoint every one of that committee from their own number, so that we only get one.' And now, Friends, said he, 'let me ask, why this great difference between a red man, and a black man? Why is it a crime to admit those into our houses, who are pleading the cause of the slave, while we admit those who plead for the Indian? (Here some Friends seemed quite uneasy, particularly one or two of those



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who were members of the Indian committee.) A short time since, when my Indian brothers were likely to be robbed of their property, by a powerful and unprincipled company of speculators, their chief and WARRIORS were invited into our houses, to tell of their wrongs, and plead for their brethren; Friends were not then told to 'keep in the quiet'— to 'keep out of the mixture.' No— if not in word, it was in deed— AGITATE, AGITATE! Let all people know their wrong; spread their evidence before every body. We have struggled for four years to relieve our red brethren. We have circulated petitions to be signed, as well out of the Society as in it; we asked— and received names for these petitions from all kinds of religious and political parties, civil and military officers. Did Friends tell us then to 'keep in the quiet'— to 'keep out of the world by mixtures'? Some Friends had said that it was all done in the Society, but this was not so.— We pulled the wires, and these 'worlds people' danced to them. Now, Friends, what was all this for? Why, for the very thing abolitionists are now pleading for, namely— universal right to all men. I have been calumniated more for the part I have taken in behalf of the oppressed red men, and that, too, by Friends who are now in this room, than for all other acts since I was twenty-one years of age; and that, too, for protesting against robbing them of their property: and I do not expect to escape for protesting against robbing a portion of our fellowmen of themselves. Now, my Friends, if you wish to keep this subject from going to a committee, you can have it discussed here, and will have it. You cannot get rid of it. You may as well undertake to get rid of death, as to get rid of the subject of slavery. Our refusal to move on this subject is a reproach upon the name of Friends. It is no secret— the dark southern corners of this country point to us in triumph, and say, 'we have the Quakers on our side.' One of the anti-discussion, anti-committee men, and clerk of the meeting, said, 'He knew there was a medium by which some could get the proceedings of the meetings before the world, and that medium was the Anti-Slavery Standard.' He considered it a medium of slander. Of course, then, all subscribers are supporting a paper 'calculated to spread disunion among Friends, as was said of our friend I.T. Hopper; but I think that this meeting would have more business on its hands than it could well attend to, if it should pursue the same course in regard to all supporters of the Standard. It is a paper that slander and misrepresentation will not induce us to give up, so long as it continues to publish the truth, 'without concealment— without compromise.' And if it places our sect in a light that is not very enviable, all I can say is, reform, and seek to act so that the truth shall not make us ashamed. The meeting finally adjourned, after saying that 'the subject was postponed for the present.' That 'present' I trust and hope, will be of short duration. It is time some action was had that would decide whether this meeting is willing to bow to slavery or not. This we shall soon see.

Thine for liberty and equal rights,

E.W.C.

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*National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 28, 1844  
Transcribed by Charles Lenhart

TO FARMINGTON MONTHLY MEETING OF FRIENDS

Dear Friends:- After long, earnest, and careful deliberation, I come to the conclusion that I can no longer, consistently, remain a member of your Society.

I am impelled to take this step-

1st. Because your Society stands as a Society, directly in the way of efforts now making to liberate THREE MILLIONS OF OUR BRETHREN, who are held in bondage as chattel slaves. You do this by closing your doors against those who wish to plead in their behalf, even though he be a fugitive who had escaped to tell of their wrongs, while you have admitted Indian warriors to plead their cause of the red men - thus showing that you are bowing down to the wicked and corrupt public sentiment around you, which despises the Negro on account of caste, and not of color;- by lifting up your voices against those who are pleading for their deliverance;- by neglecting to act with others, who are laboring peacefully to effect their emancipation, under the bigoted, sectarian admonition, to "keep in the quiet," and to "keep out of the mixture," while you make no objection to Friends becoming partners in business with those who are not members, for the purpose of amassing wealth, by trading largely in the products of slave labor;- by your standing in full fellowship with those societies, which forbid men to speak in your meetings against oppression, and violently ejecting them from your houses, and prosecuting them in a court of law for so doing, and neglecting to raise any voice of remonstrance against such proceedings;- by allowing your members, unreprieved, to cast their votes for those who hold men in slavery, for the important offices of the country;- and by your general condemnation of the anti-slavery movement of every kind, while you neglect to take any efficient action on the subject in your Society.

2d. Because, on the subject of temperance, you have pursued nearly the same course as on anti-slavery, which has a tendency to retard the progress of this glorious cause.

3d. Because, as a general thing, you are sustaining the great system of murder, butchery, and blood, carried on by this military government, by voting for commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the State and nation- while you would excommunicate a young man who should vote for a corporal; - by entering freely into political contests, and "mixing" in disputes of elections;- and by appealing to the strong arm of the law, in cases of disagreement with their neighbors, which is only an appeal to the military force.

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4th. Because you recognize a man-made ministry as having a privilege above others, to speak in your houses, and have men to sit in judgment as to whether they shall be allowed to speak or not; thus constituting, to all intents and purposes, an ordained man-made ministry.

5th. Because the rules of your Society forbid progression - setting bounds and rules by which members shall be governed - forbidding them to progress beyond those bounds, under penalty of excommunication - which has a tendency to make men strongly sectarian in their character, and more or less slaves to the opinions of others.

6th. Because I have seen it my duty to bear a testimony against slavery, war, intemperance, priestcraft, and sectarianism; and while doing so, have been met with the mortifying truth, that I was in unity with a Society that sanctioned all these evils.

I have long remained a member, hoping to see the Society progress to a better, purer, nobler position; but I have become fully convinced that it is not in the nature of sectarian organizations thus to progress; and for these, among other reasons, (which reasons, I request, may be given to the meeting in full.) I have concluded to request that you consider me no longer a member of your Society.

ELIAB W. CAPRON  
Walworth, February 20th, 1844

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Catharine Fish Stebbins, Quaker from Farmington and Rochester  
Member of the Sodus Bay Phalanx.  
Signer of the Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls women's rights convention.  
Frances Willard, *Women of the Century*, 690



Griffen Sisters  
l. to r., listed on back of photo in pencil  
Huldah Anthony, Alice Angus, Anna Mabbett [sic], Mary Rathbun, Sarah Hurn.  
Anna Mabbett and Sarah Hurn, with their husbands, lived at the Sodus Bay Phalanx.  
Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film

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John W. Hurn and Sarah H. Hurn, Quakers and members of the Sodus Bay Phalanx.  
John Hurn later became a telegraph operator and assisted Frederick Douglass in his escape to Canada after the John Brown raid, 1859. In the 1860s, Hurn became a photographer.

Courtesy George Eastman House  
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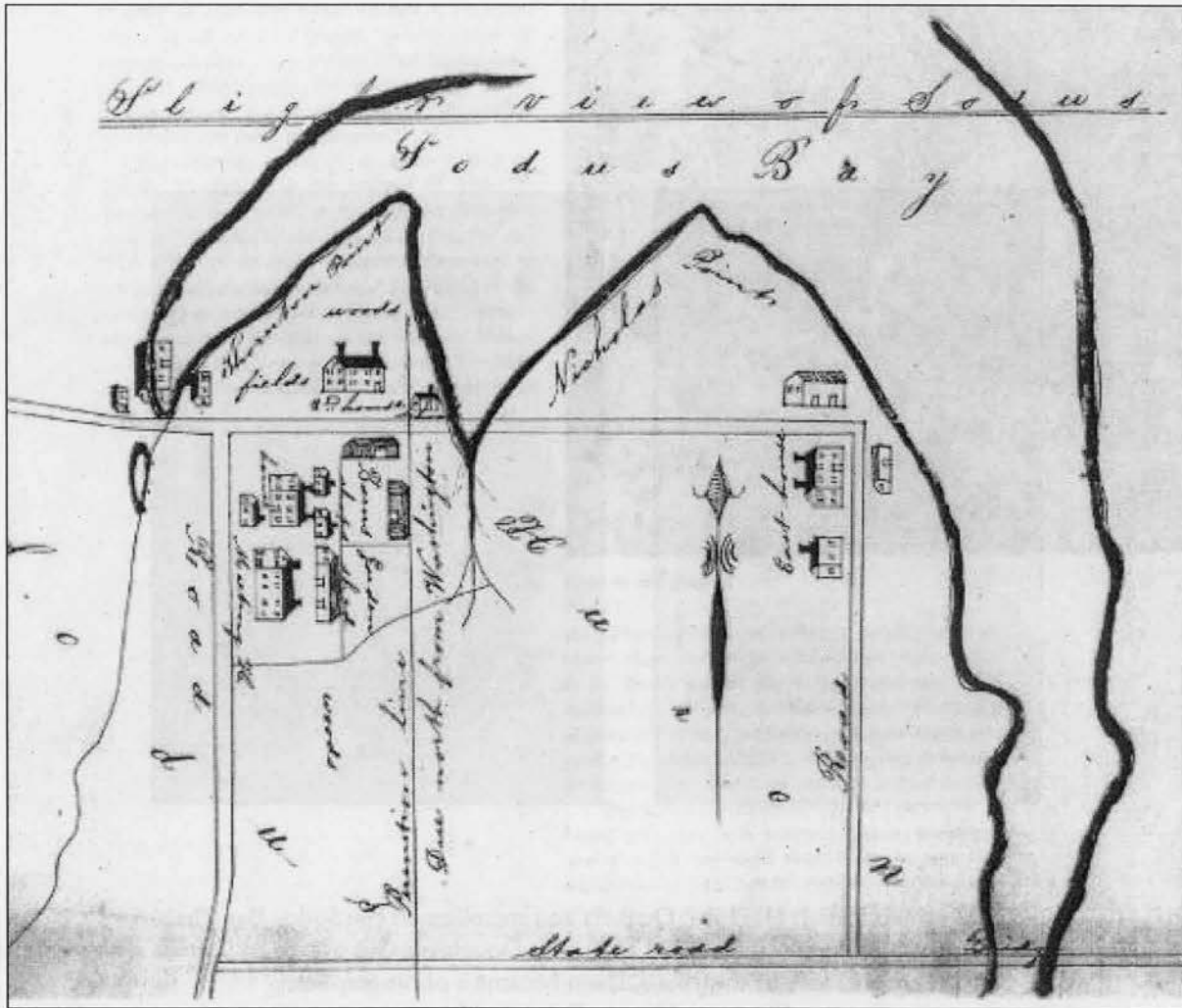
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*1834 Sketch of the Sodus Bay Shaker Tract*

Drawing by Isaac N. Youngs, copied by George Kendall, "Sketches of the Various Societies of Believers in the states of Ohio & Kentucky, to which is added a slight sketch of Sodus Bay in the northern part of N. York," Reprint Stephen W. Jacobs, *Wayne County: The Aesthetic of a Rural Area* (New York: Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1979), 64-65.

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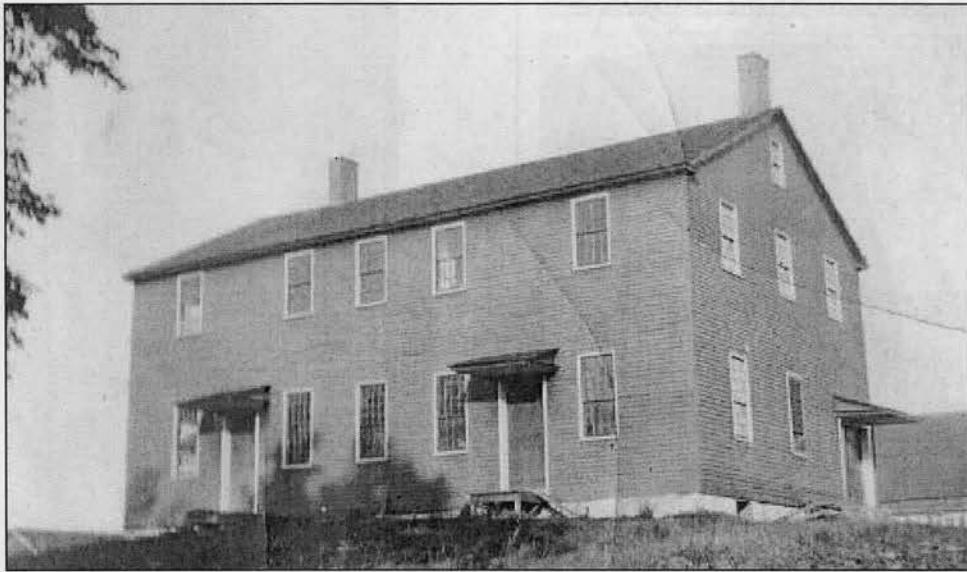
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*1924 photo of Shaker Meeting House*



*Pre-1935 photo of the Main House; note the small front porch and the lack of the 1935 attached rear garage*

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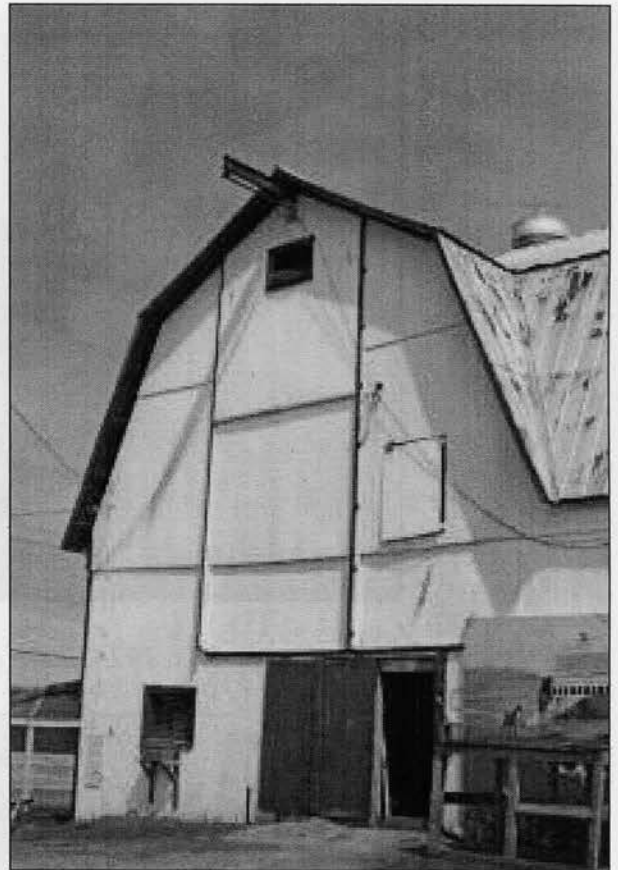
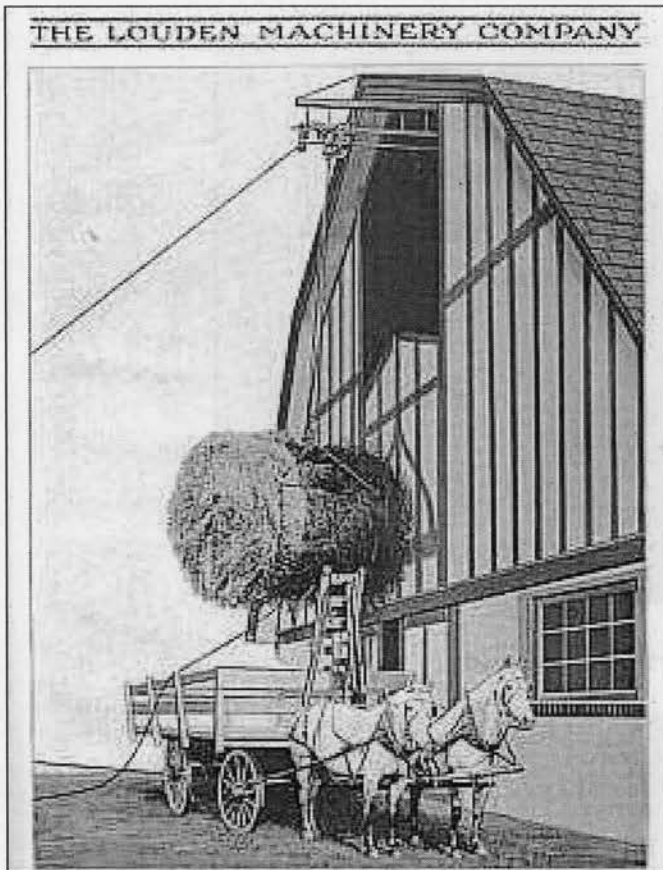
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*Above left: sample illustration from Louden Barn Plans (1919; comparable to Jamesway catalogues of the period); above right: west end of Alasa's cow barn*



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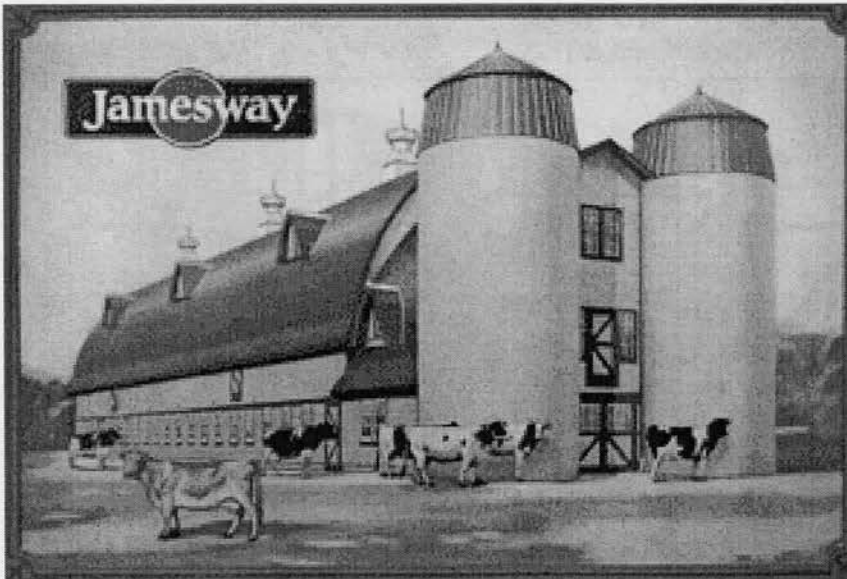
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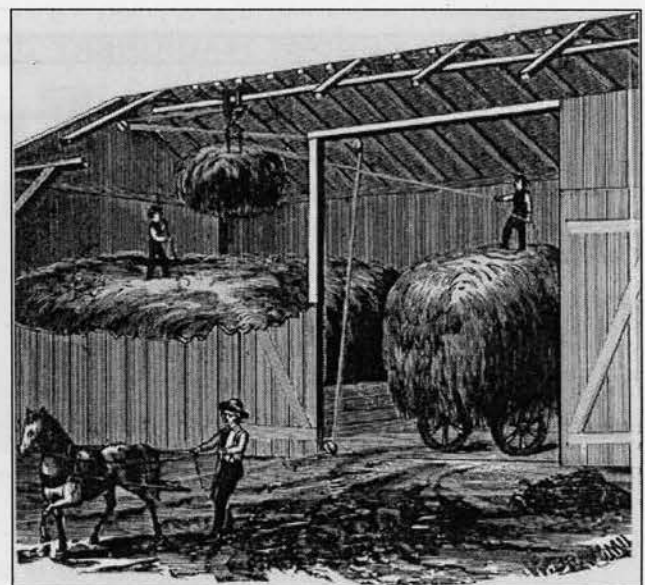
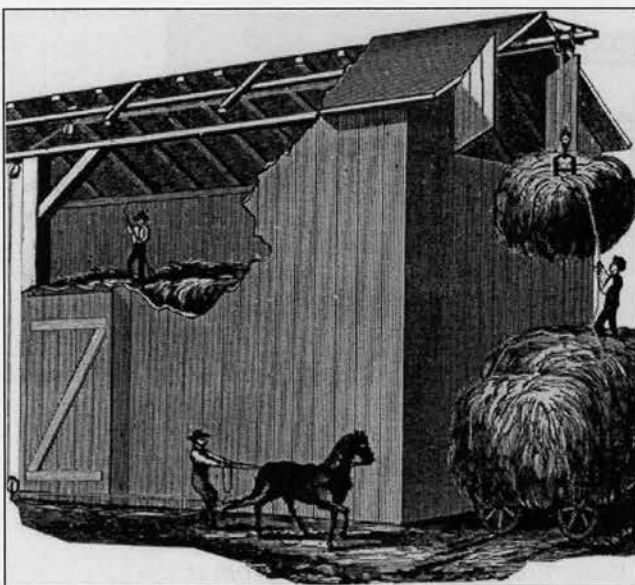
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*Sample covers from Jamesway and Loudon catalogues*



*Sample illustrations from a 1919 Jamesway catalogue showing hoisting of hay up into the mow and moving hay throughout the mow*

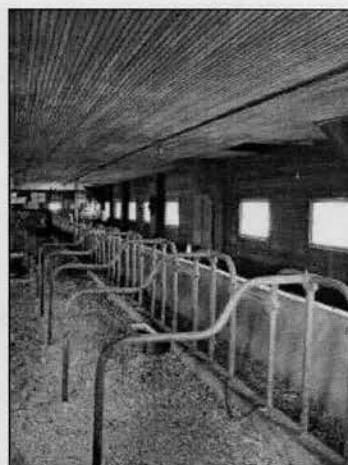
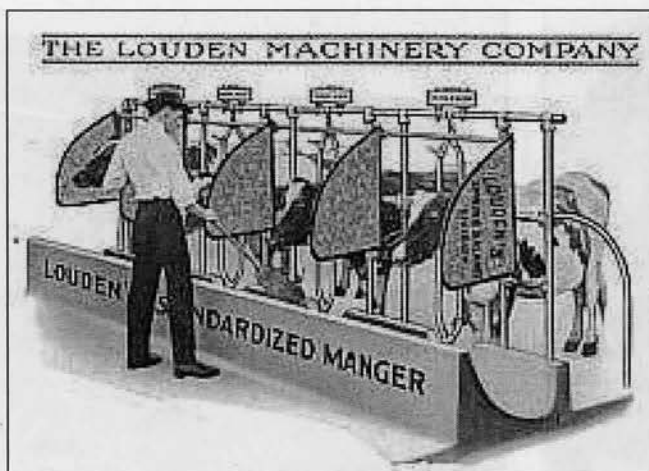
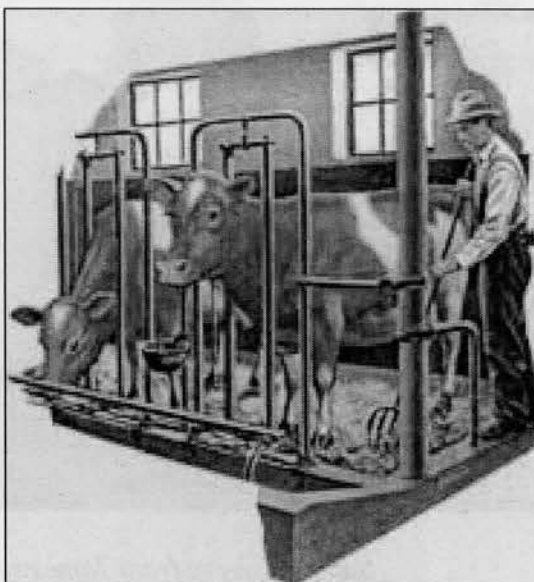
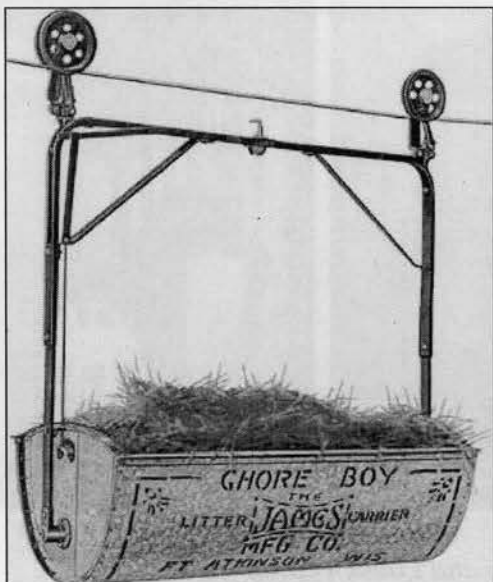
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*Sample illustrations of feed carts and stanchions with water cups from a Jamesway catalogue; sample standardized manger from a Louden catalogue; lower right: extant stanchions and communal manger in Alasa's cow barn*

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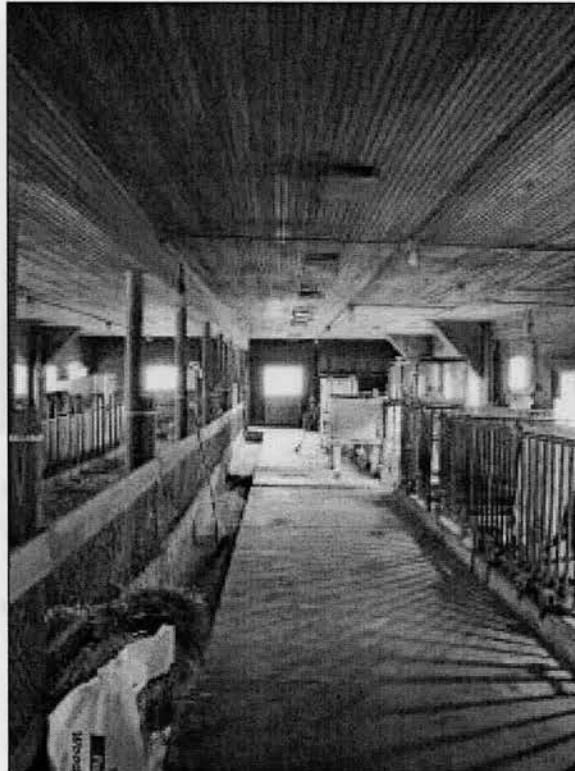
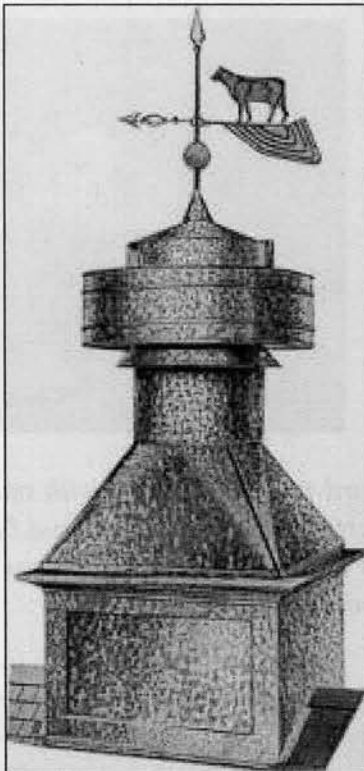
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*Above left: illustration of a model ventilator from a Jamesway catalogue*

*Above right: cow barn; corridor between stanchions and calf pens*

*Below: Covers over Jamesway air uptake vents*



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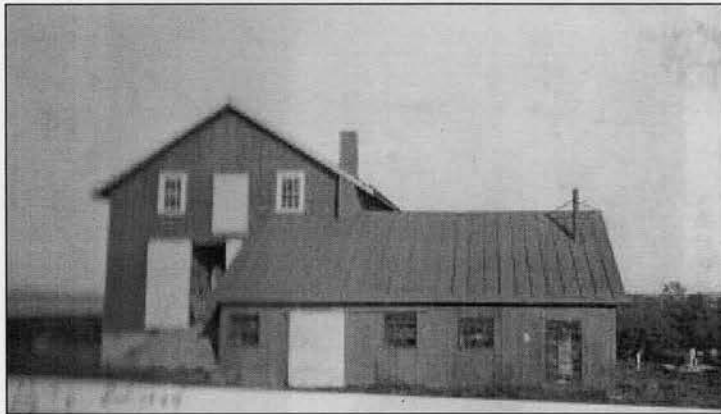
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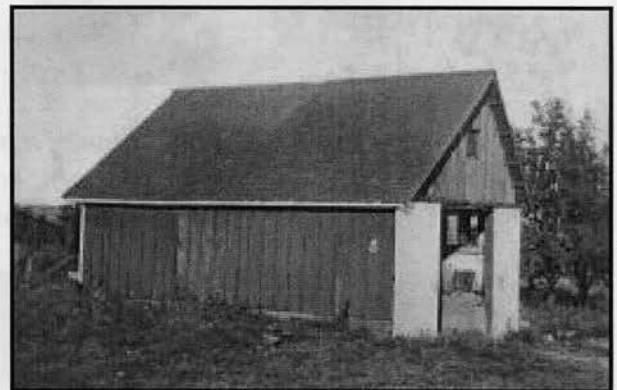
Additional documentation: illustrations, historic photos, and additional current photos  
(Supplement to Significance Statement)

Special thanks to Cheri Roloson of Cracker Box Palace for supplying historic (mostly ca. 1926) photos

Page 7



*Above left: 1920s photo of the front (west) of the 1840s board-and-batten barn with small barn in front; note lack of granary (added ca. 1930) on the left (north) side of the board-and-batten barn  
Above right, current view of board-and-batten barn after the small barn in front was removed; note granary on left (north) side of the board-and-batten barn*



*Above left: 2009 view of south and east elevations of the pony barn; rear (east) elevation of the main house is in the far background on the left and the side (east) elevation of the board-and-batten barn is in the middle background on the right*

*Above right: 1926 photo of the south and west elevations of the pony barn.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Alasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton vicinity, Wayne County, NY

Additional documentation: illustrations, historic photos, and additional current photos  
(Supplement to Significance Statement)

Special thanks to Cheri Roloson of Cracker Box Palace for supplying historic (mostly ca. 1926) photos

Page 8



*1926 photo of front (west) and side (south) elevations of bachelor farmhands' housing*



*Current photo of horse barn (right, foreground) and rear elevation of bachelors' housing (left, background)*



*1924 view of northernmost tenant house*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Alasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton vicinity, Wayne County, NY

Additional documentation: illustrations, historic photos, and additional current photos  
(Supplement to Significance Statement)

Special thanks to Cheri Roloson of Cracker Box Palace for supplying historic (mostly ca. 1926) photos

Page 9



*8487 Red Mill Road; non-contributing house (1970s)*



*8535 Red Mill Road; non-contributing house and garage (1970s)*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Alasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton vicinity, Wayne County, NY

Item 10, Geographic Data

Page 1

UTM References: Zone 18

Point	Easting	Northing
1	339028	4789344
2	339544	4789344
3	339920	4790056
4	339916	4789560
5	340104	4789556
6	340316	4789956
7	340540	4787800
8	339608	4787800
9	339596	4788044
10	339028	4788048

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the legal lot lines of three separately owned parcels as delineated on the attached county tax maps: 71117-00-442958, 71117-00-506949, and 71117-00-752684.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary coincides with the full extent of intact acreage currently associated with the nominated resources. When owned by the Sodus Bay Shakers and the Sodus Bay Phalanx, the farmstead comprised approximately 1,400 acres. By the late 1800s, the subsequent owners had expanded the farmstead to 1,670 acres, all of which were purchased by Alvah Strong in 1924. During the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Strong and his direct descendants subdivided and sold nearly 1,000 acres: some sales comprised large agrarian tracts that were taken over by other farmers and, to this day, continue to be farmed. Water frontage along Sodus Bay was cut into relatively small parcels and sold as building lots for summer cottages. In 1977, two parcels of land on the north side of Red Mill Road just west of Second Creek were sold; totaling approximately 25 acres, these two parcels—both of which contain small, modern dwellings—are landlocked within the 685.6 acres that are directly associated with the nominated complex. Because they cannot be gerrymandered out of the proposed boundary and because the land itself was always associated with the Sodus Bay Shakers, the Sodus Bay Phalanx, and Alasa Farms, the two parcels and two non-contributing buildings are included in the present nomination. Thus, the boundary encompasses approximately 710 acres.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Alasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton vicinity, Wayne County, NY

Item 9, Bibliography, Page   1  

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### Bibliography

Herbert Wisbey, Jr. *The Sodus Shaker Community*. Lyons, New York: Wayne County Historical Society, 1982.

Jacobs, Stephen W. *Wayne County: The Aesthetic of a Rural Area*. New York: Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1979.

Latte, Lorraine Marie. "The Sodus Bay Phalanx," unpublished essay, 1956. On file at the Wayne County Historian's Office.

"Shaker Tract, Comprising 1600 Acres with 23 Buildings Sold to Alvah G. Strong," *Wayne Democratic Press*, October 8, 1924;

*Welcome to Alasa Farms; A Day at Alasa Farms*. Alton, New York: Alasa Farms, 1927.

*Welcome to Alasa Farms: A Self-Guided Walking Farm Tour*. Alton, New York: Cracker Box Palace, n.d.



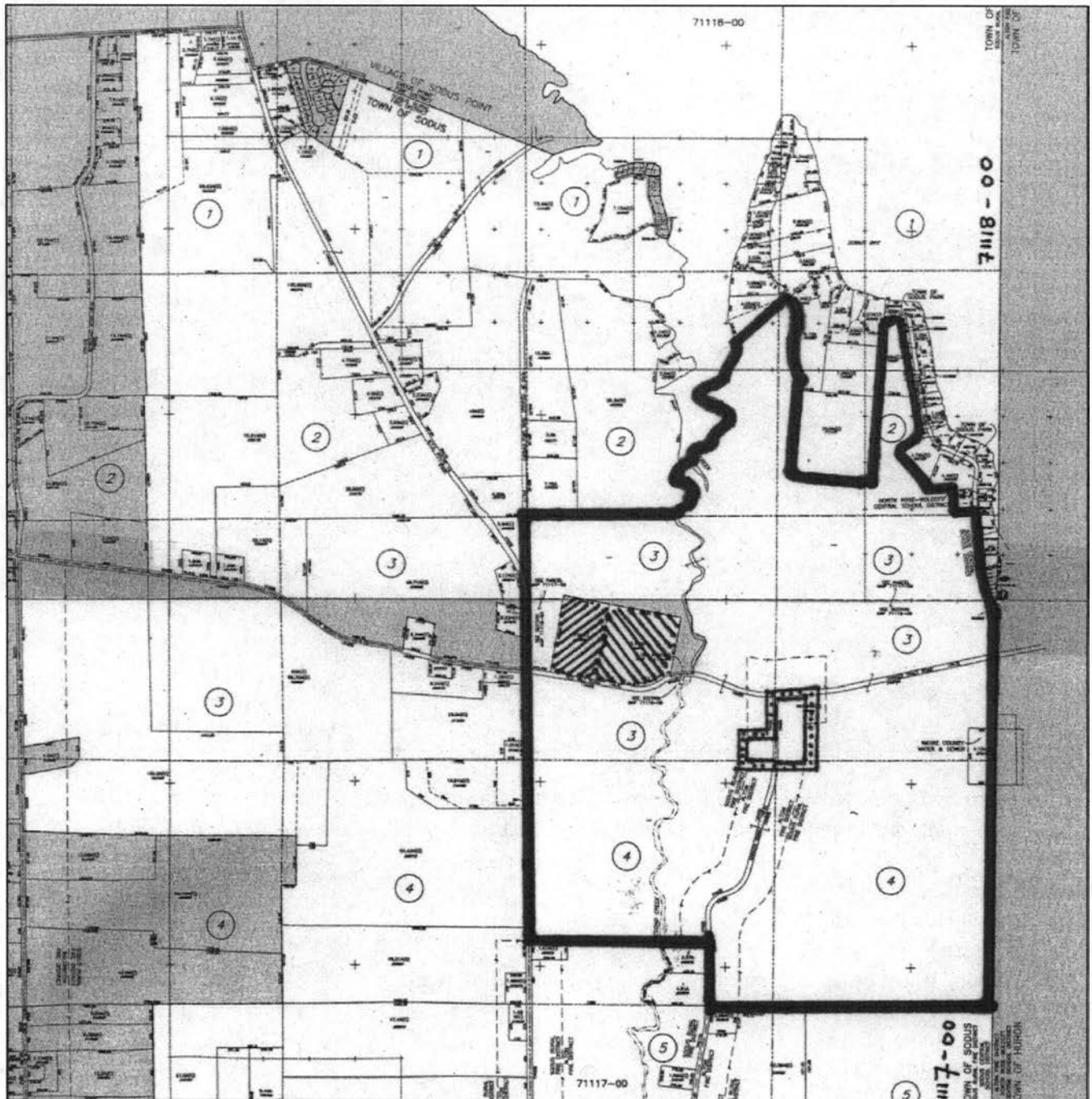
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Alasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton vicinity, Wayne County, NY

Item 10, Geographic Data

Page 2



1" = approx. 1600'

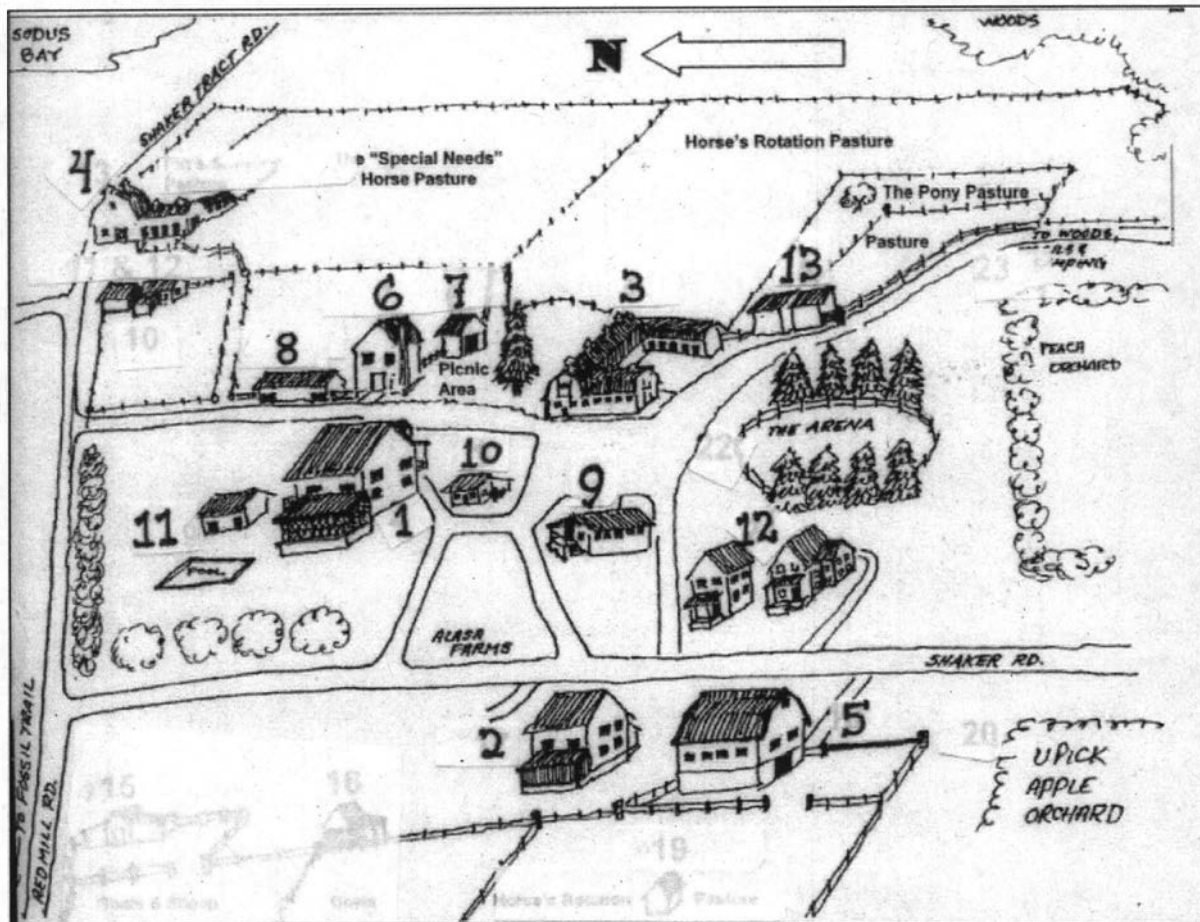
Heavy black outline defines boundaries of nominated property. The two parcels marked with cross-hatching contain two small, modern, non-contributing houses. The L-shaped area in the middle indicates the general area in which all historic components of the nomination are clustered. See the next page for a site sketch showing location and orientation of historic buildings in the L-shaped area.

United States Department of the Interior  
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Alasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton vicinity, Wayne County, NY

Item 10, Geographic Data



Site sketch showing location and orientation of historic buildings in the L-shaped area; not to exact scale.  
See the next page for an aerial view of the locations and orientations of the buildings

1. Main House
2. Deacon's House
3. Horse Barn
4. Cow/Dairy Barn; creamery and ice house to the immediate west
5. Barn next to Deacon's House
6. Board-and-batten barn
7. Pony Barn and well with pump
8. Granary
9. Bachelors' Housing
10. Office
11. Pool and pool house
12. Tenant houses
13. Goat and pony sheds

United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation Sheet

Alasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton vicinity, Wayne County, NY

Item 10, Geographic Data

Page 4



*Aerial view of historic house and barn complex; looking northeastward toward Sodus Bay*

*Based on a clock face, the dairy barn is located at 12 noon, the horse barn is at 2 o'clock, the Deacon's Barn is at 6 o'clock, and the Deacon's House is at 8 o'clock. The Main House is hidden in the trees at about 10 o'clock.*

United States Department of the Interior  
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Alasa Farms (Sodus Bay Shaker Tract/Sodus Bay Phalanx)  
Alton vicinity, Wayne County, NY

Additional Documentation: Key to digital photographs

Page   1  

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Digital Photos by Nancy L. Todd, April, 2009

1. Shaker Road, approaching Alasa Farms from the south
2. Aerial view, mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century; cow barn in upper left (northwest) corner
3. Main House, front (west) and side (south) elevations
4. Main House, Shaker era staircase
5. Main House, Shaker era room numbers
6. Main House, Shaker era pegs
7. Deacon's House (in background) and later barn, viewed from southeast
8. Horse Barn (on right) with Bachelor Farmhands' House (on left); viewed from southeast
9. Horse Barn, typical feeder in typical stall
10. Left to right: Horse Barn, Pony Shed, Bachelor Farmhands' House, Board-and-batten barn, granary; viewed from northeast
11. Board-and-batten barn on left, Cow Barn in background; viewed from southwest
12. Cow Barn, viewed from southwest
13. Cow Barn, stanchions
14. Cow Barn: stanchions, litter trenches, and calf pens
15. Ice house and creamery
16. Office, front (west) façade; note side of Main House in background
17. Office, built-in oak drawers, cabinets, etc.
18. Swimming pool
19. Pool House, viewed from southwest
20. Tenant Houses, viewed from southwest, note gambrel roof of Horse Barn in far, middle background



Alasa Farms

(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)

Alton, Wayne Co., Ny

1



Alida Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

2





Alasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

3



Alasa Farms

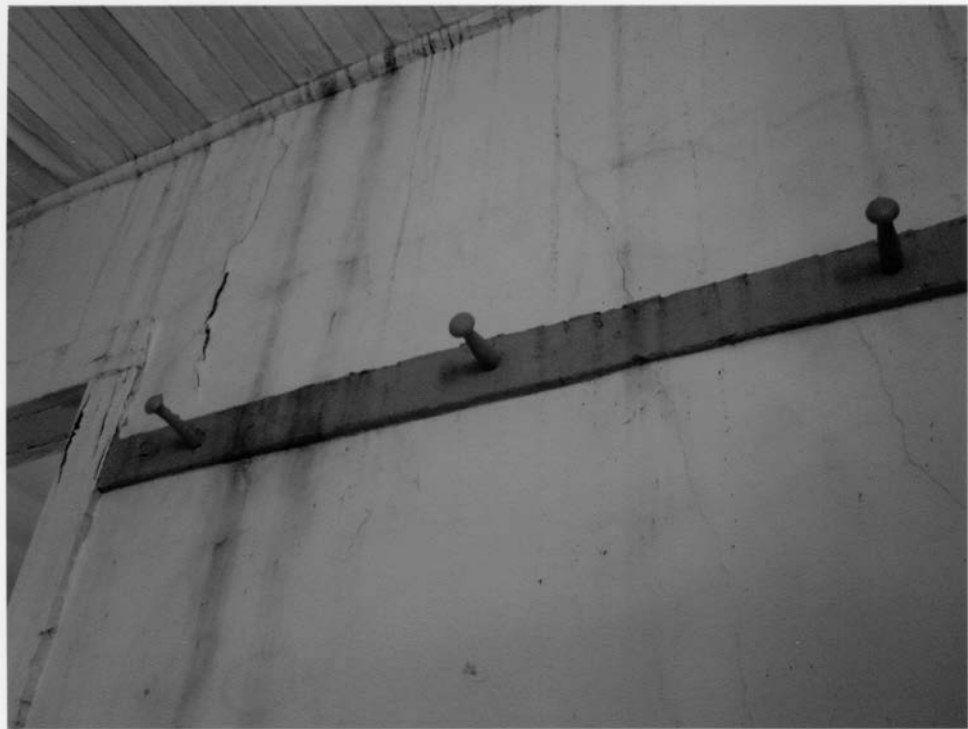
(Socius Bay Shaker tract)  
Aton, Wayne Co., NY

4

No. 6.

Alasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

5



Atlas Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

6





Alton Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

7



Alcisa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY  
8



Alasa Farms

(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)

Alton, Wayne Co., NY

9



... Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)  
Atton, Wayne Co., NY

10





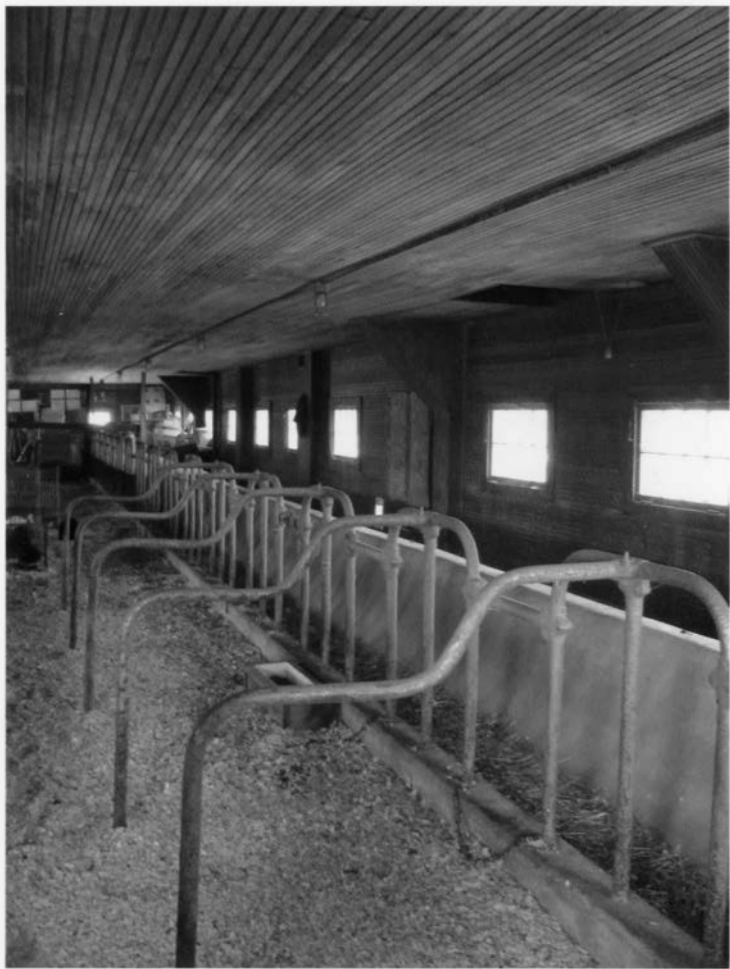
Alasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shalger Tract)  
Atton, Wayne Co., NY

11



Alasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

12



Shaw Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

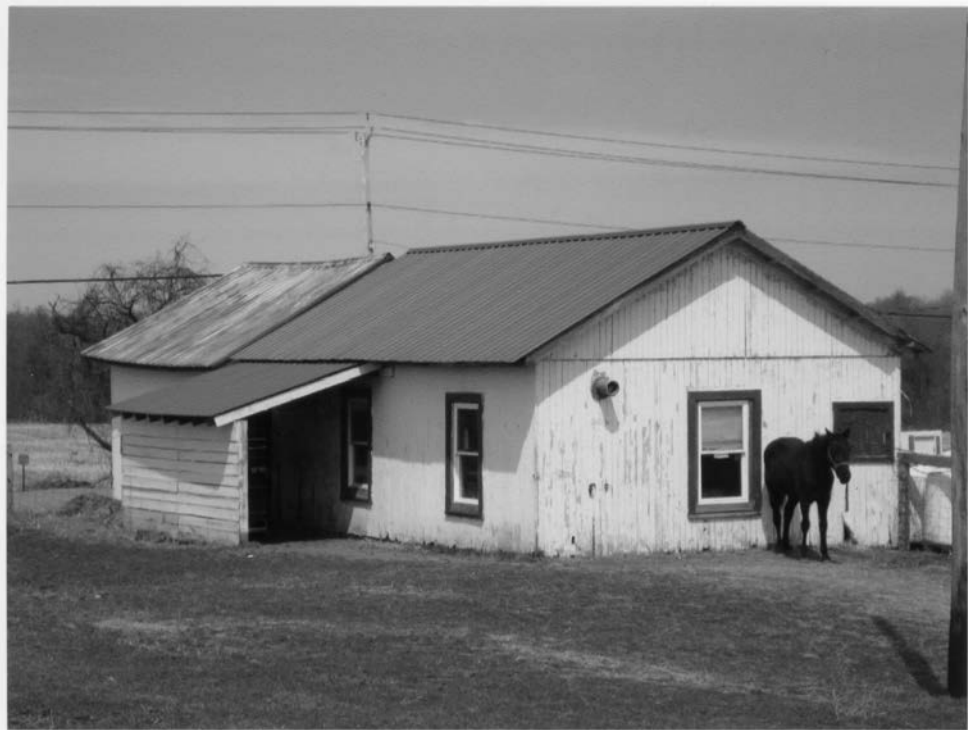
13



Alasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

14





Atasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay, Shaker tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

15



Alasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

16



Atasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

17



Wood Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)  
Alton, Wayne Co., NY

18





Alasa Farms

(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)

Alton, Wayne Co., NY

19

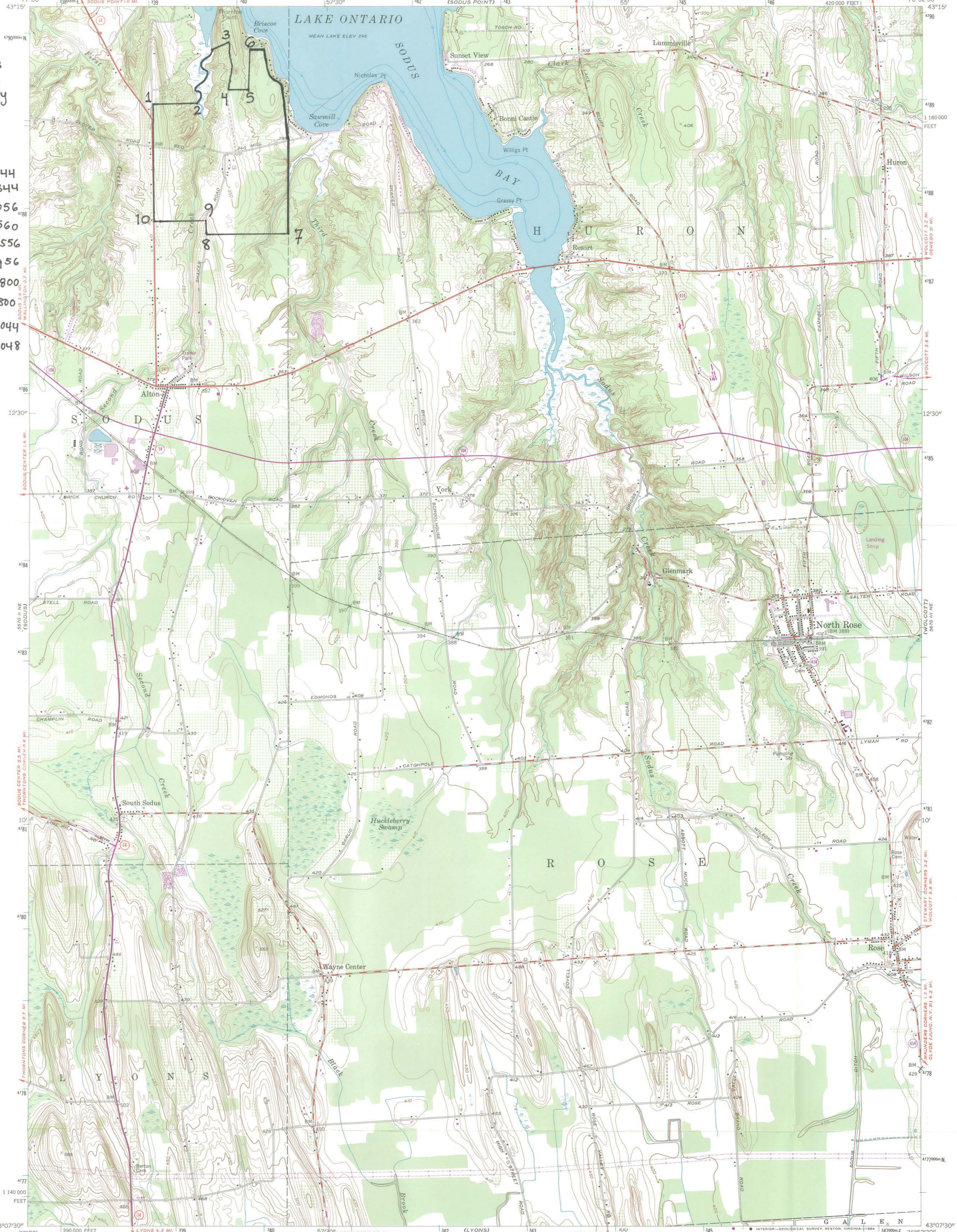


Alasa Farms  
(Sodus Bay Shaker Tract)  
Aiton, Wayne Co., NY

20

Alasa Farms  
Alton vicinity  
Wayne Co, NY  
Rose Quad  
Zone 18  
1:24,000

1. 339028/4789344
2. 339544/4789344
3. 339920/4790056
4. 339916/4789560
5. 340104/4789556
6. 340316/4789956
7. 340540/4787800
8. 339608/4787800
9. 339596/4788044
10. 339028/4788048



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS

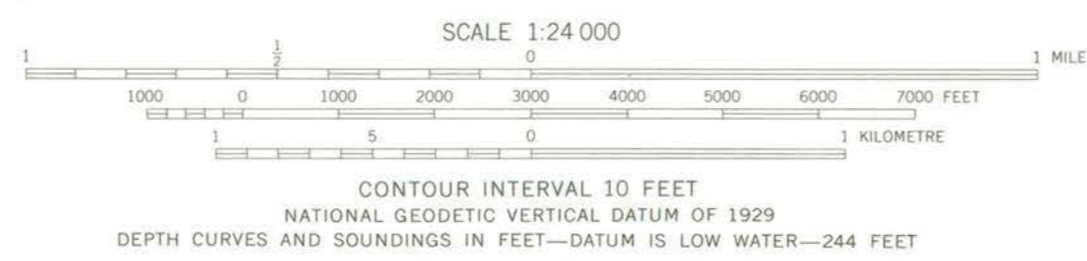
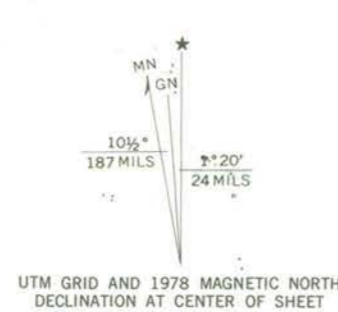
Culture and drainage in part compiled by Corps of Engineers,  
Dept. of the Army, from aerial photographs taken 1942  
Topography by plane-table surveys 1953

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system,  
central zone

Hydrography in Lake Ontario by U. S. Lake Survey 1949

1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 18, shown in blue

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from  
aerial photographs taken 1976 and other source data.  
This information not field checked. Map edited 1978



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS LOW WATER—244 FEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route	Slate Route

ROSE, N. Y.  
NW/4 CLYDE 15' QUADRANGLE  
N4307.5-W7652.5/7.5

1953  
PHOTOREVISED 1978  
AMS 5670 III NW—SERIES V821

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Alasa Farms  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Wayne

DATE RECEIVED: 9/04/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/18/09  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/03/09 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/18/09  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000835

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 10-16-09 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*An important local Sluher farm.*

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER Abernathy DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

STATEMENT OF OWNER SUPPORT

Before an individual nomination proposal will be reviewed or nominated, the owner(s) of record must sign and date the following statement:

I/WE J GRIFFIN MANGAN Pres.  
(print or type owner name)

am/are the owner(s) of the property at

ALASA FARMS Inc.  
(name of property if applicable)

6450 SHAKER RD ALTON, NY 14413  
(street number and name, city, village or town, state of nominated property)

I/WE support its consideration and inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

J Griffin Mangan Pres ALASA FARMS INC 4/22/2009  
(signature and date)

POB 185

ALTON NY 14413-0185

(mailing address)

STATEMENT OF OWNER SUPPORT

Before an individual nomination proposal will be reviewed or nominated, the owner(s) of record must sign and date the following statement:

I (We), Lou Thurston,

Kathleen G Fowler,

(print or type owner[s] name[s])

Own the property at: 8487 Red Mill Rd North Rose N.Y.  
14516

I (We) support its nomination to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Sign and date below, and provide legal mailing address(es) of owner(s)

Signature: Kathleen G Fowler Date: 8/7/09

Signature: Lou Thurston Date: 8/7/09

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address 8487 Red Mill Rd

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip Code: North Rose N.Y. 14516





STATEMENT OF OWNER SUPPORT

Before an individual nomination proposal will be reviewed or nominated, the owner(s) of record must sign and date the following statement:

I (We), Ricky E. Fowler,  
Kathleen Q Fowler,

(print or type owner[s] name[s])

Own the property at: 8535 RED MILL ROAD

I (We) support its nomination to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Sign and date below, and provide legal mailing address(es) of owner(s)

Signature: Ricky E. Fowler Date: 8/8/09

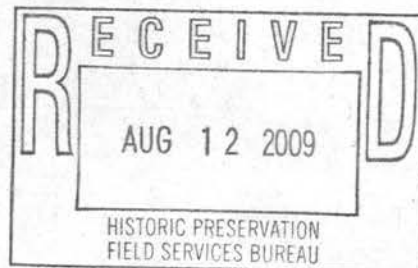
Signature: Kathleen Q Fowler Date: 8/8/09

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address 8535 RED MILL RD.

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip Code: NORTH ROSE, N.Y. 14516





**New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

www.nysparks.com



**David A. Paterson**  
Governor

**Carol Ash**  
Commissioner

August 31, 2009

Ms. Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Transmittal of National Register  
Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to transmit five National Register nominations to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register as follows:

Tremont Baptist Church, Bronx, Bronx Co., NY

South Salina Street Historic District, Syracuse, Onondaga Co., NY

New Rochelle Railroad Station, New Rochelle, Westchester Co., NY

Alasa Farms, Alton, Wayne Co., NY

Boyd & Parker Park and Groveland Ambuscade, Cuylerville and Groveland, Livingston Co., NY  
(this previously submitted nomination has been revised to more clearly articulate commemorative significance)

Thank you for your assistance in processing these proposals. Please feel free to call on me at 518-237-8643 ext. 3258 if any questions arise.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Peckham  
National Register  
Program Coordinator

enclosures