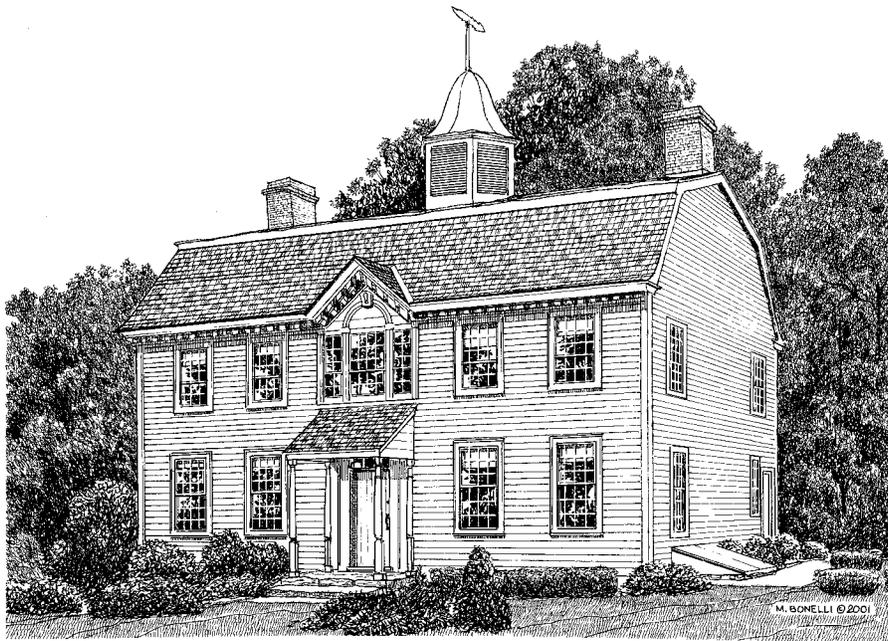

HISTORIC LANDMARKS

OF THE TOWN OF
NORTH SALEM, NEW YORK





HISTORIC LANDMARKS

OF THE TOWN OF
NORTH SALEM, NEW YORK



By past and present members of the North Salem Historic Preservation Commission

*This book is dedicated to all of the town's landmark owners – past and present.
Without their commitment to historic preservation, their hard work restoring and
maintaining their properties and their fierce desire to keep North Salem's past alive,
our town would have no landmarks and leave no legacy.*

*The Commission especially thanks landmark owners Lori and Larry Fink
who proposed and sponsored this project.*

Second Edition 2019

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION 2019

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Except as otherwise noted in the captions, the vintage photos and maps are courtesy of and credited under the photos with abbreviations as follows: North Salem Town Historian (NSTH), North Salem Historical Society (NSHS), and *Atlas of Westchester County, New York*. J.B. Beers & Co. 1872. (Beers 1872)

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❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

Arranged by hamlet* — Salem Center, North Salem, Purdys and Croton Falls — this book celebrates our town's landmarks, their owners and the colorful history of North Salem. The stories of the buildings and the people who created them bring our past alive. They include first settlers, Loyalists and Patriots, farmers and tradesmen, circus entrepreneurs and their menageries, shopkeepers and millers, the creation of the reservoir and the arrival of the railroad. Each story is the result of careful research by Commission members. Sources range from deeds, wills, maps, 19th century histories, letters and diaries to newspaper articles, interviews and old photos. Most of the sources are listed on p. 86. Each landmark is illustrated with a splendid pen and ink drawing by Croton Falls artist Michael Bonelli and with an old photo or illustration. For more information, please see the Town Historian in Lobdell House, the local history section of the Ruth Keeler Memorial Library, the North Salem Historical Society or any member of the Historic Preservation Commission.

In 1984, North Salem's Landmark and Historic Preservation Law was passed by the Town Board, and the first Historic Preservation Commission was appointed. Since then the Commission has recommended 35 properties to the Town Board for designation. The Law was amended in 1995. And in 2000 the Historic Road Preservation Law was passed. The Town now has two historic roads: Baxter and Mills. These laws are in the town code on the town website www.northsalemny.org. The first edition of *Historic Landmarks of the Town of North Salem, New York*, sponsored by the Town Board, celebrates 19 landmarks and one historic road and was published in 2002. This new edition contains all 33 landmarks and two historic roads. All of this material is on the town website and will be updated as new designations are made.

*The hamlets do not have geographic boundaries that appear on maps. They grew up around four post offices, and their borders are somewhat arbitrary. Since Peach Lake never had a post office, that area is included in the hamlet of North Salem.

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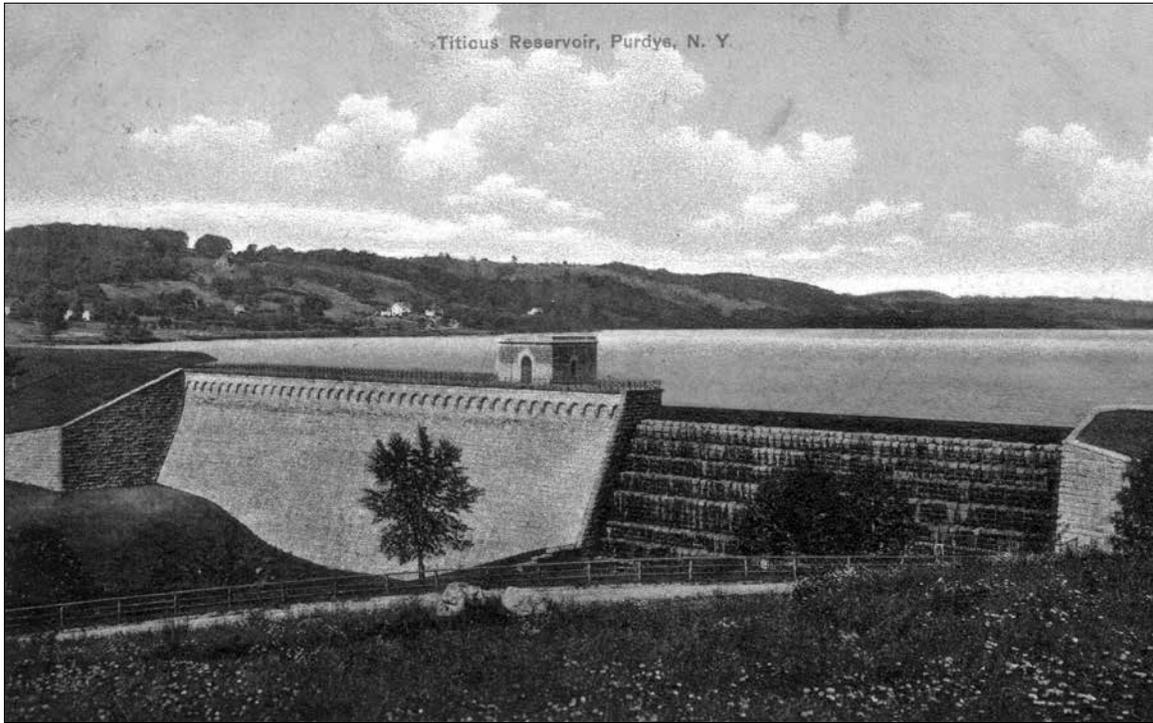
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The creation of the Titicus Reservoir drastically changed the character of the town and the lives of many of the residents.

This postcard view is looking east over Titicus Dam to houses on Titicus Road. Courtesy of Cynthia Curtis

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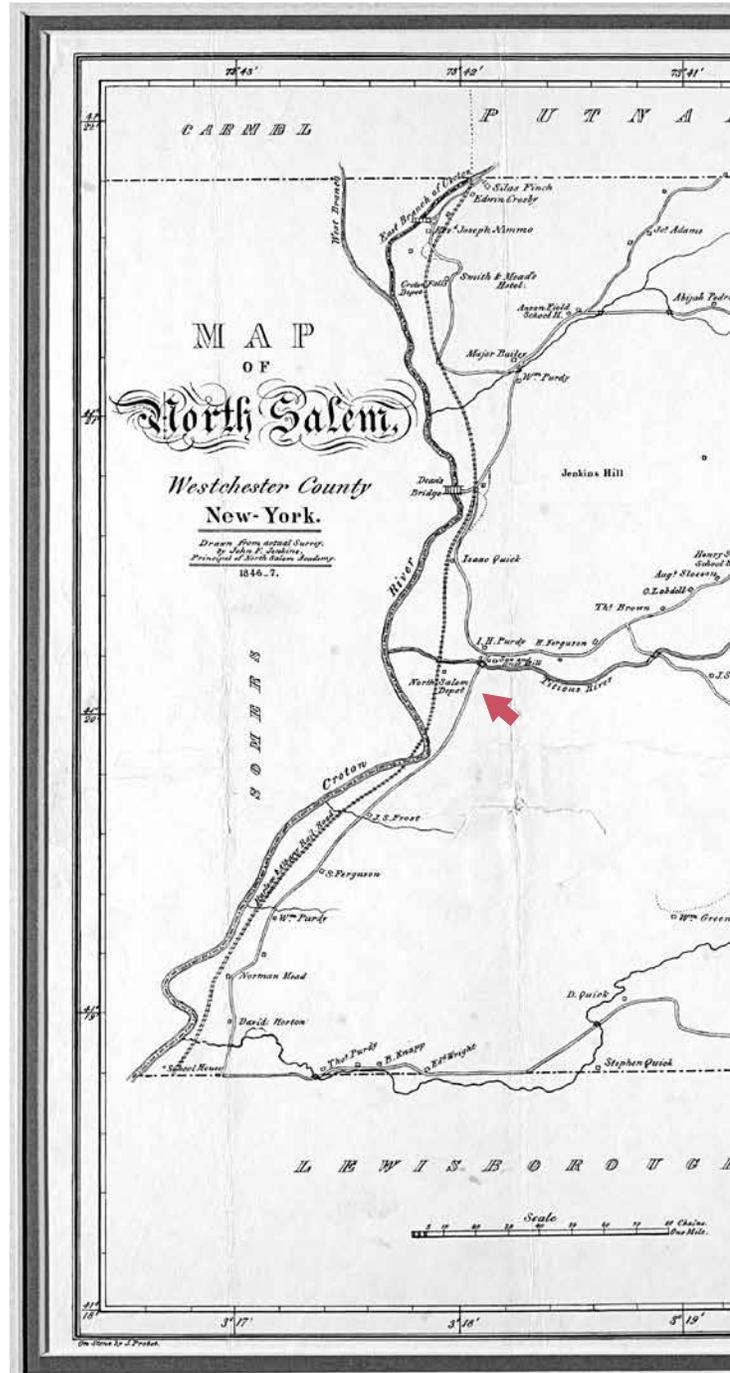
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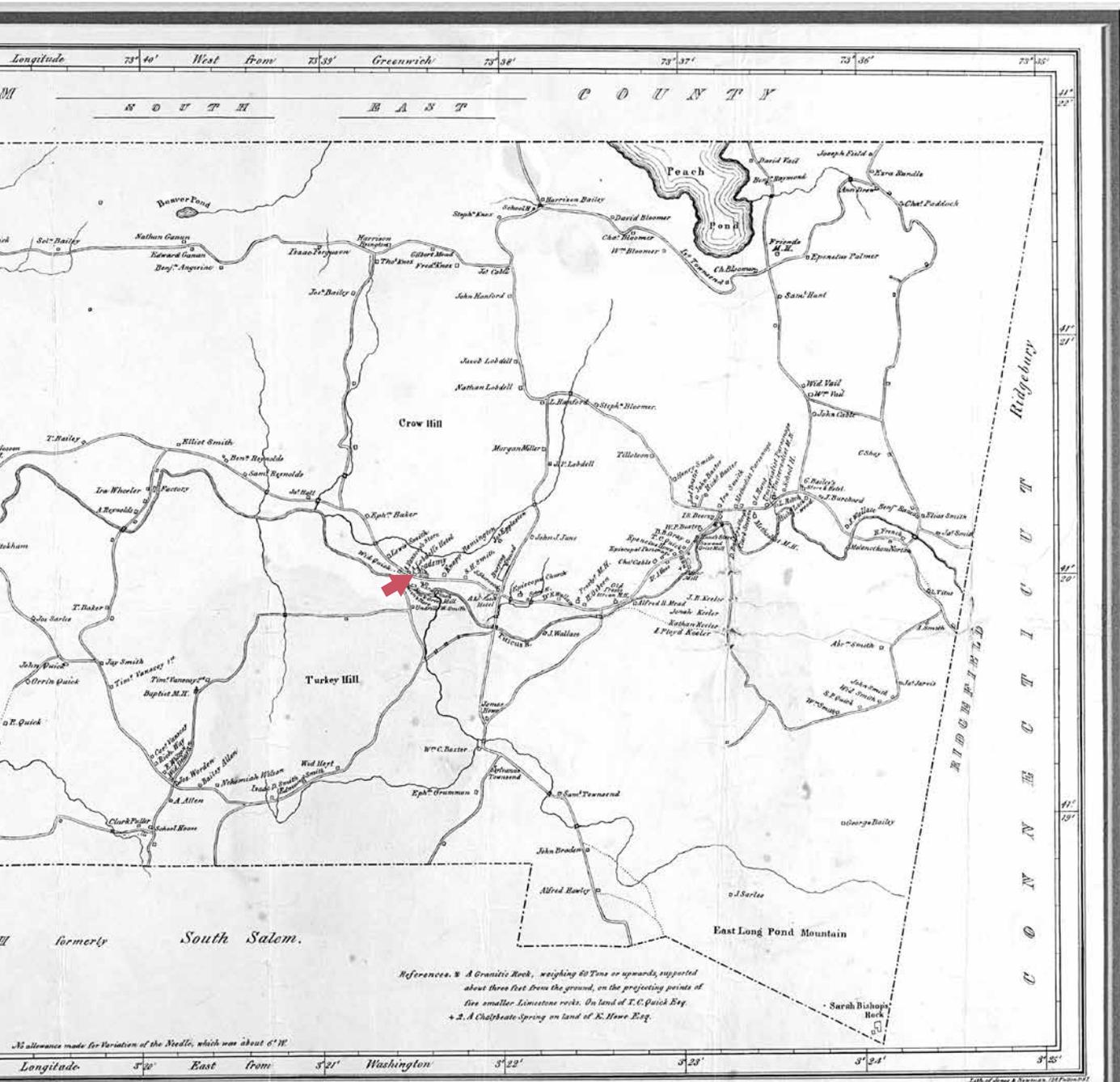
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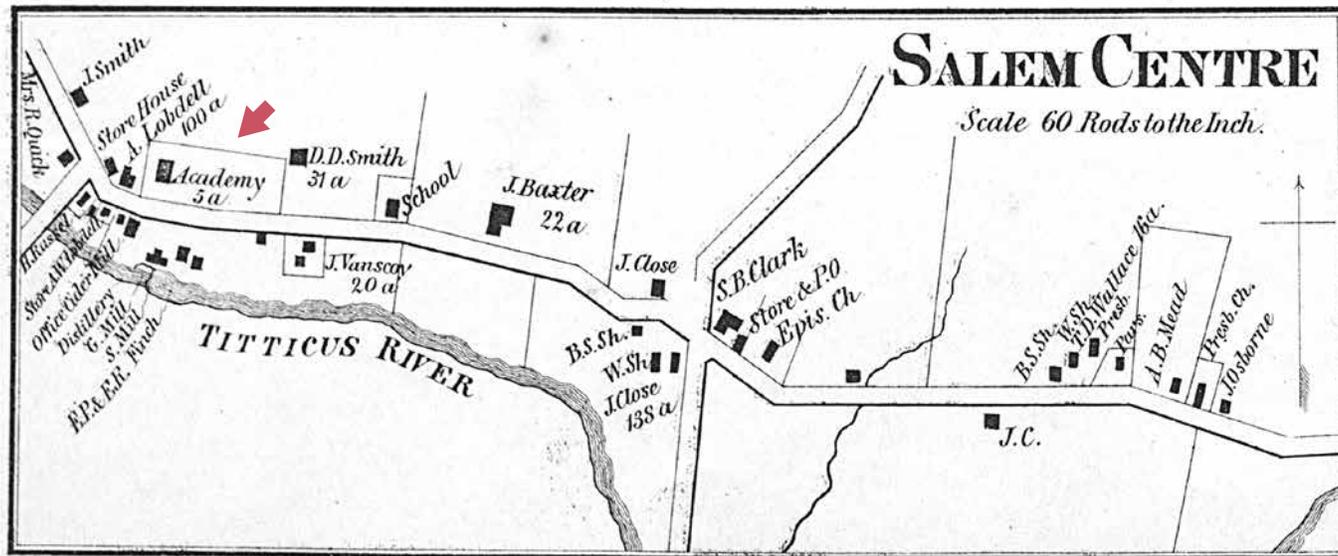
JOHN F. JENKINS,
 MAP OF
 NORTH SALEM
 1846-1847

This is the first surveyed map of North Salem that shows where people lived. Properties not named might have been vacant or rented. This 1846 version was drawn the year the railroad came to Purdys and Croton Falls. Jenkins identifies the now Purdys station as North Salem Depot (see arrow far left). It became Purdys Station after Isaac Hart Purdy deeded a right-of-way through his property to the railroad. Most of the land between Purdys and Salem Center was farmland before 1893 when the valley was flooded and became Titicus Reservoir. The arrow near the center points to the Academy/Delancey Hall.

*Map of North Salem, Westchester County,
 New York, Drawn from actual Survey,
 by John F. Jenkins, Principal of
 North Salem Academy*







The arrow points to the Academy/Delancey Hall, Beers, 1872.



Buildings across from Delancey Hall before 1893. The columns of Lobdell Store & Post Office are visible far right. Courtesy of the Westchester County Historical Society.

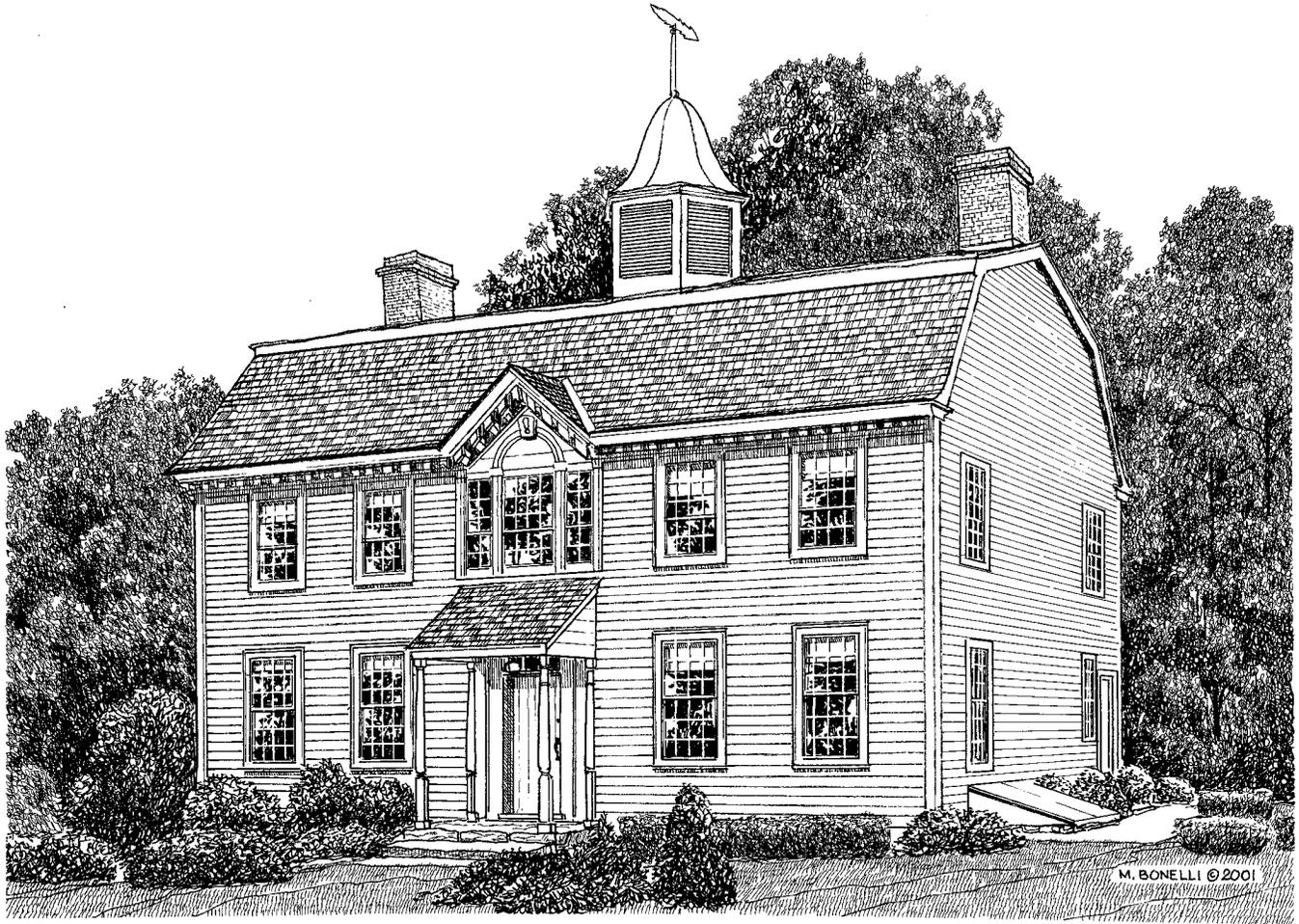
SALEM CENTER

The western three quarters of North Salem were originally part of Van Cortlandt Manor. When Lord of the Manor Stephanus Van Cortlandt died in 1700, his land holdings went to his 11 children. Anne Van Cortlandt and her husband Stephen Delancey became owners of lots 9 and 10, most of present day North Salem. Their eldest son James bequeathed the property to his son Stephen in 1744. Stephen began to divide and lease the land to tenant farmers including among others Van Scoys, Delavans, Smiths and Lobdells. In the 1760s Delancey began construction of his

manor house (see Delancey Hall, next page) and by 1769 had begun to sell land to his tenants. A small village, originally called Delanceytown, grew up along the Titicus River and around the manor.

By 1826 the village was established as Salem Center, when the first postmaster, James Mills, was appointed. Salem Center was — and still is — North Salem's center. The cider, grist and saw mills, shops, a tavern and Lobdell Store and Post Office originally across from Delancey Hall were either moved or torn down when the land was taken for Titicus Reservoir.

SALEM CENTER



❧ Delancey Hall ❧
266 Titicus Road
1765-1773

Stephen Delancey began construction of his manor house in the 1760s. The Georgian plan included two rooms on either side of a central hall and four bedrooms on the second floor. The two-chimney structure was sheathed with narrow clapboards. The Palladian window above the front entrance, the carved keystone and picturesque cornice with modillions are typical Georgian embellishments. The belfry contains a Ziba Blakeslee bell that was cast and installed later. Stephen, a Loyalist, married Hannah Sackett, a staunch Patriot, in 1767. Delancey was forced to retreat behind British lines, and from 1776 to 1783 his home was used by patriots. In 1777, he sold the manor to his friend Cornelius Steenrod to protect it from confiscation. In 1779 Hannah divorced him.

On their return march from the victory at Yorktown in October of 1782, the French Army camped nearby, and General Rochambeau (Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau) and his officers probably stayed in the hall.

Area residents purchased the building in 1787 and remodeled it into an academy, the first academy in Westchester County, the third in New York State. Many notables were educated there over the next 90 years. Extensive additions were made in the 1800s, including four dormers in the front and three in the rear. Declining enrollment and the deterioration of the building forced the trustees to close the academy, and in 1885 the building was conveyed to the town to be used as Town Hall. The first town meeting was held there in 1904. Electricity was installed in 1924. In 1932, a library was established in the building and remained there until 1980. The dormers, a front porch and an enclosed outside staircase were removed in renovations in the 1950s. The building was completely restored in the 1980s, under the beneficence of the Ronald Stanton Foundation. Furnishings were funded by the North Salem Bicentennial Committee. The top, shingled portion of the gable roof was replaced by a red enameled standing-seam metal roof, and roofs were added to cover the back entry ramp (2002) and the east door (2016). The building was listed on The National Register of Historic Places on September 4, 1980. In recognition of the town's place on the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, the National Park Service installed an exhibit on the town hall campus in 2015.



*Delancey Hall
in 1912, still
surrounded by
farmland.
NSHS*

❧ Lobdell Store & Post Office ❧
274 Titicus Road
c. 1848

Now the home of the North Salem Building Department, Lobdell Store and Post Office was built c. 1848 by Clark Stevens and originally stood across from Delancey Hall on the banks of the Titicus River. The two-story Greek revival building has a temple front with four columns. In his seminal work *American Architecture Westchester County New York*, 1977, Frank Sanchis wrote, “the columns support a partial entablature that is carried along the side of the building. The front gable is not pedimented...the size and configuration of the windows and door on the façade are more domestic than commercial. The small door may be an alteration.”



The store when it was still across the road, before 1893. Albert Lobdell in the doorway. NSTH

Anson Lobdell acquired the building in 1866, and it is likely that he and Stevens were partners before that. It is “A.W. Lobdell Store” on the 1872 Beers map. Albert Jenkins Lobdell became proprietor in 1880 and sold everything from food and spirits to candles and cloth. When the City of New York took land for the expansion of the reservoir system, the store was moved to the north side of the road, just east of Delancey Hall. The outside staircase was removed and a loading dock was added. Town records report many meetings in the upstairs hall, and the store was a mecca for town business, news and fun. Albert presided over all of it, including the town itself when he was supervisor 1915-28. His family lived next door in today’s Lobdell House.

The store and post office were run by Lobdells until the 1950s, and then the building was rented out to various businesses. The town acquired it in the 1980s and dubbed it “The Annex.” In 1995, it was moved to its present location and underwent extensive renovations to accommodate town court and police. After the court and police moved to 66 June Road, the interior was remodeled again for the building department in 2017.

SALEM CENTER



SALEM CENTER



❧ Lobdell House ❧

Hickory Glen
270 Titicus Road
1883

Albert Jenkins Lobdell built this house for his wife, Mary Louise Braden, in 1883, and they named it Hickory Glen. It stood west of Delancey Hall until 1893 when the City of New York took the land for creation of the Titicus Reservoir. The house was moved to its current location on log rollers.

The significant architectural features that define the style of the house as “Stick Victorian” include sloped gables, cross gables and dormers with “Kings Post” trusses, deep bracket overhangs and wrap-around porches. Other features are the twin brick chimneys with corbelled bases and tops, the angled and bracket dormer on the east side and the posts, brackets, railings and the angled corner of the porch. Most of the original features are intact, but the entry door that faced the road is now a window, and the front porch stairs were removed. A new stairway and door were added on the west side in the 1940s.

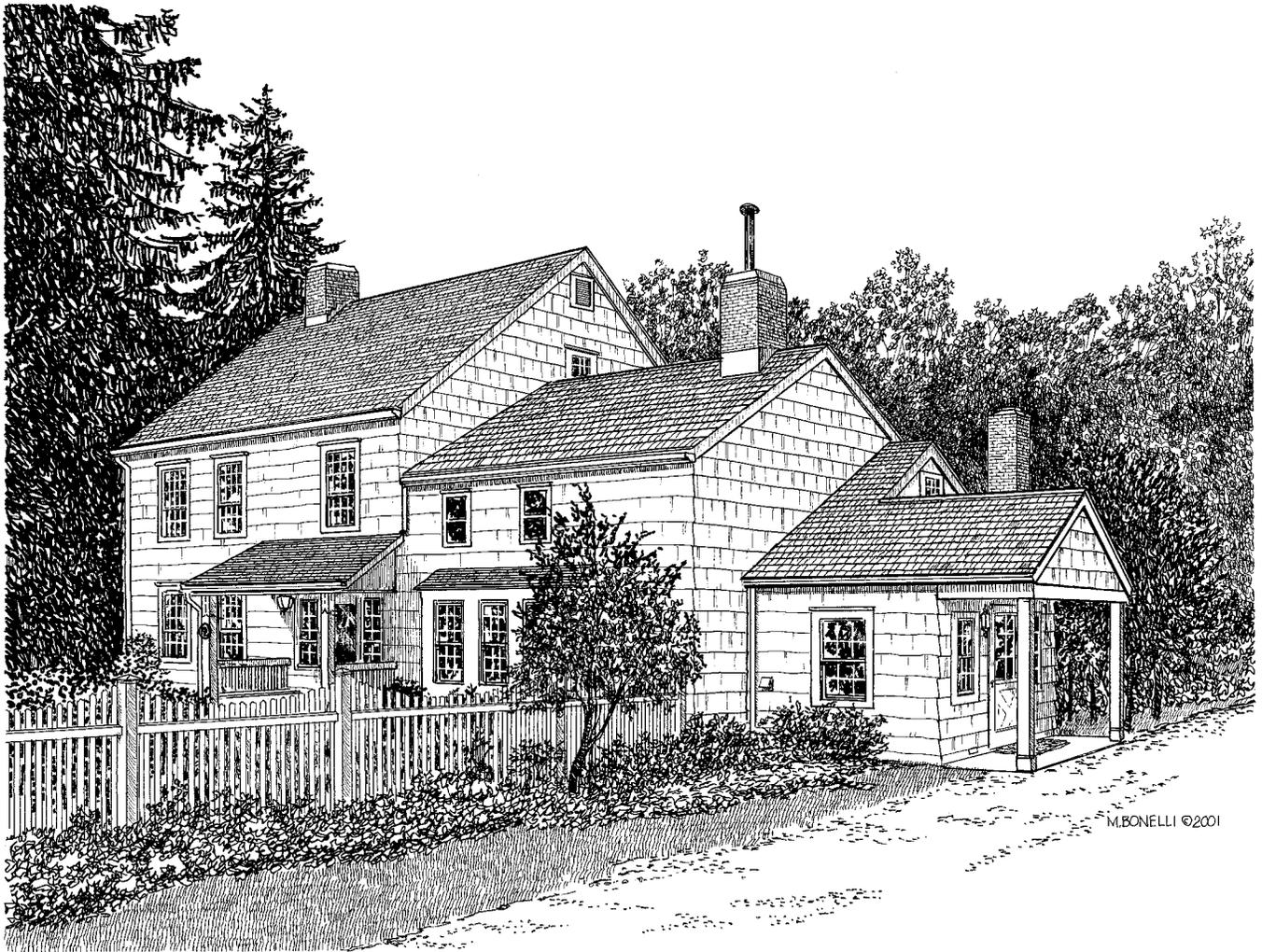
The Lobdells were the heart and soul of Salem Center for nearly 200 years. Albert and Mary Louise raised six children here, including Albert junior who died while serving in France in WWI. Five of the children clerked in the family store and post office. Albert ran the store — and the town as supervisor 1915-1928. Daughter Cornelia was postmistress until 1951. She and sister Jenny lived in the house until their deaths: Cornelia in 1964, Jenny in 1995.

The town acquired the building and converted it into offices. An older addition on the north side was removed and replaced with the current one. Today the building is home to the assessor, receiver of taxes, planning board, recreation department and town historian.



*Members of the
Lobdell family
in front of their
home after
1893 when the
house was moved
to its present
location. NSHS*

SALEM CENTER



M. BONELLI ©2001

❧ Uriah Wallace House ❧
264 Titicus Road
1790

Uriah Wallace, son of early settlers James and Abigail, built this house circa 1790 (see also information with the Samuel Wallace House, p.52). Uriah was a Patriot and was promoted three times while serving in the militia and in the Westchester Light Horse during the Revolution. One of the incorporators of the Academy, he also served as Town Clerk and was a road commissioner. Land Records show Ananias Weed purchased the property in 1809 and later sold it to Anson Lobdell. On the 1846 Jenkins map of North Salem, the building is labeled “A. Lobdell’s Hotel,” and it may also have been a tavern. Students at the adjacent Academy used this house as living quarters.

The house has had several shapes. It was originally square, and a kitchen and dining room were added about 1820. The tiny room next to the fireplace in the dining room is rumored to have been a stop on the underground railroad. The interior staircase was remodeled between 1850 and 1890. A two-story back porch, added in the 1890s, was removed in the 1970s. At some point a front porch was added when the house was sided with clapboards. This porch was removed before 1970. A picket fence was added in 1993. Owners have worked with the Commission to change the siding color from dark brown to off-white, to enlarge the side entry area, to expand the kitchen and sitting room at the back of the house, to add a closed porch at the back and to enlarge upstairs bedroom and bath areas. Through all of this the main portion of the house retained its original character.



*Uriah Wallace's
house before major
renovations. NSTH*

SALEM CENTER



❧ Daniel D. Smith House ❧
282 Titicus Road
1760-1790

The name of the builder of this early home has not been found, but he or she was likely a member of the Smith family, early settlers in what was then Van Cortlandt Manor. The house was part of the settlement called Delanceytown, the buildings that were constructed near Stephen Delancey's manor house. There were mills, shops and a tavern across the road along the river.

The building date is based entirely on physical evidence that confirms pre-1790 for sure and likely much earlier: hand-hewn rafters are joined with pegged mortise and tenon joints; interior posts are chamfered; nails used to fasten trim and flooring are very early hand wrought; the original wood lathe is hand split. The original structure was one room over one room, and floor patching suggests the original fireplace and hearth were larger. The home is representative of side-gabled American folk houses, framed with massive chestnut timbers, numbered with Roman numerals and joined with amazing skill. The foundation is local granite and mortar, and the basement posts are either full tree trunks or large milled timbers. Cupboards and a fireplace mantel are original as are hand-hewn chestnut floors on the second level. Other historic features on the property include an old field turnstile crafted of rough milled boards, a small corn crib and a few large mined stones.

Additions were made to the house in the mid-1800s, when a kitchen with coal-burning stove was added. The extension in the rear was originally a separate apartment and over time was joined to the main house with a breezeway.

The property has had nine owners since Daniel and Mary Smith lived there, including North Salem School District #2 (the school was one door to the east), a Kodak executive who painted it bright yellow and St. James Episcopal Church. It became a private home again in 2003, when the house underwent significant renovation/restoration.



*The house in 1979
before most of
the sugar maples
were lost in major
storms. NSTH*

❧ **Mills House** ❧
 425 Mills Road
 c. 1770

Probably built by a member of the Smith family, a building on this site appears on Bertier’s map of the French Army’s 39th Camp at Salem in 1782. The property was acquired by James and Hannah Mills in the early 1800s. James served the town in many capacities including Assessor, Postmaster, Commissioner of Common Schools, Justice of the Peace and finally Supervisor in 1835. His fifth son, Darius Ogden Mills, born here on September 5, 1825, was educated at the North Salem Academy and at Mount Pleasant Academy in Sing Sing. He went to California in 1848 and made a fortune, not by panning for gold, but by starting a general merchandise business that catered to the gold hunters. Mills later established banks in Sacramento and San Francisco, and at his death in 1910 left an estate of \$35 million.

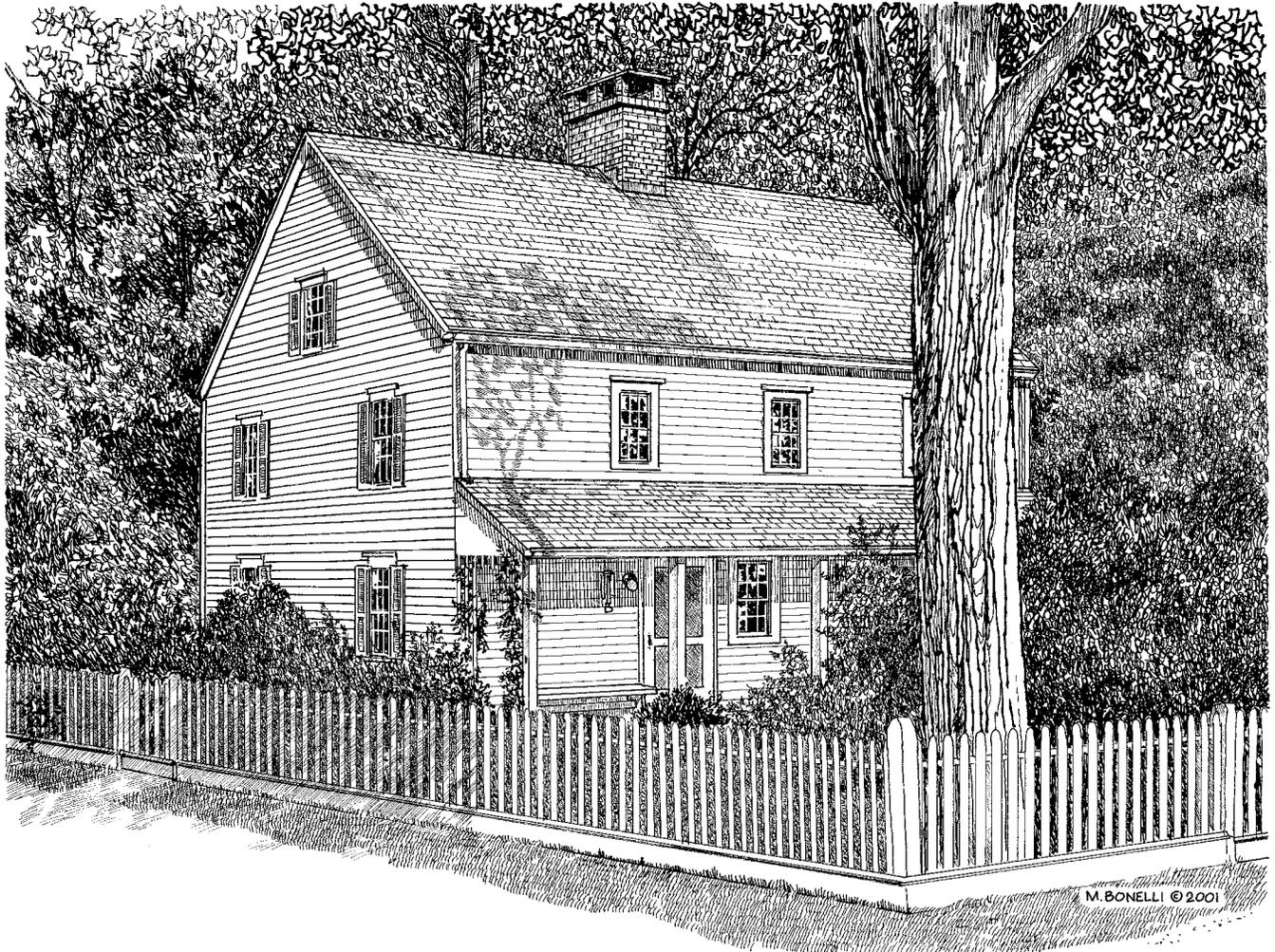
The house is a simple two-story, gable-roof house, typical of the farmhouses of the Georgian period, with rooms added later to the rear. Architectural historian John Stevens examined the interior and spotted evidence — building techniques, moldings, floor dust guards — for a range of dates from 1750 to after 1800. The mantel in the dining room looks c.1780 but the “gains” in the top edges of two of the chestnut floor beams, which were made to accommodate dust strips below the floor boards, are found occasionally in pre-1750 houses on Long island. In this house, it appears that the beams were re-used from an earlier building because the floor boards in the room with the large fireplace and oven run the opposite way.

When the Mills moved to Sing Sing in 1841, Underhill Smith bought the property, bringing it back into the huge Smith holdings. Thomas Purdy, Jr. acquired it in 1923, and sold it to the Whitman sisters on condition that he could buy it back when they could no longer use it. Helen Whitman was a landscape architect and very highly regarded herb specialist. In 1946 she and her friend Charlotte Lee established the Tool Shed and Herb Nursery on Helen’s property. After Helen Whitman’s death in 1983, the property was sold back to the Purdy family.



*The house
c. 1912. NSHS*

SALEM CENTER



SALEM CENTER



Mills Road

18th, 19th & 20th centuries

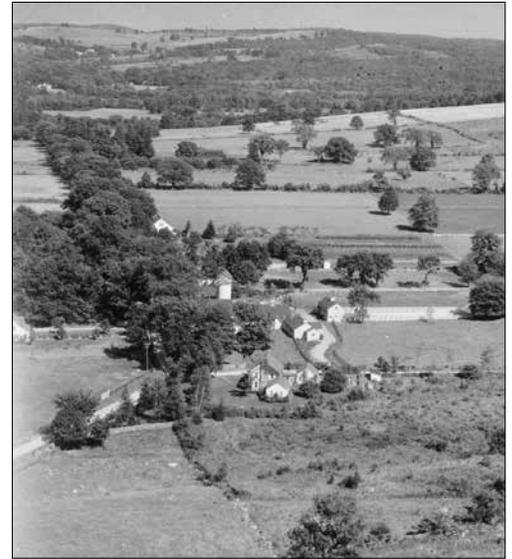
Mills Road winds through some of the town's most interesting history and most stunning vistas, including rolling fields, stands of fir and reservoir views. Most of the route is lined with beautiful stone walls. Some of the fieldstone walls date from the 18th century. From Titicus Dam to the 90 degree turn at Bogtown, newer walls, with flat stones on top, mark the boundary of New York watershed property.

The road was created in three sections. In the mid-1700s, it ran only from Titicus Road to Cat Ridge Road, the route south. This was Smith land, leased then purchased from Stephen Delancey. There is a lot of history along this stretch: Mills House (p. 19); #369, the 18th century farm of Daniel Smith; #329, part of the huge Thompson Decker dairy farm that ran all the way to Titicus Road before the reservoir. The land and buildings on the corner of Cat Ridge and across the street became part of the Woolworth Estate, and then private homes and a horse farm.

When the valley was flooded for the reservoir in the 1890s, the Aqueduct Commission agreed to construct a road along the south side of the reservoir from Purdys to the eastern remainder of Bogtown Road. In 1907, the section from Cat Ridge to Bogtown was constructed, making Mills a main route from Salem Center to Purdys.

Along the stretch from Purdys to Bogtown is Mills Road Cemetery, created when the burial ground on the Stocum farm was condemned for the reservoir. Most of those graves were moved here, including that of Revolutionary War veteran Abijah Pedrick. The section from Bogtown to Cat Ridge crosses Wheeler Road where a 1700s house stands on the northwest corner. Probably created by the Baker family, the property includes a beehive-shaped stone chamber and, until a few years ago, a forge.

Until the 1930s, when the North Salem Improvement Society suggested to the Town Board that roads be named for prominent citizens, town roads had descriptive names. This one was known as the Purdys — Salem Center Road.



Mills Road is hidden beneath the trees in this aerial looking east in the 1930s. Cat Ridge Road goes to the right. Courtesy of DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Robert Yarnall Richie Photograph Collection

🌀 Cat Ridge Cemetery and Site of Cat Ridge Baptist Church 🌀

Cat Ridge Road

1798

By the 1770s, Stephen Delancey had begun to sell land to his tenants. One was Timothy Van Scoy who bought land along Cat Ridge in 1773. Around 1798, Van Scoy, deacon and preacher, built the Cat Ridge Baptist Church at his own expense on his property. Asa Bronson, a preacher at the church 1819-21, reported that it was a “neat pretty little sanctuary, completely finished in every part, the pulpit only excepted.” It seems Van Scoy had been ill and prayed that God would allow him to live until the church was complete. He left the pulpit, which Bronson described as “a henroost fastened to the side of a palace,” unfinished fearing completion would cause his demise.

To the rear of what is left of the sanctuary foundation is the burial ground. The date of the first burial is unknown because the very worn and rustic stones are either not marked or illegible. Among the graves are those

of Cornelius Van Scoy who died at Harpers Ferry, Revolutionary War veteran Daniel Purdy and many early families including Knapps, Ways, Wilsons, Fullers and Greens. At least one grave, dated 1803, was moved from the Stocum burial ground when that land was taken for the Titicus Reservoir.

The little (0.12 acres) burial ground includes approximately 50 gravestones, a walk-in receiving vault (where caskets were held in winter when grave digging was too difficult) and remnants of the foundation of the Cat Ridge Baptist Church. The cemetery and church were mostly abandoned when a new Baptist Church was built in Croton Falls in 1877. In 2015 the North Salem Historic Preservation Commission and the North Salem Historical Society joined forces to restore the seriously neglected burial ground.

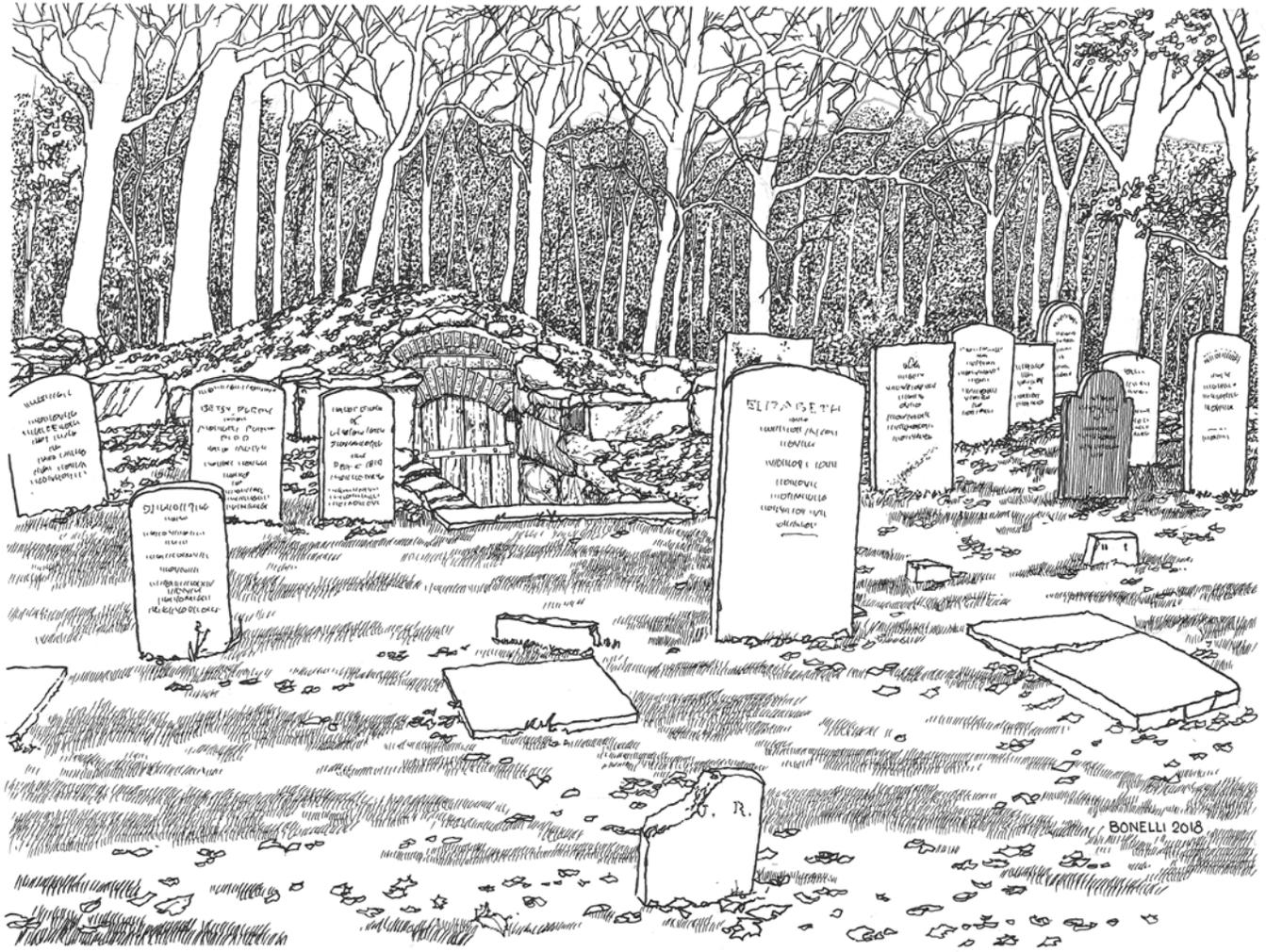
Volunteers cleaned and righted stones. A major Historical Society

fundraising campaign combined with additional support from the town paid for professional restoration of the receiving vault and of seriously damaged stones. Local contractor Peter Martini restored the vault under the direction of restoration architect Stephen Tilly. Lisa and Will Cornell of Beyond the Gravestone restored the most seriously damaged stones. The wonderful result is an excellent example of what can happen when a community bands together to take on a project.

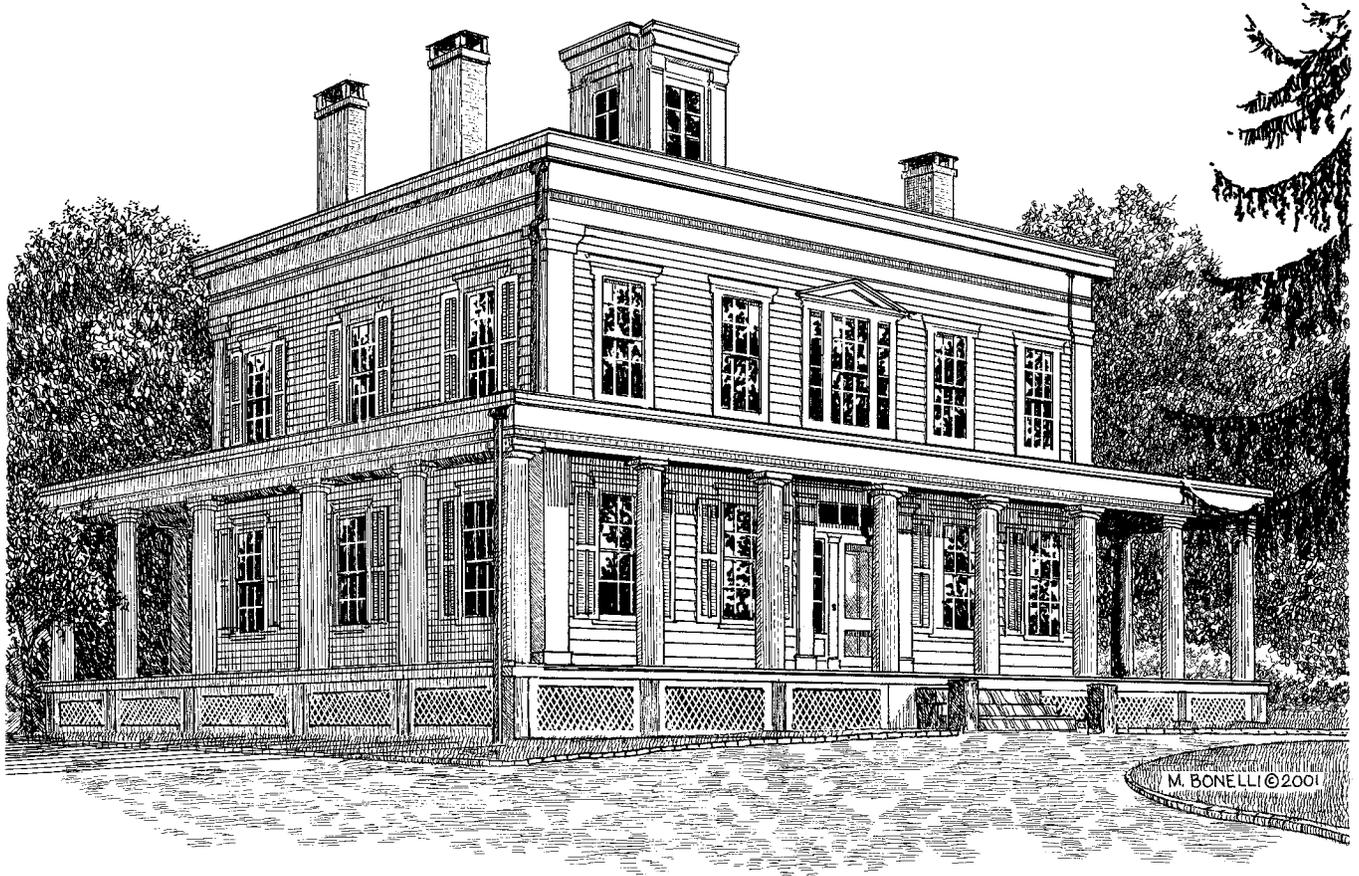


Some of the gravestones and the top of the receiving vault before restoration. NSTH

SALEM CENTER



SALEM CENTER



❧ John J. June Farm ❧
85 June Road
c. 1846

John J. June was a North Salem farmer descended from Zabud June, a Patriot who was prominent in the early history of the town. John served as a Trustee of the North Salem Academy. In the 1830s he and his brother James and uncle Lewis became involved with the circus and menagerie business, and John became an active partner in America's first circus syndicate: June, Titus and Angevine & Co. In 1830, Lewis Titus, Caleb Angevine and June brought over and exhibited the first rhinoceros ever seen in this country. It had been captured in India when only months old. The rhino was exhibited with a pair of monkeys and an ichneumon (African mongoose). Two elephants, Romeo and Juliet, and other animals were added to the menagerie that toured out of North Salem. The syndicate also established winter quarters in the Bowery where they could display some of the exotic creatures during the winter. Success with the menagerie allowed June and Titus to build their elegant homes and barns, where some of the animals lived when not on tour. (Lewis Titus built the beautiful home at 753 Titicus Road, now called Dog Hill.) Many members of the large June family are buried in the town-owned June Cemetery across from the farm. Several subsequent owners of June Farm are convinced that the benevolent ghost they have seen and heard is John June.

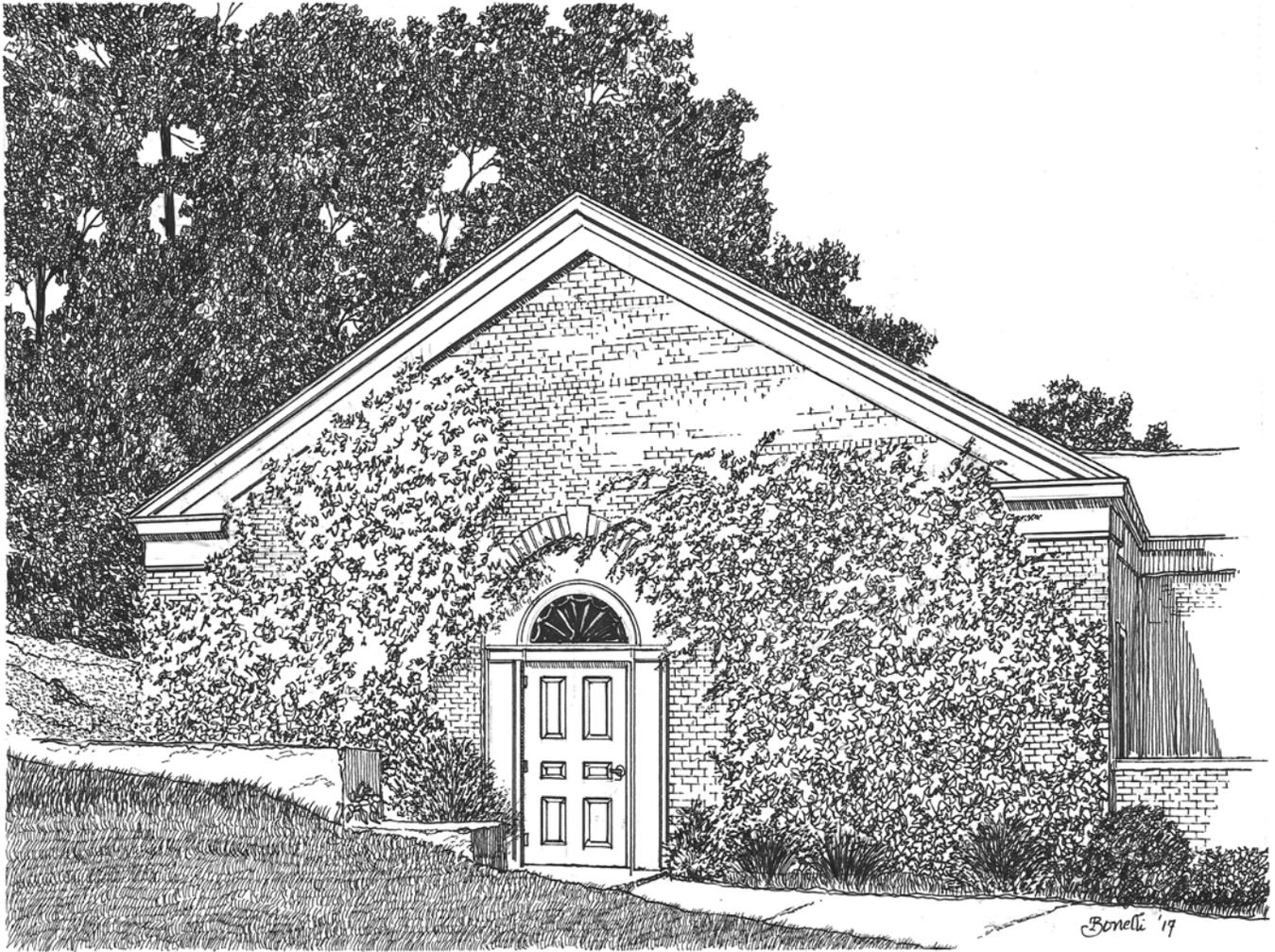
The Greek revival style house features a handsome cupola on its shallow hipped roof with four brick chimneys and is simply yet elegantly detailed in the Doric order. Well-proportioned Doric columns support the full-width veranda, and pilasters at the corners of the building extend up to a deep entablature that is carried all around the building.

An early kitchen house that sat on the northeast corner of the house was moved to a new foundation and became a home on Deveau Road. An elegant outhouse that matched the architecture of the house has unfortunately been demolished. Extensive restoration in the 1980s was much needed. The next owners remodeled the house in 1998, continuing the porch surround onto the south side, adding a new kitchen at the back and a loop driveway in front of the house.



June Farm before restoration, looking a bit haunted!
NSHS

SALEM CENTER



❧ South Façade, North Salem Courthouse ❧
66 June Road
1950

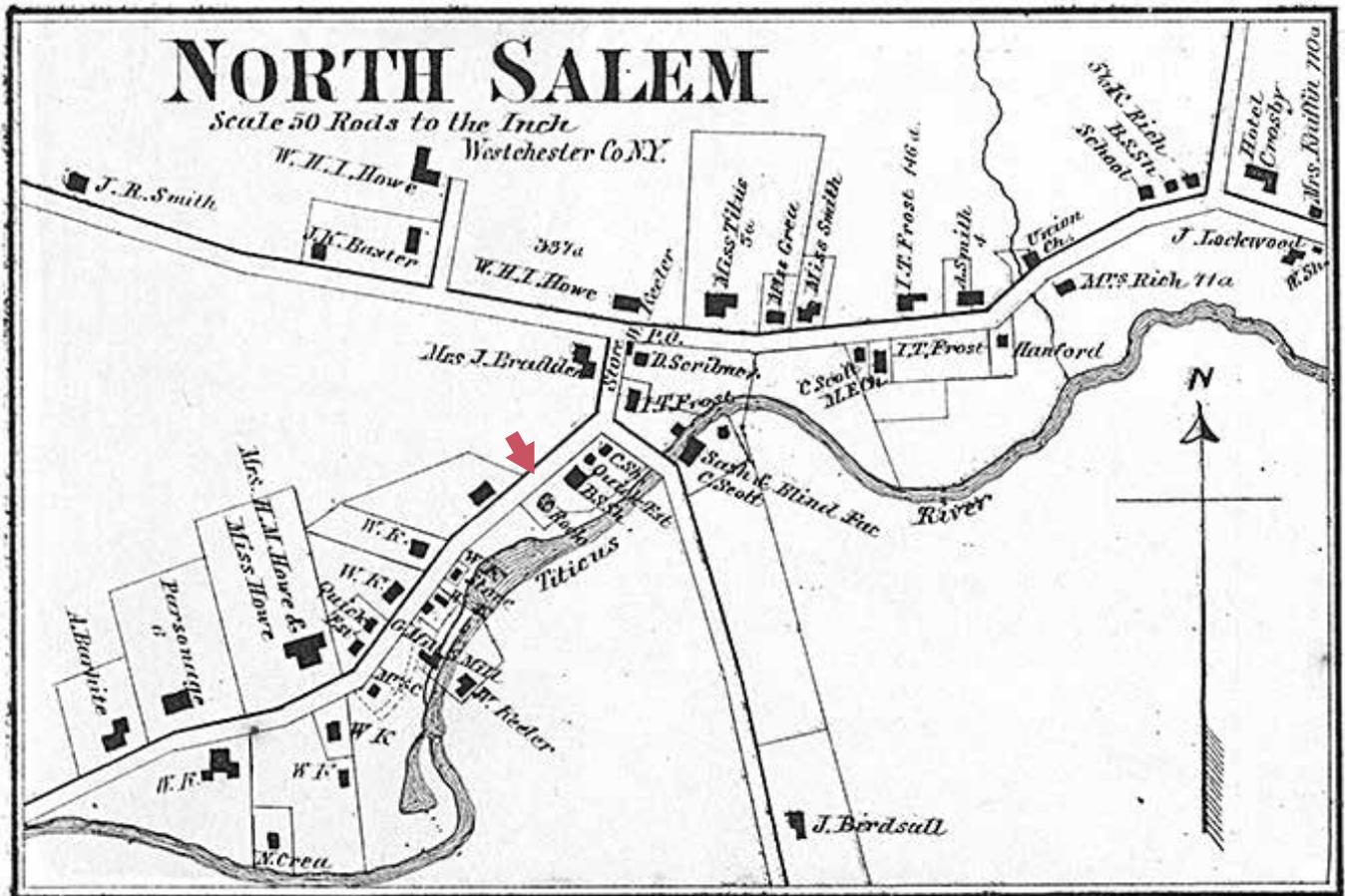
This building was constructed in 1950 as the town highway garage. Architect J. Blair Muller did the design work, including the attractive south façade which features a well-proportioned entry door and transom window with brick arch and keystone, a graceful fan window and door trim.

The property was originally part of Van Cortlandt Manor and then a parcel in Stephen Delancey's north great lot 10 when the Manor was divided among Van Cortlandt heirs. When Solomon Close came to North Salem in 1749, he and his family purchased a lot of land, eventually including this piece on what became known as Close's Corner. The family had an almost 200-year tradition of hospitality, as they ran a nearby tavern and then a hotel followed by a tea room across the road. There was a Close house on this spot until 1945 when Ella Close sold the property. The house was torn down, and the land was sold to the town in 1949.

After the highway department moved to new quarters in 2014, the town remodeled the garage to accommodate courthouse, meeting room and police. Offices and meeting room replaced garage bays, and the east façade became brick. The wall air conditioning unit was removed, but otherwise the simple south facade remains unchanged.



The building when it was still the town highway garage. NSTH



The arrow points to Balanced Rock. The intersection of Baxter and Titicus Roads has since been re-configured. Beers, 1872



*Looking northeast
on Titicus Road,
Union Hall in the
background, Balanced
Rock at right.
c. 1880s NSTH*

❧ NORTH SALEM ❧

The eastern quarter of what would become North Salem was legally settled in 1731 by Keelers, Hawleys and others who signed a quit claim deed for 50,000 acres from the governor of New York. This property was in the Oblong, a narrow piece of land extending from Long Island Sound to Massachusetts and the subject of a boundary dispute between New York and Connecticut for nearly two centuries. The Oblong land (the eastern quarter of today's North Salem and Lewisboro) was the original town of Salem. In 1784 an act of the New York Legislature added three quarters more territory from the eastern part of Van Cortlandt Manor and split the new territory into the two towns of Upper and Lower Salem. In 1788 a second act in-

corporated the two towns and changed their names to North Salem and Salem. The Croton River became the western boundary of both towns.

The first settlers in the Oblong cleared land by hand in a total wilderness and became farmers by necessity to meet their own needs. Their first homes were modest log cabins. Gradually some residents built mills and a meeting house and became blacksmiths and tavern owners. By the beginning of the Revolutionary War, the hamlet was a key stop on the New York to Vermont Post Road and on the east-west route from the Hudson River to Ridgefield. By the mid-19th century, North Salem was a beehive of activity with homes, hotels and shops located in the area shown on the map.

NORTH SALEM



M. BONELLI ©2001

❧ Balanced Rock ❧

667 Titicus Road
Glacial period

George H. Cable bequeathed this .384 acre parcel, including the barn on p. 36, to the Town of North Salem in 1959. The town fathers found Balanced Rock to be of “historical and scientific” interest. That is an understatement, given the number of visitors who have been drawn to the site from all over the world. Scientists agree that the 60-ton granite rock was a passenger from New England during the last glacier.

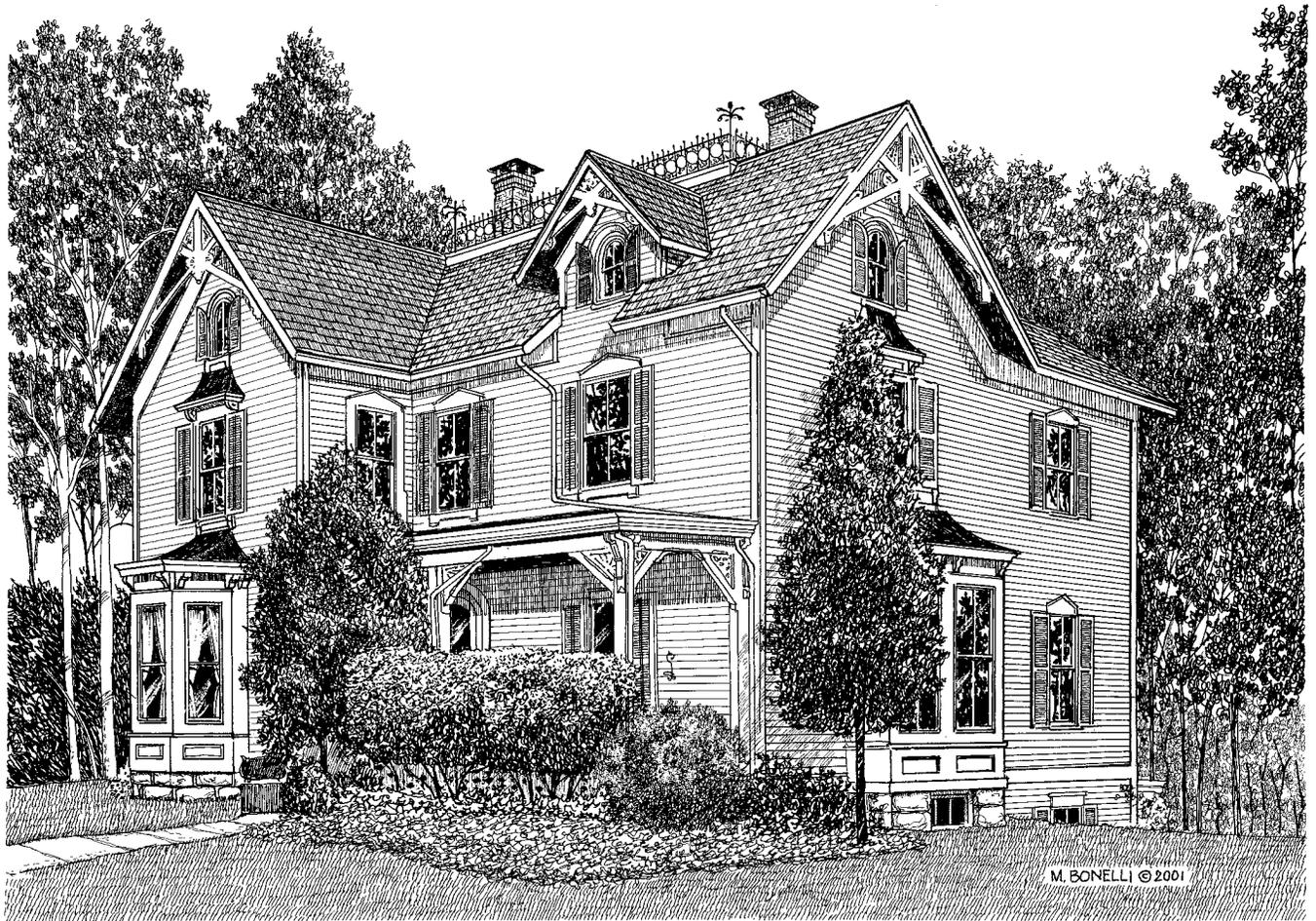
But how did it come to be perched on limestone pillars? In 1798 Supervisor Daniel Delavan wondered “whether by nature or by art...” Early in the 19th century, British mineralogy professor John Finch argued that primitive limestone never appears naturally above ground as pillars, so the rock had to have been placed. While there were many Native Americans here before settlers came in the early 1700s, they were not known for erecting huge stone monuments. Historian Robert Bolton, Jr. described the rock romantically in his 1848 *History of Westchester County*, “This immense block viewed from the valley beneath has much the appearance of a huge mammoth ascending the hill. From its weather beaten sides the Indian magician and priest is presumed to have deciphered the destinies of his tribe.” In an October 28, 1875 speech, John Jay’s grandson, following a visit to Europe, marveled at the resemblance between this rock and the many dolmens (ceremonial stones erected for memorial or religious purposes) he had seen abroad.

In the late 1900s, Harvard scientist Barry Fell and archaeologist Salvatore Michael Trento, Director of the Middletown Archaeological Research Center in New York, advanced the theory of Celt-Iberian presence in our area. Other sites nearby — stone chambers aligned to solstices, standing stones, circular earthworks — suggest possible pre-Columbian visitors as well. Whether Balanced Rock is a man-made artifact or a stunning accident of nature, it is a priceless North Salem treasure that cries out for further scientific investigation.



The rock and a human measuring stick. c. 1900 NSTH

NORTH SALEM

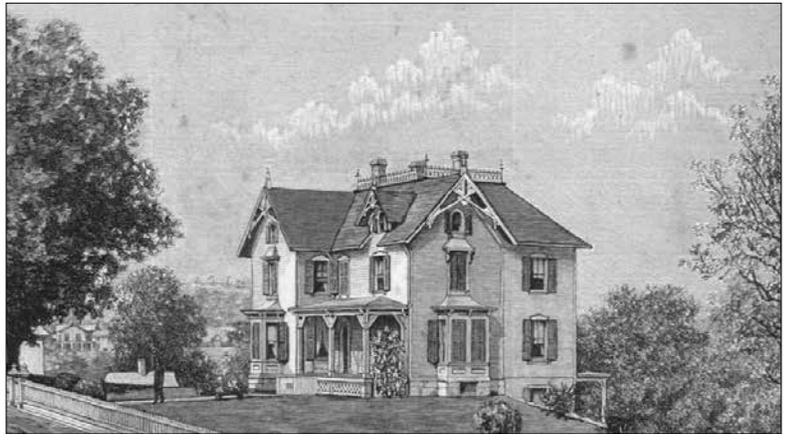


M. BONELLI © 2001

❧ Stebbins Baxter Quick House ❧
669 Titicus Road
c. 1869

Stebbins Baxter Quick was born in North Salem on October 19, 1829, of English descent. His father, Fladius, was well-known in the traveling show business, as was his uncle and namesake. His mother was Julia Keeler. A graduate of the North Salem Academy, Stebbins went to New York City and rose to partner in the firm of Davis Collamore & Co., manufacturers of glassware and crockery, and became a Director of the Bank of New York. When he retired and returned to North Salem, he purchased the family homestead and reconstructed the buildings. He married Alice A. Read in 1869, and they had one child, Florence. Years after his first wife's death, he married Mary Augusta Frost. According to Scharf's *History of Westchester County*, Stebbins Quick was very active in the life of the Academy and participated in the transition of that building into the Town Hall. He contributed liberally of his time and means toward the erection of the third Methodist Episcopal Church (p.50), becoming its secretary, treasurer and a trustee. Widely known to be honest and honorable, he was a philanthropist devoted to the town. He died in 1915.

Quick remodeled the family homestead according to the new precepts of the English architect Charles Eastlake (1836-1906) with restrained decorations and simpler motifs. It is an example of balloon-frame construction. Three chimneys, three porches, two bay windows and a widow's walk punctuate the exterior, which has crossed wood members in the gable ends. The home's original shutters, chandeliers, doors, etched-glass panels, seven mantels, over-mantel mirrors, cornices, summer-kitchen coal stove and soapstone sinks, and yellow-pine wood floors are intact as are the Eastlake-style, two-room outhouse and the barn behind the house, which probably dates from the mid 1850s. The barn was originally a workshop and was also used to store ice. All of the structures were restored by Gail and Sal Pantezzi who purchased the property in 1976.



*Engraving from
History of Westchester
County, J. Thomas
Scharf, 1886.*

🌿 The Stebbins B. Quick Carriage Barn 🌿
 667 Titicus Road
 c. 1869

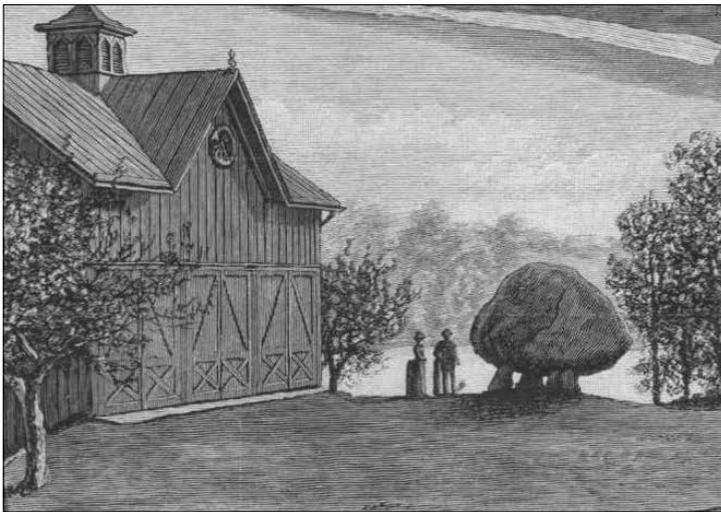
This carriage barn was built by Stebbins B. Quick when he remodeled the family homestead (p.34). The carriage barn and Balanced Rock were separated from the original Quick property in 1959 when George Cable bequeathed them to the town, and the town board designated the .384-acre parcel North Salem park land.

Following the teachings of English architect Charles Eastlake, Quick built this board-and chamfered-batten-sided three bay carriage barn featuring simple, straight lines. The original paint colors of this structure were disclosed during the 2002 restoration which stripped off all layers of paint to expose a cream siding color and dark

green trim. The test was done by Sam Fleischman, proprietor of Rock Miracle Company, Brooklyn, New York. The chamfered moldings, cross pieces and window frames would have been painted a color to contrast with the siding. The original shutters are no longer on the building. The squared cupola is original. A cedar shake roof was installed in about 1978 to replace a seamed metal roof which had replaced a slate roof. In 2002, all exterior lead paint was removed. An asphalt shingle roof was installed in 2015, and new gutters and leaders in 2019.

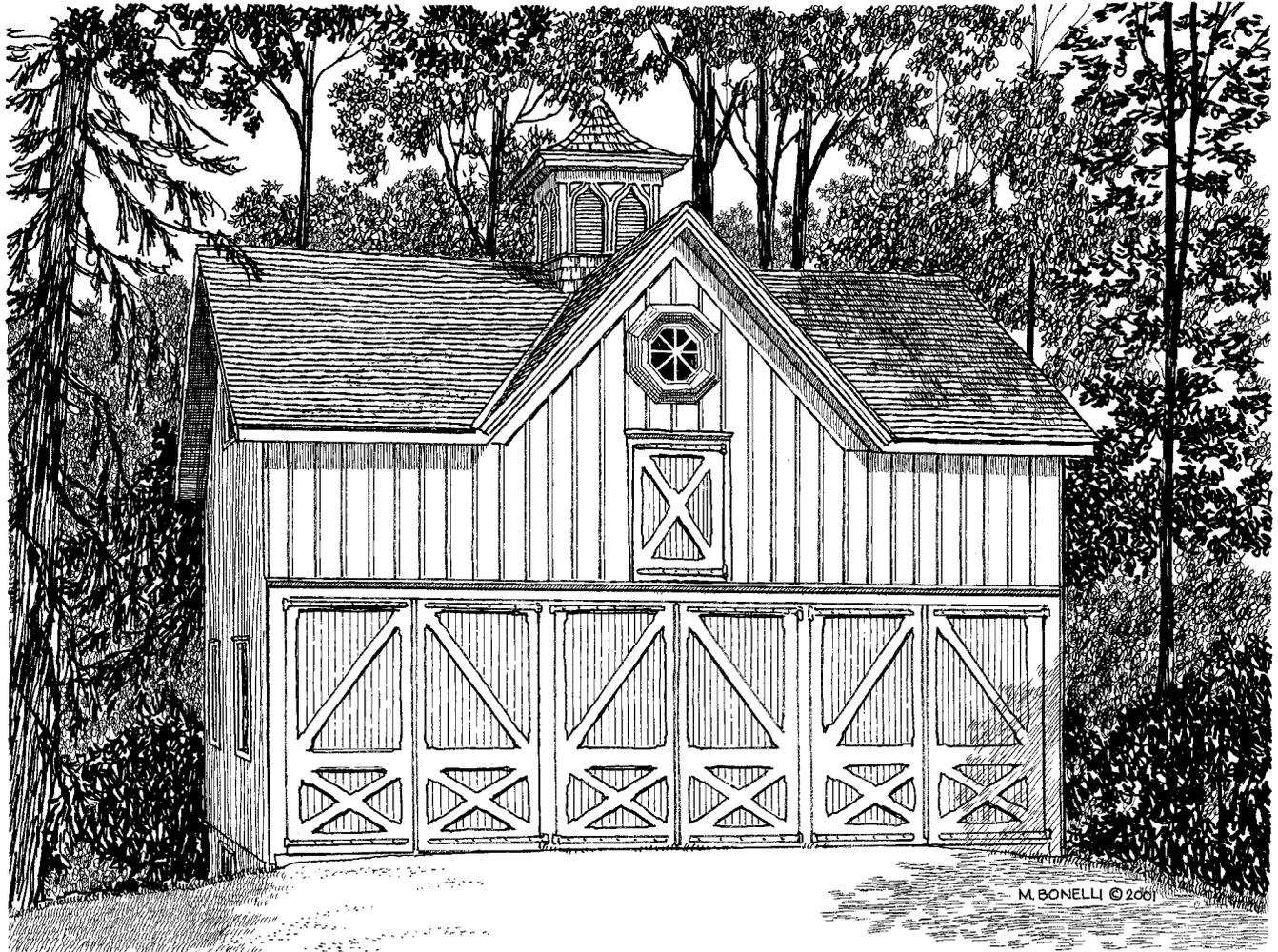
In the bottom level of the barn a cover slides back, revealing a pit. Water from an underground stream runs from the hill across the road and under the carriage barn through the pit. Milk cans from nearby farms were stored there to be kept cold until wagons

could deliver them to the train in Purdys. Water from the spring collects behind the barn at the bottom of the slope to the Titicus River and eventually runs into it.



Engraving from History of Westchester County, J. Thomas Scharf, 1886.

NORTH SALEM



NORTH SALEM



❧ Union Hall ❧
2 Keeler Lane
c. 1848

The name comes from a legend that the building housed Union troops during the Civil War. The Keelers also called their nearby mills Union Mills. The hall was probably constructed by Clark Scott, when the property was owned by the Bailey family. Isaac Frost was owner and proprietor during the heyday of industrial activity in the hamlet. Throughout the 19th century, general stores like this one were standard features in rural communities. Along the Titicus River there were grist mills, presses for making cider and vinegar, a fulling mill, sawmills, a paper mill, a sash and blind factory and factories for making carriages, woolens, shirts and hats. There were also hotels and taverns. All of this activity began to decline in the 1880s when a planned railroad spur through the hamlet to Danbury failed to materialize.

Union Hall has functioned as a store, post office, meeting hall, music hall, stagecoach stop (on the New York to Vermont Post Road) and residential quarters. Built into a steep slope, it is two stories high at the front and four at the back, with a broad gable roof and deep eaves supported by single scroll brackets and a simple collar beam with pendant decorating the main façade gable end. An example of vernacular Italianate Revival, the building has arched top-floor windows and decorative woodwork on the front porch. The original display windows and center door have been removed, but some shutters remain intact. Other alterations include basement level French doors on the south and rear elevations, a single door and large multi-pane window on the basement level north elevation, and an asphalt shingle roof. Dedicated owners have done extensive restoration, including major structural repairs to the third floor and interior changes to accommodate many different businesses, including a dance and yoga studio. The original pine siding has been replaced with similar pine boards.

Union Hall and its Carriage Barn were named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. The Carriage Barn roof caved in due to heavy snows in January 1996, and the building was demolished in 2001.



POST OFFICE, North Salem, N. Y.

*Early 20th
century postcard,
courtesy of
Cynthia Curtis*

NORTH SALEM

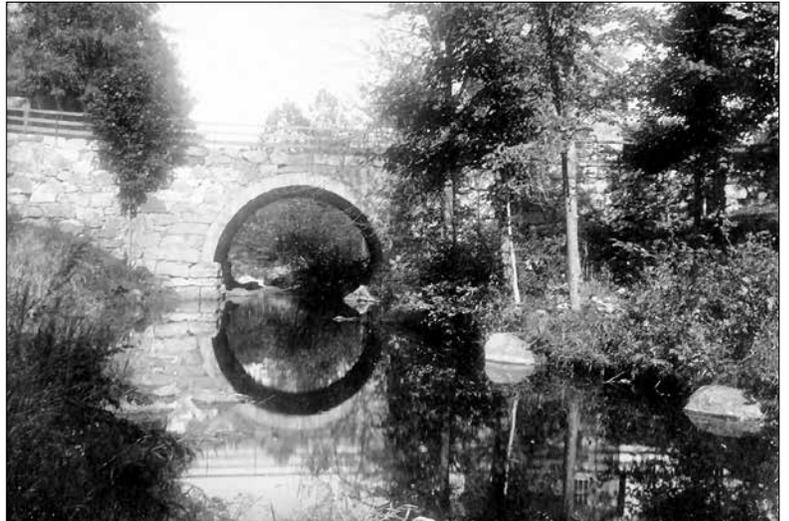


❧ Keeler Lane Bridge ❧
Keeler Lane
c. 1853

There has been a bridge on this site since at least the 1730s when the Keelers began farming and building houses on the lane. This keystone bridge is generally agreed to have been built in 1853 after an earlier crossing was swept away in a terrible storm that took out most of the bridges in town. Alfred S. Hawley described the storm in his journal, November 12, 1853: “The bridge over Titticus (sic) River that goes to Nathan Keelers was carried away & a number of persons were on the bridge and narrowly escaped....it seemed as if the flood gate of Heaven was thrown open...”

One of the few keystone bridges remaining in Westchester County, it served the hamlet well until the 1930s when the western portion of the arch and walls required repair. With too much weight and traffic (the one-lane bridge was built almost 60 years before the first automobile came to town), by the 1980s the arch, roadway and retaining walls were in critical condition.

In 1986, the town received a commitment from the county to rebuild and restore the bridge. It was ingeniously repaired in 1988, at a cost to the county of \$339,055. Chief architect of this restoration was Abba Lichtenstein, P.E. Work was undertaken by Thalle Construction Co., Briarcliff, New York. The North Salem Historical Society led the efforts to attain a historically sensitive restoration. The bridge roadbed was removed, the arch stones were tied to a concrete infill with steel bars and precast concrete slabs were laid to support a new asphalt roadbed. This high-tech, bridge-within-a-bridge solution maintains all appearances of the original 1853 stone bridge with the exception of a steel guiderail required for safety.



The bridge in 1912 NSHS

❧ Keeler Homestead ❧

85 Keeler Lane
c. 1787

In the 1600s, careless surveyors made a two-mile-wide mistake, 60 miles long. Called “The Oblong,” it was in neither the colony of Connecticut nor of New York, making it impossible for settlers to take title to the land. Nevertheless a few venturesome settlers moved in, among them Jonah Keeler, grandson of the immigrant, Ralph Keeler, from Essex County, England, who had settled in Fairfield in 1635. In 1731, by Quit Claim Deed, Jonah acquired 365 acres on what is now Keeler Lane. Seven generations of Keelers were born there including Ruth Keeler (1908-2001), the last Keeler to live in the homestead. Nineteenth century maps show the area as “Keller Ville”(sic). In what was originally forest, the first two Jonahs and Jeremiah laid out the fields for pastures and crops and built the houses and barns. The original house, called “the homeplace,” was a log cabin that stood between today’s 71 Keeler Lane and The White Elephant (P. 44).

The Keeler Homestead was built by Jeremiah’s son Nathan Keeler, starting in 1787, but was not completed until the 1800s. According to Ruth Keeler, “As the early houses were built, they would build a central box and inevitably the houses ran north and south to the road and close to the road so that you could get out in the winter. Then they would build the south wing which would be the kitchen and then, as the family increased, they would build the north wing.” Each generation has added and subtracted and moved buildings. There was an ice pond, and the ice was stored in the icehouse, now the garage. Large barns were built in the 1930s for a commercial dairy farm operation. From the early 1800s until 1969, when the over 300 acres were divided, the Keelers operated a

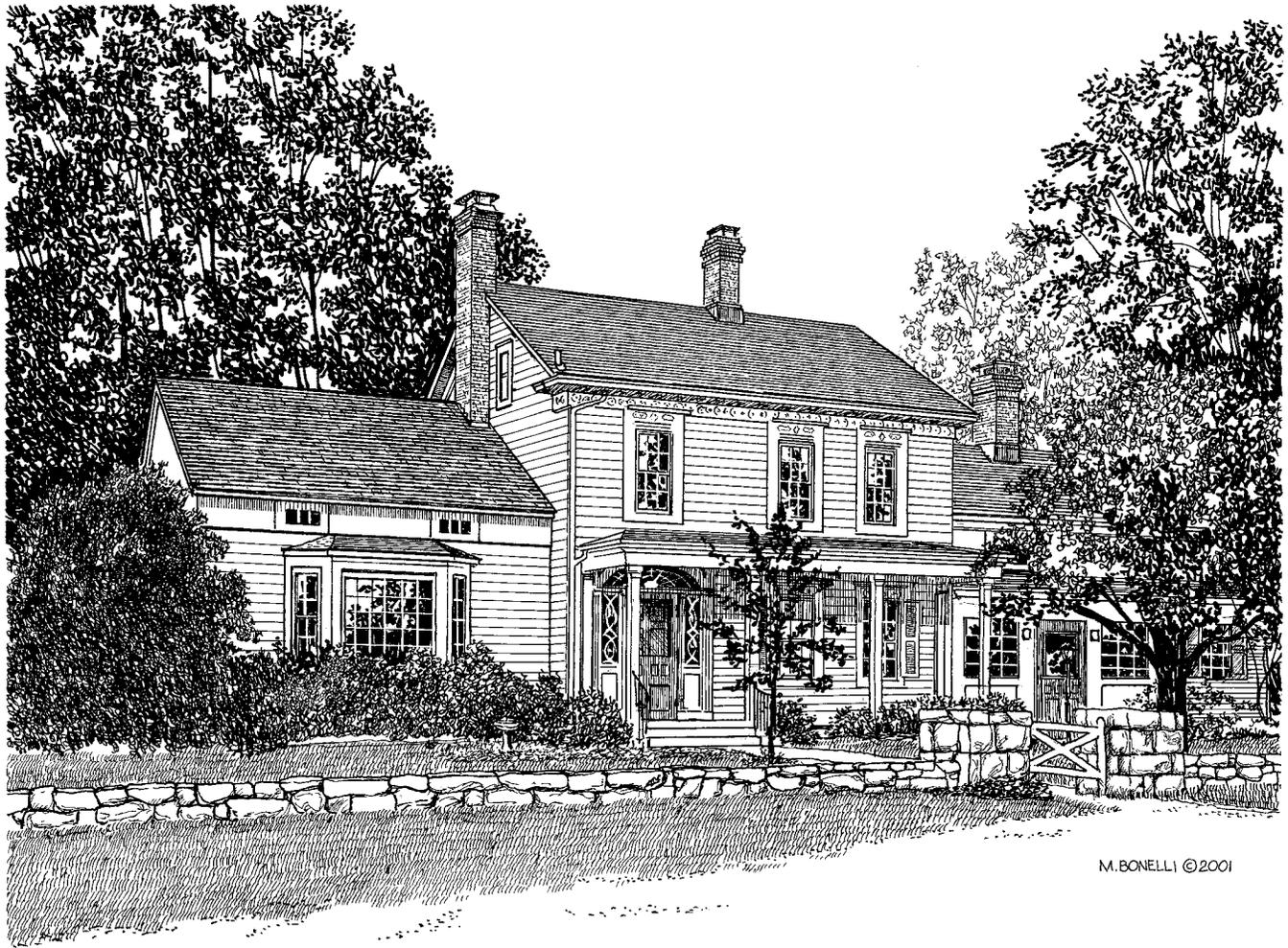
successful farm and were prominent members of the town.

This house, with a notable Federal Style entry, had a major addition in 1891. It was remodeled again in 1933 when the kitchen extension was added. That was removed in 1955, as was the entire Victorian wing. Totally restored by the current owners, the Homestead now sits on 4.9 acres.



*Keeler Homestead
in 1887, courtesy
of Linda Gracie*

NORTH SALEM



NORTH SALEM



❧ The White Elephant ❧
81 Keeler Lane
c. 1780

Now the home of The North Salem Historical Society, this building is a wonderful example of adaptive reuse. It was originally part of the Keeler Homestead. Jonah Keeler and his descendants worked from the 1700's to develop a successful farm, raising cattle and sheep and growing corn and hay, among many other activities. This building was created as a sheep shed in the late 1700s. In the early 20th century, it was converted to a garage in the Shingle Style (the portico, dormers, a cupola and fine architectural details were added), when H. Hobart Keeler purchased the first family automobile. The loft was left in place for hay in case the automobile did not last. When new barns were created for automobiles in 1936, Ruth Keeler decided to transform the building into a consignment sales shop for friends and neighbors and named it "The White Elephant." Furniture and other household items were transferred from neighbor to neighbor advantageously until the late 1950s. Then the building became the art studio of H. Winfield Scott, famous for his hundreds of magazine cover illustrations depicting Wild West scenes and sports figures. On August 30, 1978, Ruth Keeler donated the building and 1.2 acres to the North Salem Historical Society. Now the Society's headquarters, it is a place for meetings and programs. The White Elephant also houses their collections and archives.

In 1978, the Society added a vault, kitchenette and bathroom. In 2002, extensive renovations included repair of shutters, windows and columns; insulation; and steel re-enforcement beams to make the second floor safe. In 2008, the second floor was remodeled for archival storage, research and trustee meetings. HVAC and a security system were added. The chimney, which caused a leak, was removed, and the exterior repainted.



The building and perhaps the first Keeler car, courtesy of Linda Gracie

❧ Thaddeus Crane House ❧
 2 Baxter Road
 c. 1760

Thaddeus Crane (1728-1803) acquired farmland in the Oblong and moved here from Southeast with his wife Sarah Paddock in the 1750s. They had 11 children. He was quickly to become the town's Renaissance man and often unsung hero. First a captain in the Second Regiment, he became Colonel in the Westchester County Militia,

Fourth Regiment. In 1776-77 he suffered a chain of personal losses including the death of two sons and his wife. Then he was seriously wounded in the Battle of Ridgefield in 1777. Taking a leave from the military (but returning to service between sessions), he served as a Representative to the New York Assembly in 1777, 1778 and 1779 and was Town Supervisor 1784-1786. One of six delegates from Westchester County at the State Convention in 1788 at Poughkeepsie, he voted for ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

After Sarah died, Crane married Lydia (Read) Baxter in 1779. She was the widow of John Baxter and already had three children. Together, they had another eight. From 1779 to 1784, Crane sat as Justice on the Westchester County Court of General Sessions convened at the Meeting House in Upper Salem. He was a Trustee of the North Salem Academy from 1787 to 1799.

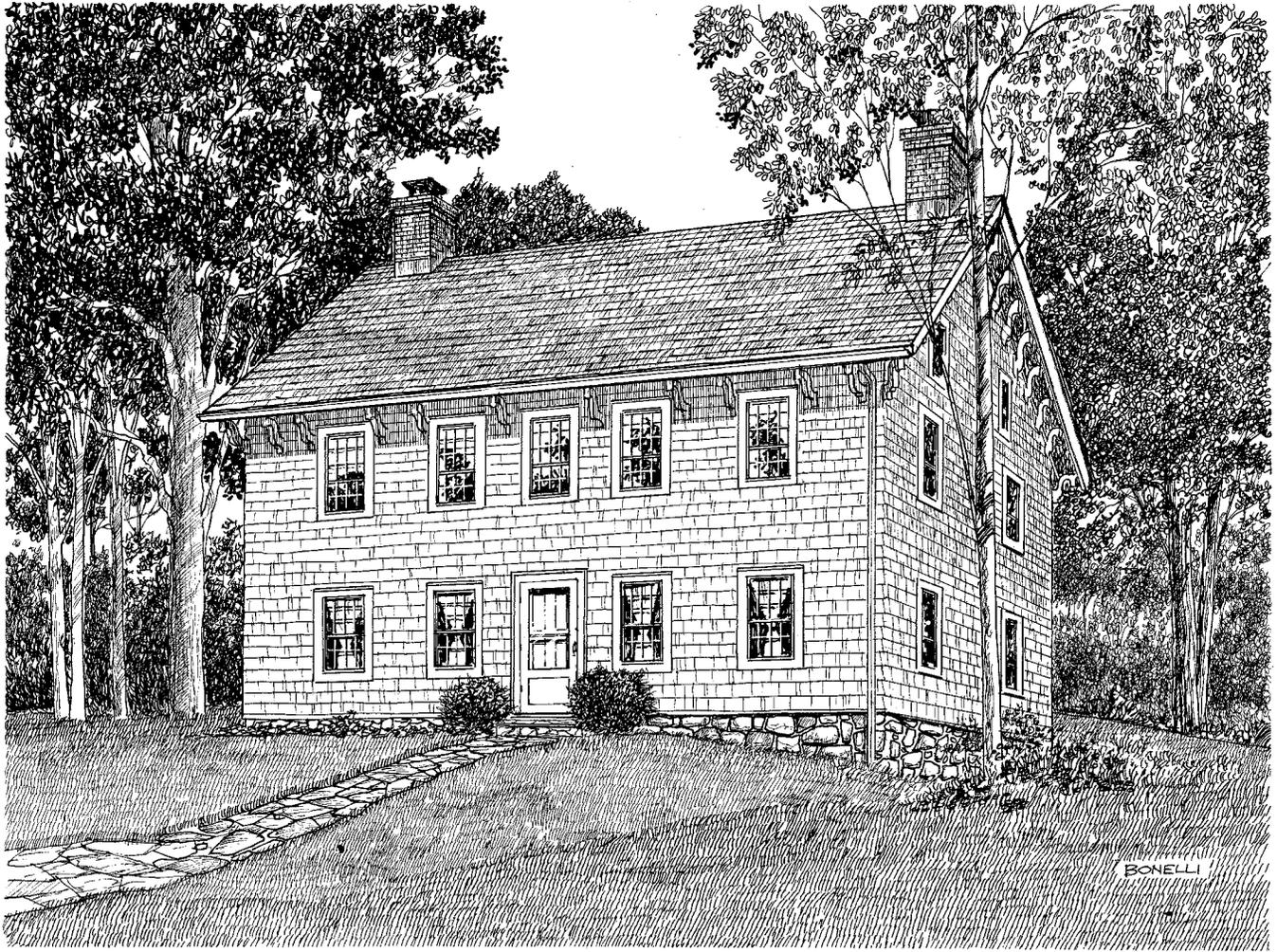
The house Crane and Sarah built is of the later Georgian period of architecture. Architectural historian Frank Sanchis notes it “has a fine molded architrave around the front entrance door and a symmetrical, five-bay façade. The brackets on the well-proportioned gable roof are undoubtedly of a later date, most likely mid-to late-nineteenth century. Of particular interest are the Gothic Revival label lintels on many of the window openings.” These were probably added in the 1830s or 1840s.



THE HOME OF COL. THADDEUS CRANE,
 North Salem, Westchester Co., N. Y.

*The Patriot's home before 1940,
 courtesy of the Westchester
 County Historical Society*

NORTH SALEM



NORTH SALEM



 **Baxter Road** 
North Salem's First Historic Road
c. 1751

Baxter Road was designated historic on January 21, 2002, thereby protecting the unpaved road, fences, stonewalls and trees from change without approval of the Historic Preservation Commission. The first appearance of the Baxter name here dates to 1751 in a deed that details the sale of land by Benjamin Close to John Baxter of Greenwich. It appears that John Baxter and his son purchased 154 acres, with Benjamin Close retaining 245 acres and selling 100 acres to Ezra Rundle. Records also give good evidence that a road connected the Close, Baxter and Rundle properties by the end of 1751. Baxter Road in 1751 would have been little more than a cleared cart or wagon path.

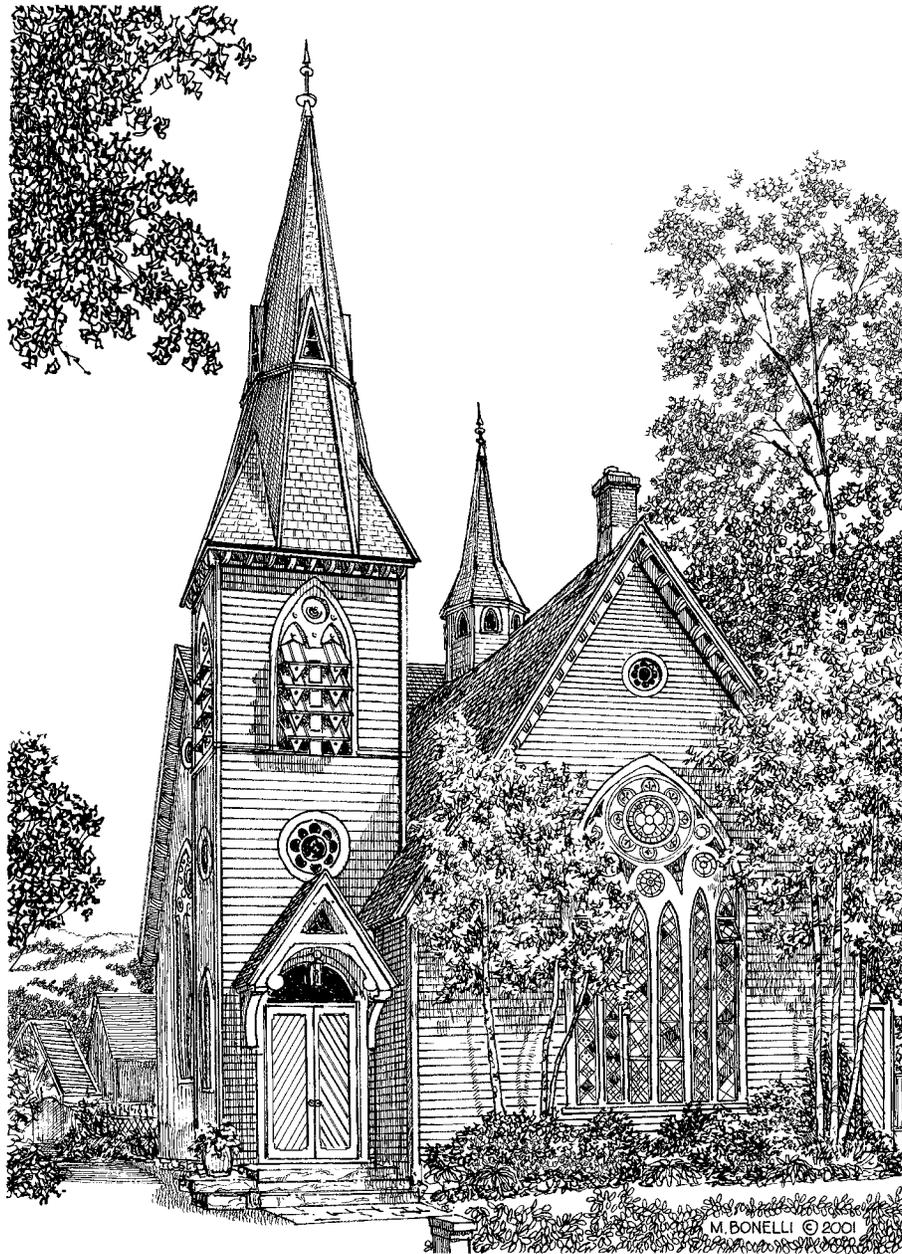
The first drawn maps of what became Baxter Road were sketches made during the Revolutionary War by Robert Erskine (George Washington's Surveyor-General) and Abraham Close (North Salem Loyalist who drew maps from memory for the British).

Many Baxters lived along the road. The fields and woodlots were consolidated into separate farms and passed from father to son by gift or inheritance. Thaddeus Crane, living at what is now 2 Baxter Road (p.46) served the town as a "pathmaster" in the 1700s, supervising his neighbors in the maintenance of local roads. Each property owner was assessed a number of work days per year determined by their property assessment. The road today is little changed, still unpaved, with beautiful pastures, woodlands, distant vistas, quiet homesteads and rustic stone walls. The arrival of the Golden Bridge Hounds in the 1940s and the preservation of many acres along the road by the North Salem Open Land Foundation beginning in 1974, have added to Baxter's charm and created public access to preserved land.



The Golden Bridge Hounds and members of the hunt in the 1950s, with black angus cows in the background NSHS

NORTH SALEM



❧ Methodist-Episcopal Church ❧
687 Titicus Road
1877

The Methodist Episcopal Society of North Salem was incorporated on January 2, 1832, and the first church—a plain structure with whitewashed walls—was built in the hamlet of North Salem soon after. The first trustees were Jonah Keeler, Abel Smith, William Cable and Stephen Ryder.

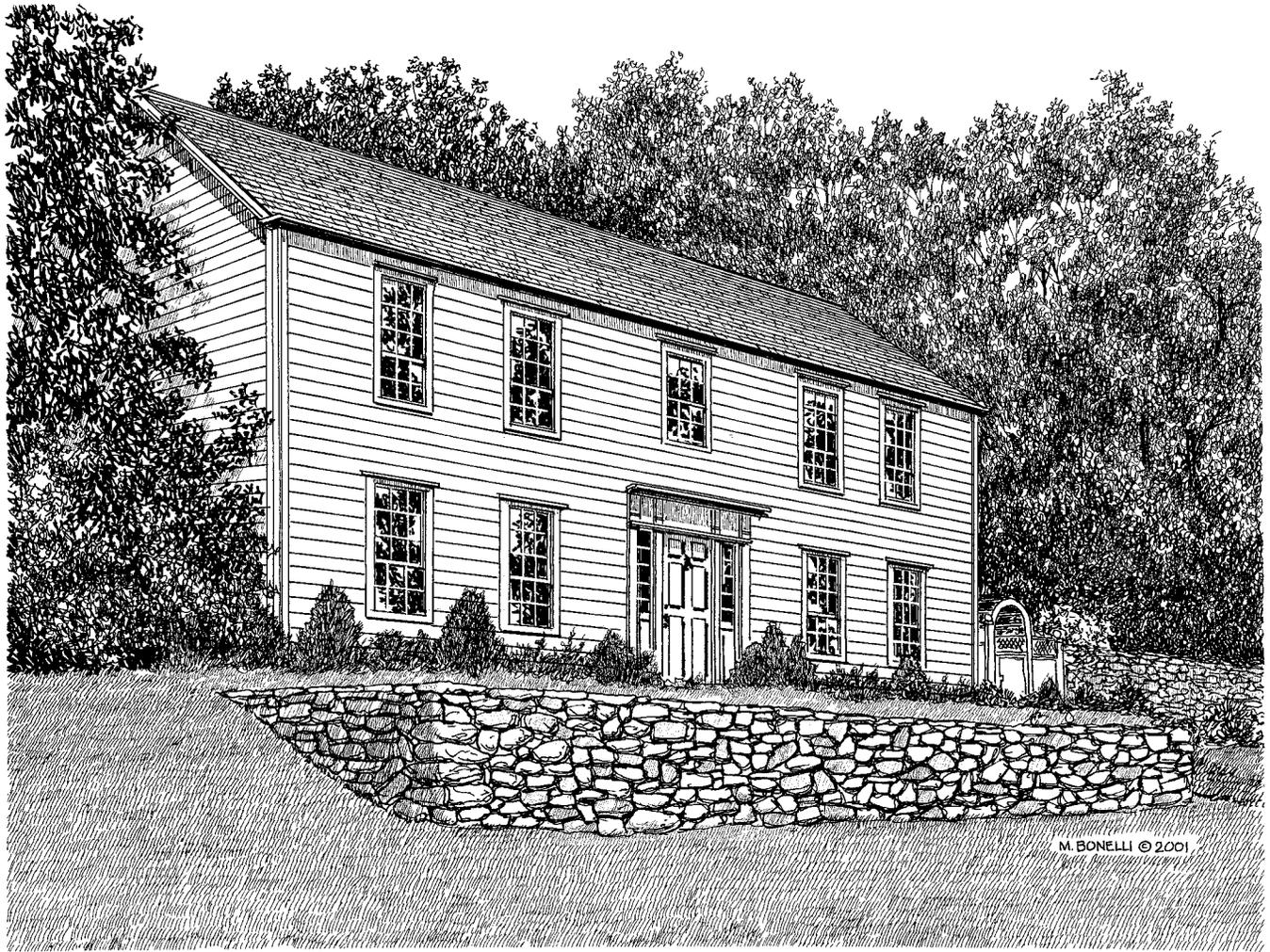
Walter Keeler wanted a large village and railroad depot in the hamlet. There had been a survey for the Danbury and New York Railroad along the Titicus River through the hamlet. Accordingly between 1865 and 1875 streets were graded and more dwellings, stores and mills were built. North Salem became a thriving village. But the railroad did not come.

About this time Isaac T. Frost was the moving spirit behind a new church, and the present one was erected in 1877 by Jeremiah Birdsall, a resident contractor and builder. The old building was sold and used as a barn. It is now the residence at 681 Titicus Road. The church features a side-entry tower with upper triangular windows and original bell cast in Troy, NY; high-pitched roofs of slate; post and beam construction with clear span wood trusses that support vaulted iron interior ceiling; three large windows of stained and stenciled glass; two windows dedicated to two of the original trustees (Abel Smith and Jonah Keeler) and one window symbolic of the farming homestead of the founding Keeler family. The church was deconsecrated, and the small membership united with the Purdys Methodist Church in 1968. The building was converted to a studio in 1977; the structure behind it is a residence. Originally Gothic Revival churches were painted a variety of lively colors with contrasting trim. This structure was returned to that tradition by the current owners.



The church in 1912 NSHS

NORTH SALEM



❧ Samuel Wallace House ❧
 1 Wallace Road
 c. 1790

The Wallaces were among the earliest settlers of North Salem, being directly descended from James Wallace who is believed to have arrived at Norwalk, Connecticut from Scotland about 1706. James married at Norwalk and moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut where his name, along with many others, is found on a deed dated 1715. This deed was for the second purchase of land made by Ridgefield settlers from Native Americans. This land allotted to James was in the Oblong and in dispute between Connecticut and New York for many years. The Wallace property extended from Titicus Road almost to the site of the Quaker Meeting House by Peach Lake and remained in the Wallace family for many generations. Land records trace the house back to Samuel Wallace (1754-1826), son of John and grandson of James. During The Revolution, Wallace family members were found on both sides of the conflict. Samuel was a Loyalist who joined the ministerial army. His property was seized but he later got it back. He had married Rachel Morehouse in 1777, and their first child was born in 1780. It is probably after that date that the house was built and thus a conservative estimate of 1790 has been set. Samuel Wallace and his wife are buried in June Cemetery.

Standing on the old road to Ridgefield (once called The Ridgefield Road), this house of saltbox design features a front entry in the Federal style and early nine-over-six windows in a five-across arrangement. The original center chimney was removed in the 1930's. The upstairs floorboards are laid with hand wrought nails which confirms a pre-1800 date. A country home for a Brooklyn lady for 50 years, the house underwent major renovation by the next owners in the 1990s, including a new wing with a family room and a master bedroom above. Two stone fireplaces were also added.



Side view of the home after the 1990s addition. Photo by Bill Atherton NSTH

NORTH SALEM



❧ Finch Farm ❧
186 Vail Lane
c. 1740

The families of prominent early settlers intertwine in the history of Finch Farm. Thomas Vail (1714-1786) acquired land in Lot 4 of the Oblong and built the original farmhouse, the left wing as you face the house in the drawing. Several generations of Vails lived here, including David, who was born in the house in 1806. David and wife Elizabeth lived in the homestead until at least 1845 when David purchased a huge tract (some of it is today's Vail's Grove) and the Comfort Field home on the east side of Peach Lake.

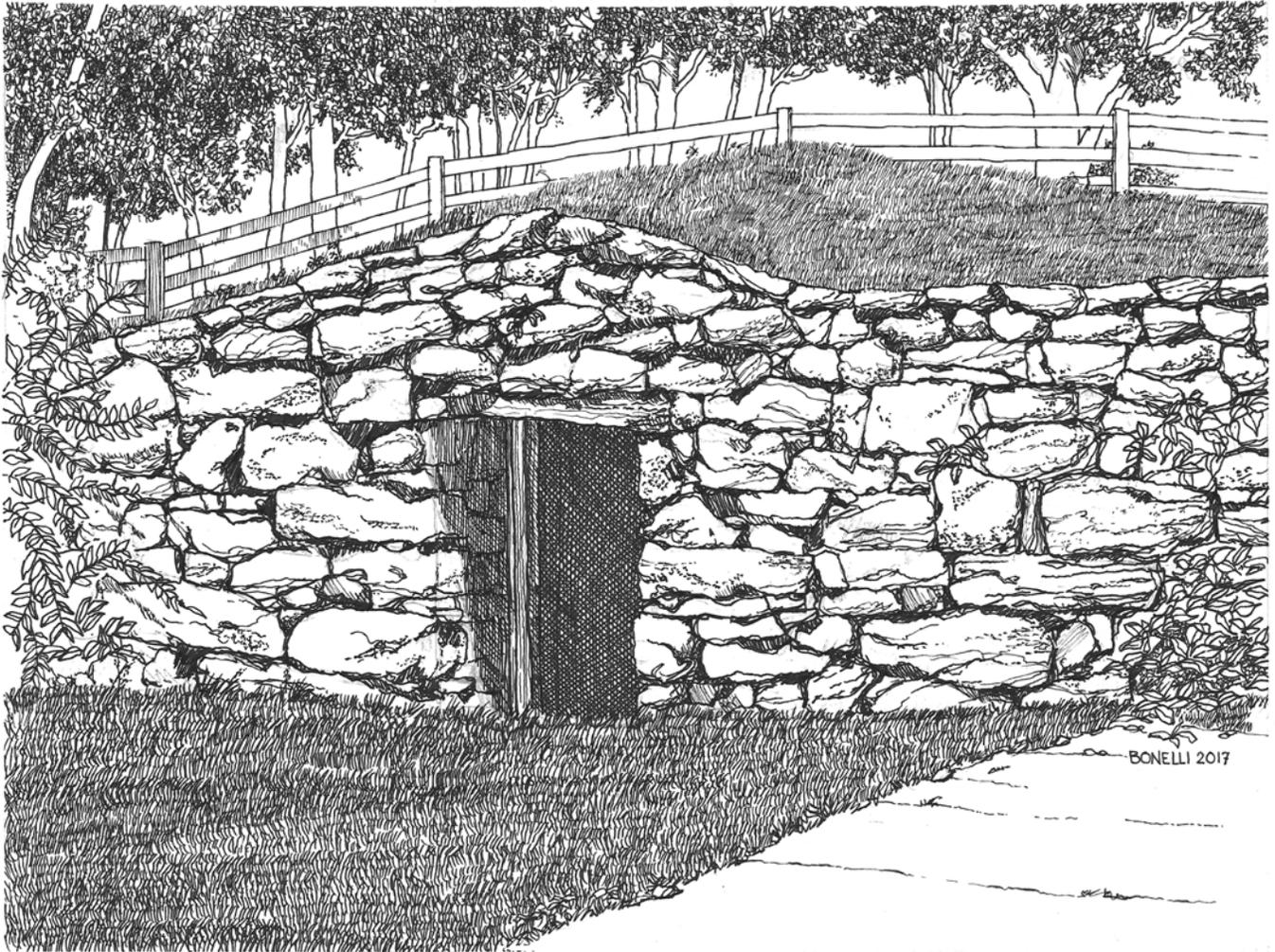
David's daughter Maria married James Finch (Finches had also settled in the Oblong nearby) in 1852. The couple settled in the Vail homestead, and James purchased it from David and added the center section of the house. Carvings of hearts on posts in the entrance hall were done at this time, presumably to celebrate the union. The Vail homestead became the James Finch Farm, and Finches lived there until 1928. The next owners added the kitchen wing on the right and renamed the home Dongle Ridge Farm. Subsequent owners brought back the Finch Farm name.

The farm was in need of major restoration and care when the current owners acquired the property in 2004. Devoted to preservation and history, they painstakingly restored the house and barns while also re-planting fields and gardens with native grasses and plants. Each section of the house has windows, doors and architectural features representing the three historical styles, and they are perfectly blended. Restoration architects and carpenters paid meticulous attention to every period detail, making sure brickwork, roofing, siding, molding, even hinges and latches are accurate and beautiful restorations or reproductions. The c. 1740 fireplace and original well were also restored and are stunning examples of 18th century stone and brickwork. Although constructed in three different centuries, the three sections of the house that face the road appear almost seamless, as if they have always been together.



*An 1870 view of
the farm from across
Vail Lane NSTH*

NORTH SALEM



❧ Peach Pond Stone Chamber ❧

955 Peach Lake Road

Date unknown

Enigmatic stone chambers like this one abound in Westchester and Putnam Counties. In North Salem, twelve (including the one on p.64) have been found so far plus three others that are in ruins. Who built them and why? Some believe they are Colonial root cellars (although a number of the chambers are not suitable for food storage or are situated on difficult hillsides); others think they are Native American ceremonial sites; still others believe we had pre-Columbian visitors, possibly Celts, who brought their ancient stone building techniques and related traditions from Europe and the British Isles.

The Peach Pond Stone Chamber is typical of a slab-roofed, corbelled type of construction that is common throughout Northern Europe and northeastern America. Built into the side of the hill and covered with a mound, this chamber is 7' high, X 9' wide X 20' long. The walls start out straight and then are corbelled to the ceiling, which consists of seven huge granite slabs. The floor is dirt. The chamber was built without mortar, but mortar has been added in places over the years for repair. In the 20th century the chamber was connected to a new stone garage.

The entrance faces west, and a winter solstice sunset alignment, where the sun hits almost the center of the back wall of the structure, has been observed by members of New England Antiquities Research Association. Another North Salem chamber has a February cross-quarter day alignment. The celebration of alignment events is a vestige of ancient traditions.

Originally Native American hunting ground, the area was settled by Fields and then Vails beginning in the 1700s. The house across the road was built in the 18th century, probably by Samuel Field. Just north of the chamber is Peach Lake Cemetery that began as the Field family graveyard in the early 19th century.



The chamber in 2008 NSTH

❧ Eighteenth Century Mile Markers ❧

Grant, Titicus and Dingle Ridge Roads

1700s



Marker 55 was moved south in the early 1900s to accommodate the trolley line that didn't come.

These stone markers are sometimes called Franklin markers because legend says when Benjamin Franklin was deputy Postmaster General in the mid 1700s, he devised an early version of the odometer to measure miles between cities and set postal rates. The story also says he ordered the installation of carved stones to mark each mile. Unfortunately, according to Leonard Labaree who edited the Franklin papers for Yale, there is no written evidence that Franklin spent time or post office money erecting the milestones. But it may have been his idea to place them for the convenience of travelers. Each marker would have been a more than welcome sight for a weary traveler on an unfamiliar road at a time when there were few if any maps

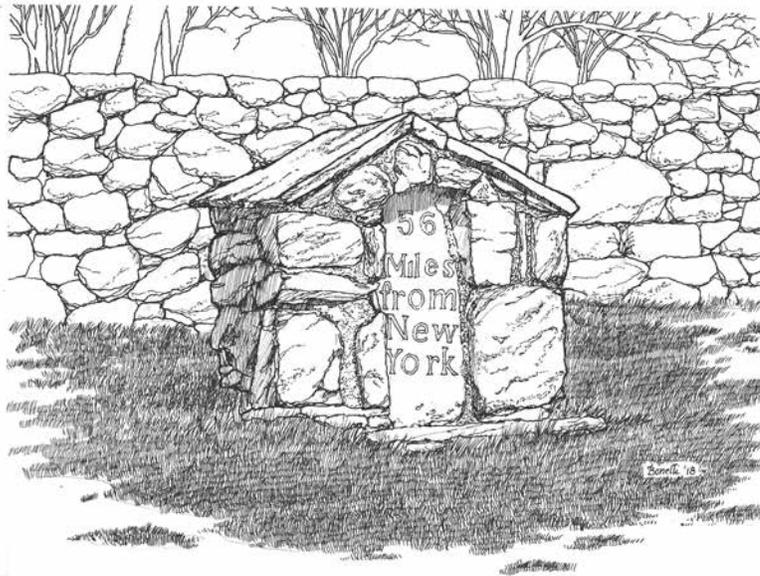
available to the public and long distances between villages.

In North Salem there are three remaining markers on what was then the New York to Vermont Post Road: marker 55 on Grant Road at #664; marker 56 east of Baxter Road on the north side of Titicus Road nearly opposite the town Christmas tree; and marker 58 on Dingle Ridge Road about 150' northeast of mailbox #41. The mile numbers represent the distance from Federal Hall (at the corner of Wall and Nassau Streets) in New York City. Similar stones lined the early post roads and turnpikes to Boston, Philadelphia and Albany.

Probably carved by the same stone workers who did gravestones, the markers are fragile sandstone. To protect them, the Westchester County Historical Society added stone surrounds in the mid-20th century. Some of the carvings are chipped, worn and illegible, and eager photographers have tried to enhance them with chalk and paint. It is better not to touch and just admire them the way they are!

NORTH SALEM

If you are traveling outbound from New York, you'll find all of the markers on the left side of the road. In the 18th century, British customs were still in effect. In 1804, New York passed a law requiring all highway traffic to travel on the right. By the Civil War this was true nationwide.



The protective surrounds make the markers look a little bit like stone doghouses. Only the center sandstone pieces are original.



*Looking west
over Route 22
at the old village
c. 1890 NSTH*

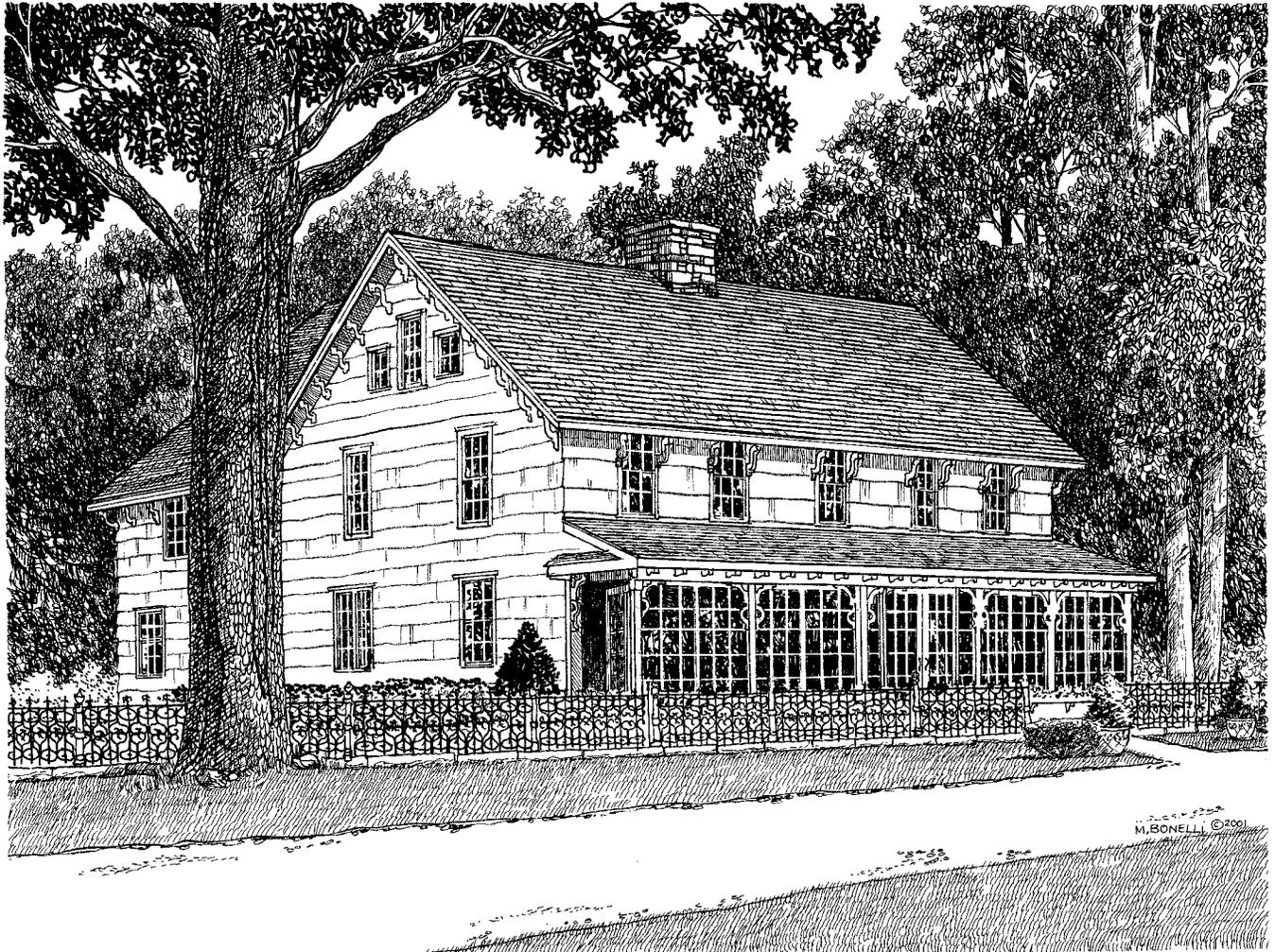
❧ PURDYS ❧

In the 1840s, the Harlem Railroad was pushing north, planning to run its tracks through the town of Somers. Isaac Hart Purdy saw a great opportunity and offered the railroad a right-of-way through his land to bring the railroad here instead. He envisioned trains moving passengers and freight and creating lucrative new businesses. His offer was accepted, and the first train came to North Salem in 1846. Purdy Station sprang up west of Route 22 where 684 and the Metro North Station are today. By the 1890s, there were at least 70 buildings — a hotel, school, church, post office, markets, barns and mills — and many homes in addition to the Purdy Homestead and mills that had been in place since the Revolution. A thriving country village had been created. But even as Titicus Dam and Reservoir were being complet-

ed, the Aqueduct Commissioners demanded further expansion of the water supply for the City of New York that required the condemning and flooding of Purdy Station. On May 13, 1900, the headline in the *New York Herald* warned: **“Whole Town Will be Knocked Down at Auction Next Friday Within a week Purdy will be wiped off the map..”** Every building would have to be moved or dismantled down to its stone foundation.

Preparing for that day, Isaac Purdy, who owned many acres up the hill on the east side of Route 22, had begun to sell lots to those who wanted to move their homes and businesses. Like Brigadoon, Purdy Station on what residents called “the flats” disappeared, and the village of Purdys grew upon the hill. Five of the landmarked buildings in this hamlet were among the buildings that were moved.

PURDYS

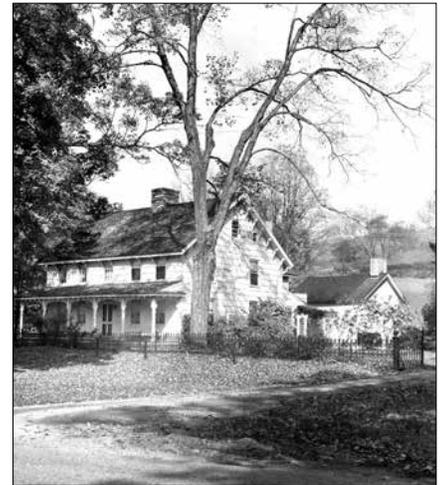


❧ Purdy Homestead ❧
100 Titicus Road
1775

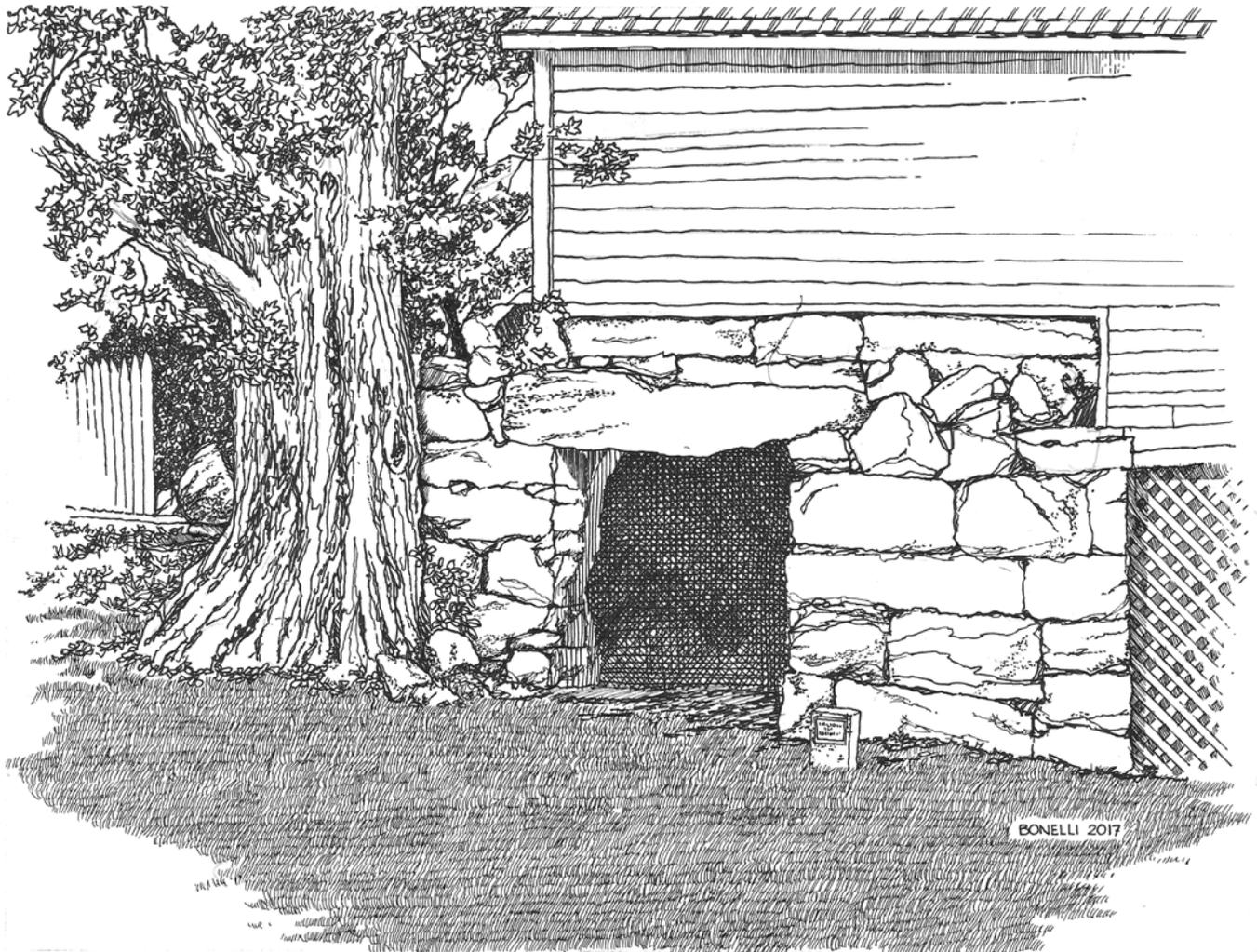
Construction of the Homestead began on June 17, 1775, the date of the Battle of Bunker Hill. Joseph Purdy (1744-1814), who built the house, was the grandson of the first Purdy in Westchester, Francis Purdy. In the early 1700s, the family acquired 1000 acres of land along the Titicus and Croton Rivers in what was still Cortlandt Manor. On his 1779 map #43D, *From Ridgebury to Somers*, George Washington's cartographer Robert Erskine marked the location of the homestead "Joseph Purdy."

Seven generations of the Purdy family occupied the house until the 1950s, including Isaac Hart Purdy after whom the hamlet of Purdy Station was named. He served as Town Supervisor from 1846 to 1850 and again from 1856 to 1857. Isaac Hart Purdy and his father, also Isaac, were partners in one of the menagerie shows, and it was their responsibility to winter some of the animals, including giraffes. This was done in several large barns erected for that purpose on Titicus Road just east of the dwelling. Most of the barns were taken down in 1919. The house, still owned by the Purdy family today, became a shop specializing in early American reproductions in the 1950s, and then home to a succession of restaurants. The building was totally renovated and updated in 2012 and became a farm-to-table restaurant called Purdys Farmer and the Fish.

Sanchis in *American Architecture in Westchester County* tells us the Purdy Homestead is "typical of the rural, frame dwellings of the late eighteenth century. The symmetrical composition of the five-bay façade of the structure recalls a similar division on the facades of Georgian buildings." The veranda was added about 1870 and probably the Italianate Revival brackets at the cornice line were added at the same time. The main, rectangular block of the house, two and one-half stories high, still has a central chimney that serves three original working fireplaces. The rear portion of the ell is of similar size and proportion and has an interior end chimney. The frame and exterior shingles are hand hewn and kept in place with hand-wrought nails. Many changes have been made to accommodate the different restaurants, but the original farmhouse is intact, and the outside looks much as it did when the family still lived there. The Purdy Homestead was listed on The National Register of Historic Places, January 25, 1973.



*The Homestead
c. 1950 when it
was still home to
members of the Purdy
family. NSTH*



❧ Purdy Homestead Stone Chamber ❧

100 Titicus Road

Date unknown

Just east of the Purdy Homestead, almost directly on Titicus Road, this chamber is conspicuous to passersby because it is incorporated into the first floor of a 19th century barn that runs parallel to the road. The chamber almost certainly predates every other structure on the property and in the area. It could be many hundreds of years old. Like most of the other 12 known chambers still standing in North Salem (see also p.56), this one is corbelled (the stones in the side walls overlap toward the center of the structure and are then capped by seven large stone slabs). The chamber is approximately 22' long, 6.5' wide and 5.5' high. The capstones are large, especially the first one, as is the doorway lintel. The original purpose of the chamber is unknown. It could have been ritualistic, and its opening may be aligned to allow viewing of a specific sky event. Similarity of construction techniques to those of ancient stone structures in Europe, the British Isles, and Scandinavia suggests the work of pre-Columbian visitors. It is also possible that Native Americans had a hand in the construction or used an existing building for their own purposes. The chamber's impractical distance from the Homestead makes it unlikely that it was built by the family as a root cellar.

Whatever its original purpose, the chamber is an excellent example of adaptive re-use. Perhaps Joseph Purdy used it as a shelter while the family was building the house. Later, in the 1800s, when Isaac Purdy went into the menagerie business, the chamber was modified when the barn was built over it and around its north and east facing walls. The chamber now had to bear the additional weight of big animals and/or circus equipment. Its role changed again when the Purdy family went into the dairy business and they altered the entrance to allow easy access for the temporary storage of milk cans.



Close-up of some of the stone work. The lintel and the seven huge roof slabs weigh many tons. NSTH

PURDYS



❧ Chloe & Charles Bloomer House ❧

Apple Hill
140 Titicus Road
c. 1859

Built by Chloe and Charles Bloomer on land Chloe inherited from her father, Thomas Brown, this home was one of the grand farms overlooking the Titicus valley. It was boom time for dairy, crop and fruit growing in North Salem. When the City of New York began claiming property for the Titicus Reservoir, many acres of the farm, including the orchards and some of the out buildings across the road and river, were lost, and the house was moved higher on the hill. Charles Bloomer had died in 1892, leaving Chloe to deal with the demands of the Aqueduct Commission. Bloomer family lore says that when it was time to move, Chloe refused to budge. Dressed in her Sunday best and working on her needlepoint, she was carried up the hill in her rocking chair.

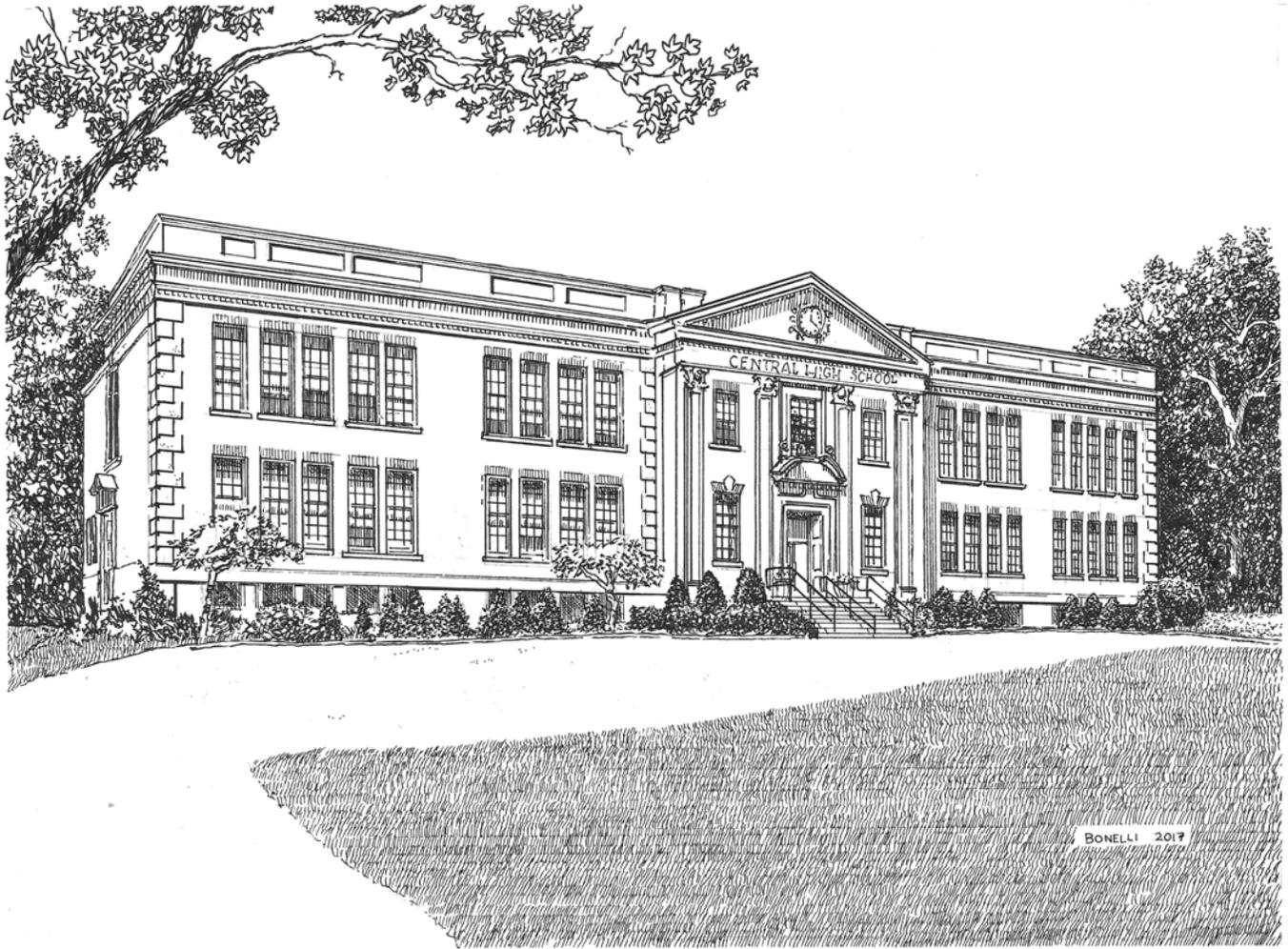
The house has a stone foundation and asphalt shingle roof. It is a two-story wood frame, clapboard house, dating from approximately 1859, with numerous additions and modifications. The old photo shows the original two-story main front structure approximately two thirds the size of the current one with a wrap-around porch and Italianate trim and cornice dentils. When the house was expanded in 1912, the porches were removed, the façade was changed from three to five windows, a center door with fan window was added and the eave and gable decorative brackets were removed. The appearance of the house was changed again in 1994 with the addition of two roofed porches in the front and a porte cochère on the east side, plus a stone-walled terrace and entry stairs.

The current owners purchased the home in 2012 just in time to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary at the site of their wedding. The bride's parents had owned the property in 1962.



*The house before
1912, photo courtesy
of Ruth and Gerald
Fischbach*

PURDYS



❧ Purdys Central High School ❧

520 Route 22

1927

Public education in North Salem changed dramatically when Robert D. Knapp, newspaper editor and printer in Katonah, was elected District Superintendent of Schools. He purchased the Chloe and Charles Bloomer house (p. 66) and moved his family here from Katonah. By 1914 Knapp had consolidated five one-room school houses on the east side of town into the new eight-room Cornelia Storrs School. But North Salem had not offered secondary education since the closing of the North Salem Academy in the 1880s. High school students went to Brewster or Katonah.

In 1925, Frank B. Gilbert, Acting Commissioner of Education for the State of New York, proposed a new Central School District for the Town of North Salem and its environs. In June, 1925, the inhabitants of the District (North Salem, part of Somers and parts of Carmel and Southeast) voted to establish the first central school district (Central School District #1) in New York State. The action resulted in the construction of a new high school that would also include seventh and eighth grades. Knapp presided over all of it.

Knapp and Morris Architects, New York, NY, were commissioned for the project, as they had designed noteworthy Mamaroneck High School and Hendrik Hudson High in Montrose. Their designs became known as Neo Classic Institutional Style. The contract for construction went to Johnson & Miller, Inc. of Yonkers, New York in 1927, and the work was completed in 1929 at a construction price of \$134,546.

The new high school on June Road opened in 1963, and this building became the school for 5th and 6th graders. Then in 1982 the building became the Westchester Exceptional Children's School. The school serves students with autism, multiple handicaps and communication and behavior disorders as well as those who are medically fragile. Students come from 36 school districts in New York and Connecticut.



*The school band
(and students
peeking out the
windows) in
1938. NSTH*

❧ Purdys Hotel ❧
4 Main Street
c. 1847

One month after the Harlem Railroad accepted Isaac Hart Purdy's (1813-1891) offer of a right-of-way, Purdy began building this hotel. Always a savvy entrepreneur, he knew that a railroad stop would mean visitors and that locals would also gather around the station. A full-service hotel with restaurant would be an essential centerpiece to the new village of Purdy Station and also would be a successful business venture. Four proprietors in succession ran the hotel for Purdy until blacksmith Eli Reynolds changed careers and purchased and expanded it. Originally a large, plain, two story building, it was enlarged to three stories with a Second Empire mansard roof



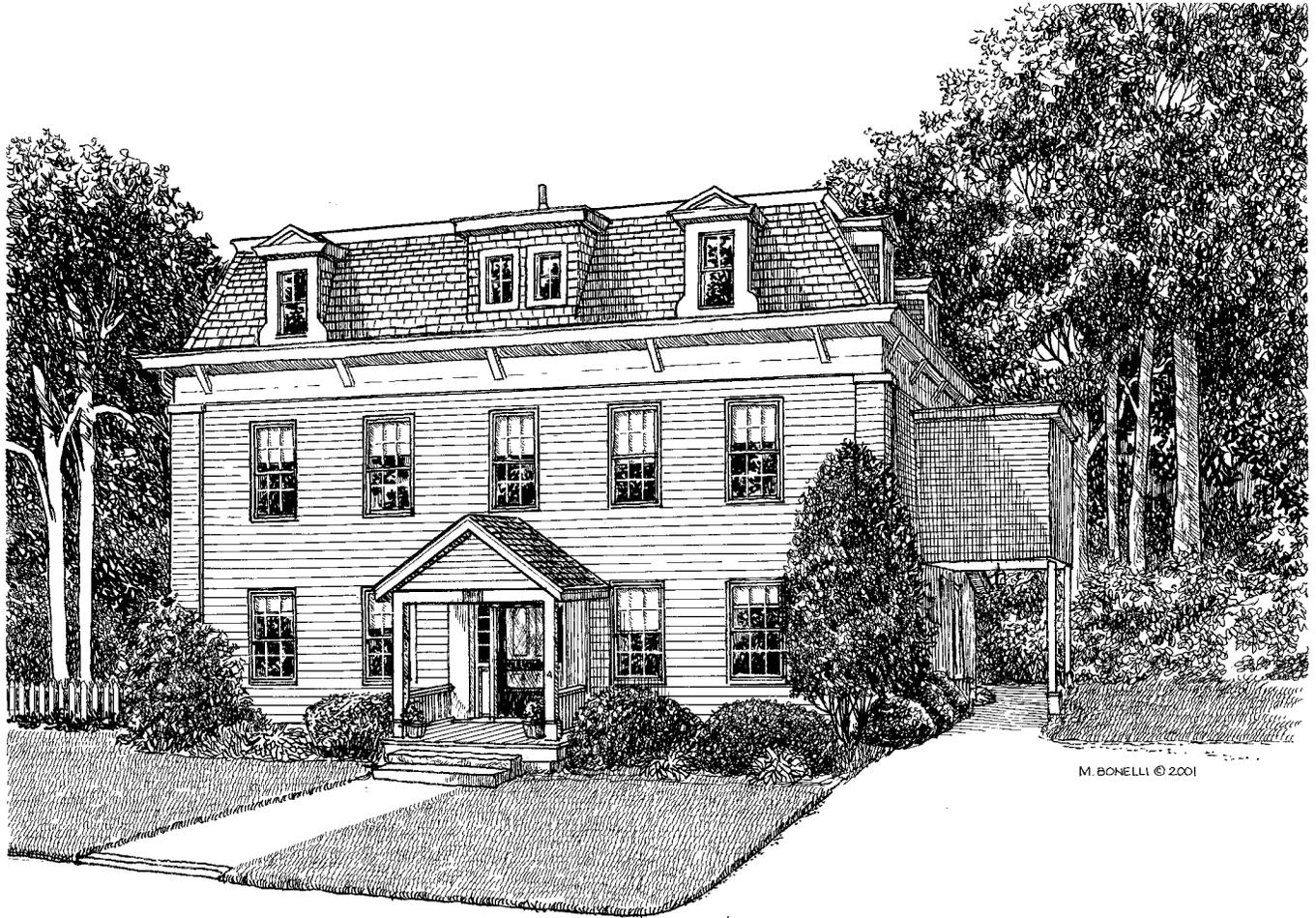
The Hotel when it was the Eli Reynolds Hotel in the old village of Purdys station, before 1900. NSTH

in 1886. Writing in Thomas Scharf's *History of Westchester County*, Charles Culver of Somers described it as "one of the most attractive and pleasant houses of entertainment on the line of the Harlem Railroad."

The hotel was still owned by the Reynolds family when it was moved up the hill. During prohibition it became a boarding house, and one of the tenants was Al Capone's bodyguard who was known to visit the still in Bogtown. During World War II, Merwin Voris purchased the building. He recognized that there was a shortage of both housing and building material and so turned the building into apartments. He removed the two-story porch and the cupola and used the wood to remodel the interior.

The building has eight pedimented dormers and two plain dormers. Aluminum siding was installed in the late 1960s, and the wood brackets supporting the Yankee Gutters (a board-on-roof gutter system) were removed. A new roof was installed, and the gutters were rebuilt in 2017. Still owned by the Voris family, the building remains an apartment building.

PURDYS



PURDYS

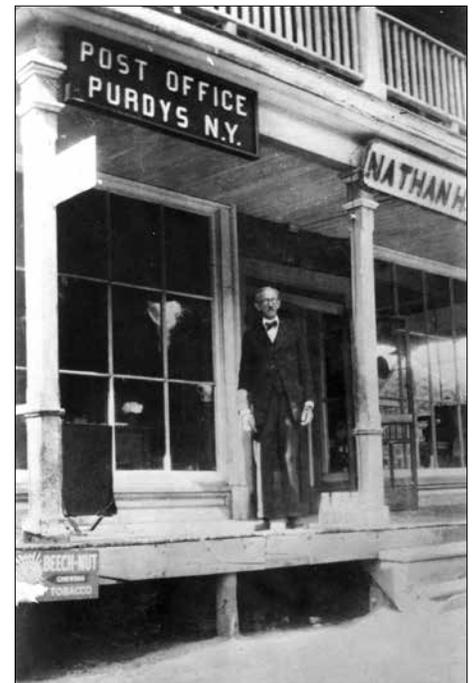


M. BONELLI © 2001

❧ Mekeel's Market ❧
8 Main Street
c. 1850

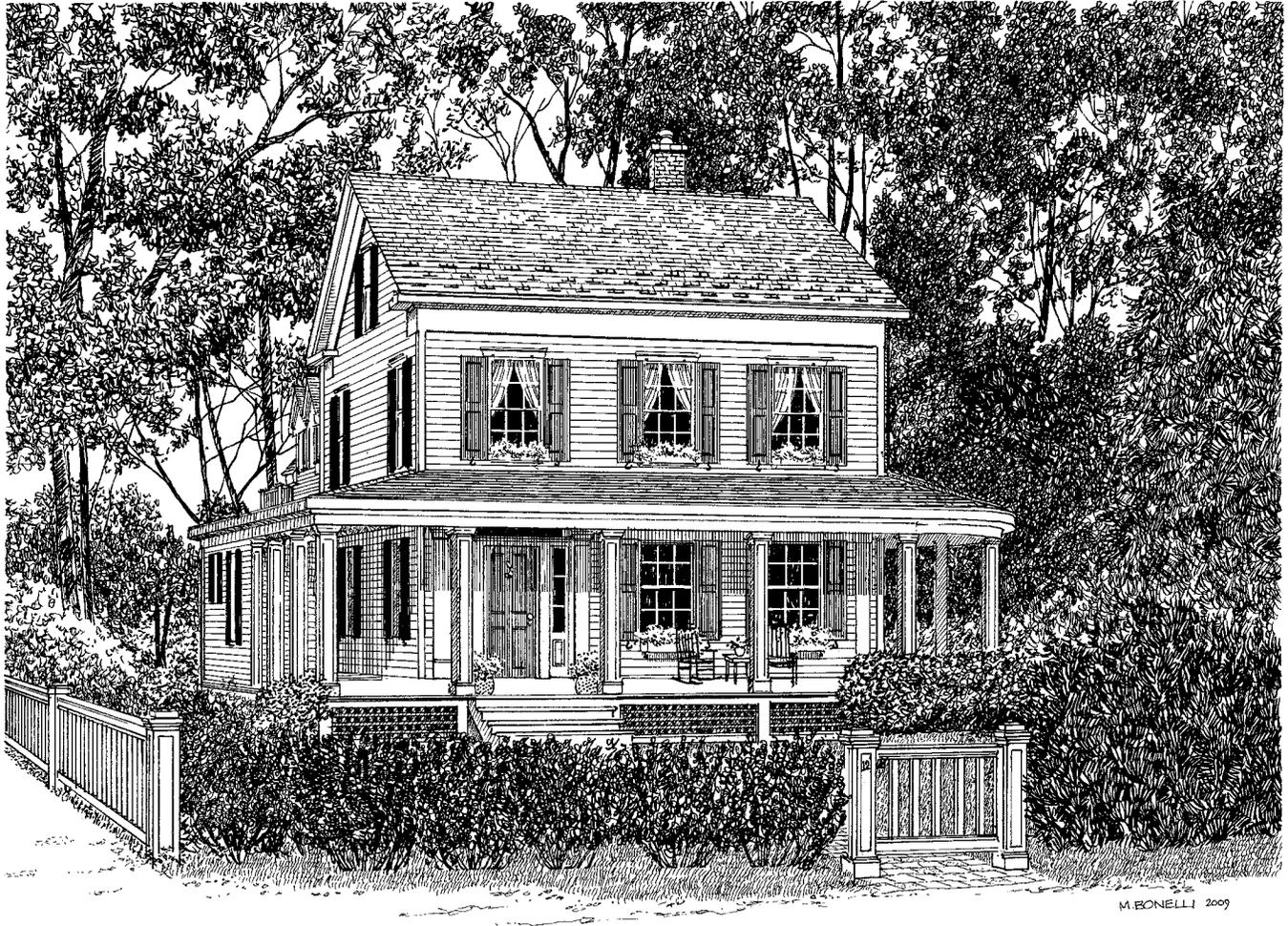
Ira Mekeel and his wife Mary ran this market and lived in the old village beginning in 1860. The building is clearly marked (Mekeel is misspelled Mckeel) just west of the railroad tracks on the 1872 Beers map of Purdy Station. Ira Mekeel was a trustee of the original Methodist Church (c.1886). When the land was taken for expansion of the reservoir system, Mekeel moved the market up the hill, and his family to Yorktown. It took six weeks to relocate the store, and it remained open for business the whole time, with shoppers entering by way of a gang-plank. Mekeel ran the store for many years, and then his son-in-law Nathan Minor became proprietor. Both Ira and Nathan were also postmasters. In 1933, Nathan's daughter Mary and husband Berkley Grey took over the business and changed the name to Grey's Market. Grey was Town Clerk for 18 years and proprietor of the store for 30. By the time Grey retired in 1962, the building had become one of the oldest commercial establishments in North Salem and had been owned by the same family for 100 years. The first floor has been home to several businesses since then with an apartment above.

This is a typical two story wood structure in vernacular Victorian style. An exposed gable roof faces the street and is three bays wide and four bays deep. In 1934, original plaster walls were covered with sheetrock. In 1935 the exterior was shingled. In 1982, the rotted porch roof was replaced with an exact replica of the original. In 1998, the owners undertook a major restoration replacing rotted balustrades, railings, porch flooring, latticework and windows; replacing asphalt siding of the building extension facing the street with wood shingles; renovating all interior spaces; and adding appropriate outside lighting. In 2016, new owners took on more restoration.



*Ira Mekeel's son-in-law
Nathan Minor (on porch)
was the second proprietor
of the store. NSTH*

PURDYS



❧ Margaret M. Mahoney House ❧
12 Main Street
c. 1830

This beautifully-restored home in Purdys was moved up from the old village in September 1900. Margaret Mahoney had purchased it at auction when the village of Purdy Station was condemned. She was then principal of the public school and, according to an item in *The Katonah News*, June 28, 1901, proved herself to be “a most capable and worthy instructor” and “an expert in children’s termperments (sic).” In 1908 she became the Purdys postmistress.

Based on the architectural style and type of building materials used (e.g., milled rather than hand-hewn lumber, factory-produced square nails used in combination with traditional mortise and tenon joinery), the house may safely be dated circa 1830, making it one of the few buildings already in Purdy Station when the railroad came in 1846. The building reflects traditional Greek revival vernacular style of the early 19th century.

After the house was moved, Margaret Mahoney extended the porch to wrap around both sides of her home and added a bay window facing the Titicus River. There were several owners after Mahoney died in 1945. In 2001 the current owners moved in and for the next three years restored the house to its 1900 condition. In 2006, they added a 6’x10’ bathroom on the west side and installed dormers on the roof above the kitchen. The architectural details of both additions accurately reflect the historic style of the home.



*The house in the
1930s, courtesy of
Debby Moore*

PURDYS



❧ Spur Street Cottage ❧

3 Spur Street
c. 1899

Purdys Hotel owners Nancy and Eli Reynolds and their ward John Manzini decided to build a Victorian style house and cottage in the new village on the hill when they learned that their hotel in the flats would have to be moved or torn down (see Purdys Hotel, p.70). Eli didn't live to see the new buildings, but Nancy and John moved into the new house about the time the hotel was moved. After Nancy died in 1913, the property had a string of interesting owners including horticulturist May Reynolds Miller who raised hybrid tulips and exotic daffodils. Sometimes the cottage was a rental, sometimes the owner's home.

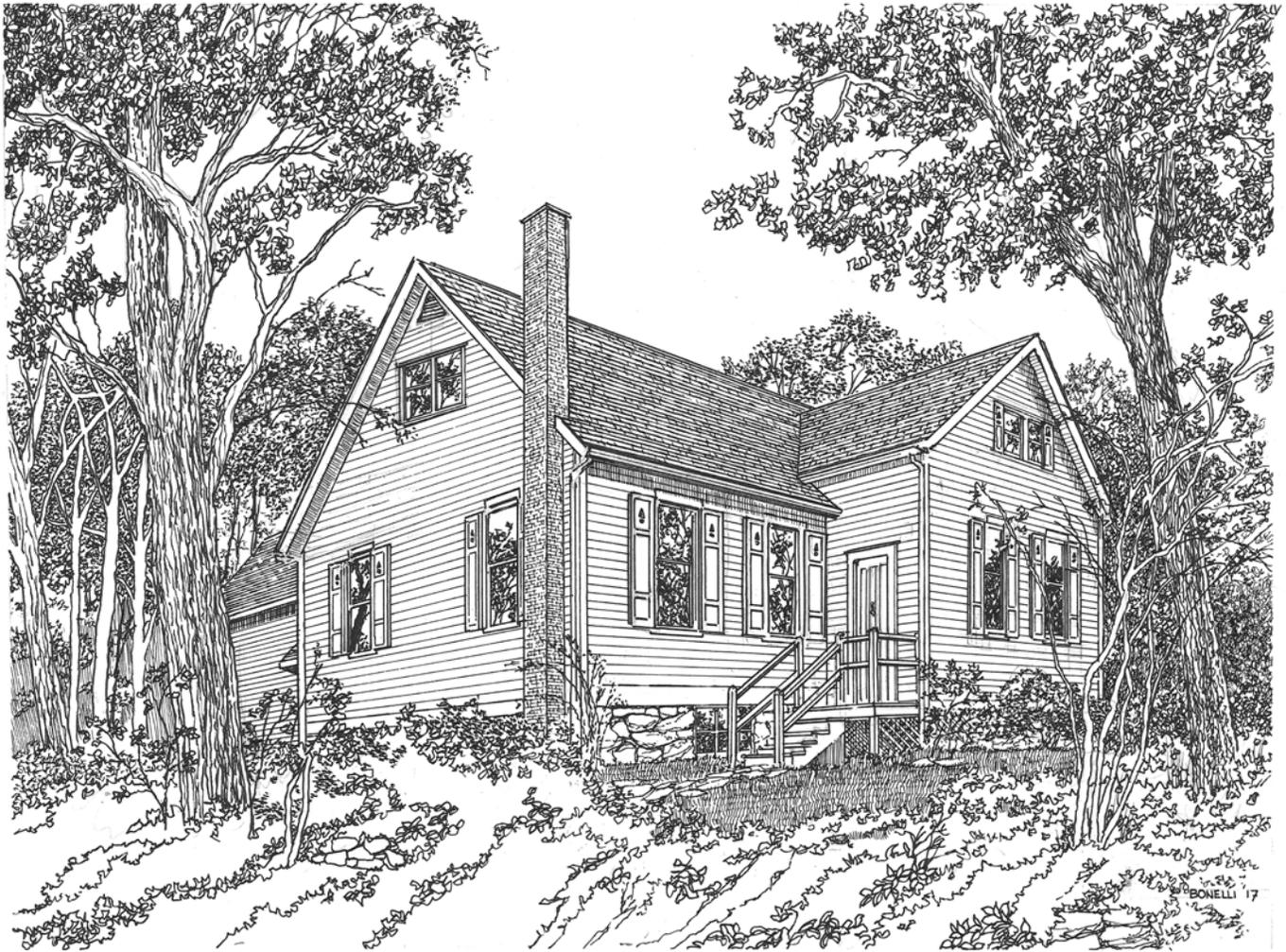
Unfortunately, by 2005 the cottage was suffering from neglect and was in poor shape. Worried that the building might be demolished, Foster Moore petitioned his mother to save the cottage which sat across the street from his great grandfather's blacksmith shop and the home where his grandfather, Merwin Voris, was born. The cottage was purchased, and the team of Martini and Moore began the rescue and restoration.

They restored and updated the cottage inside and out, preserving its classic fin de siècle architecture including elements of high Victorian and a touch of colonial revival. The rear of the cottage was extended to accommodate a family room, modern kitchen and baths. Redone with attention to period details, the exterior is framed by the original graceful porches and painted traditional Victorian colors to be consistent with similar homes of the era. Not wanting to detract from the interior's original plan or fine woodwork, Moore chose materials to carry the Victorian style and feel throughout the home.



*The cottage in
1980, courtesy of
Debby Moore*

PURDYS



❧ Purdys Schoolhouse ❧
6 Old Schoolhouse Road
c. 1893

In 1892, Isaac Hart Purdy sold a parcel of land in Purdy Station to School District #6 to erect a schoolhouse. An 1895 Westchester County map shows the building, in the shape of a cross, matching the form of today's structure.

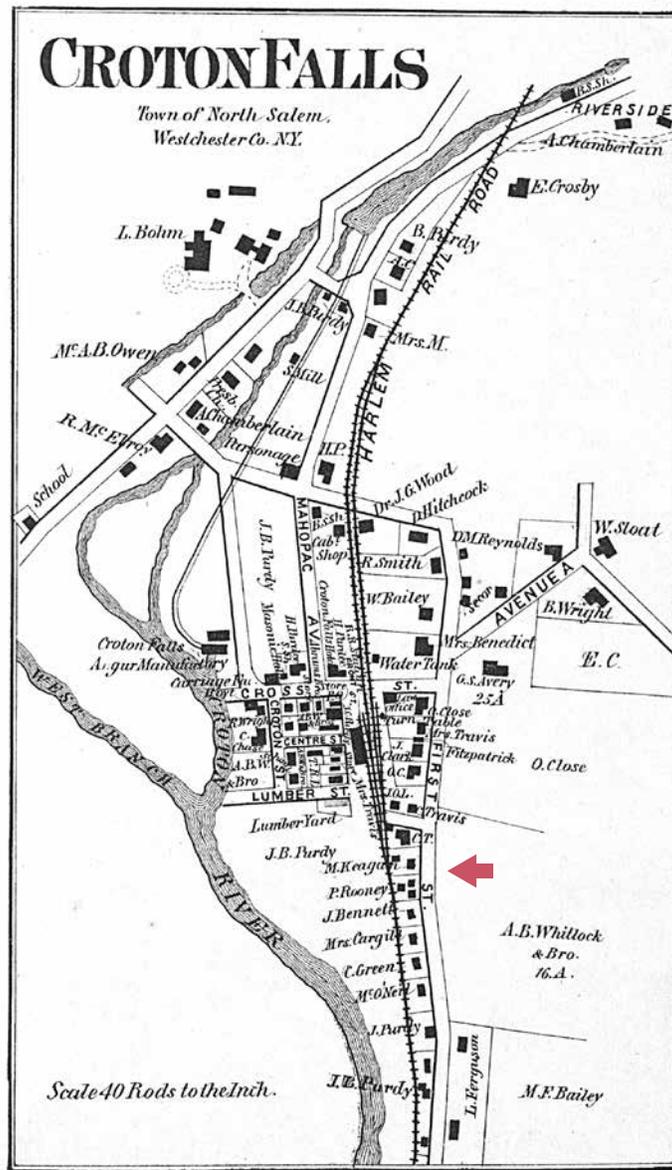
The article in the *New York Herald*, May 13, 1900, that announced the sale at auction of Purdy Station reports "last Tuesday, the village school was closed ... and it might pay the school commissioners of the metropolis who are complaining of insufficient accommodations for pupils to take a look at the Purdy Schoolhouse next Friday. It can be purchased for \$75, and this includes a good sound bell, desks, benches, blackboards, and all the paraphernalia for a school accommodating forty pupils."

On July 14, 1903, Isaac Hart Purdy sold land on what is now Old Schoolhouse Road to School District #6, and the cross-shaped structure was moved from the flats to its current location. The Schoolhouse appears again at its current location in a county map dated 1918. Longtime resident Merwin Voris, who attended the school in the 1920s, said in an interview many years ago that students entered the school through the backdoor where there were two areas for girls' and boys' cloakrooms. The rest of the building was one large room, with a rolling partition.

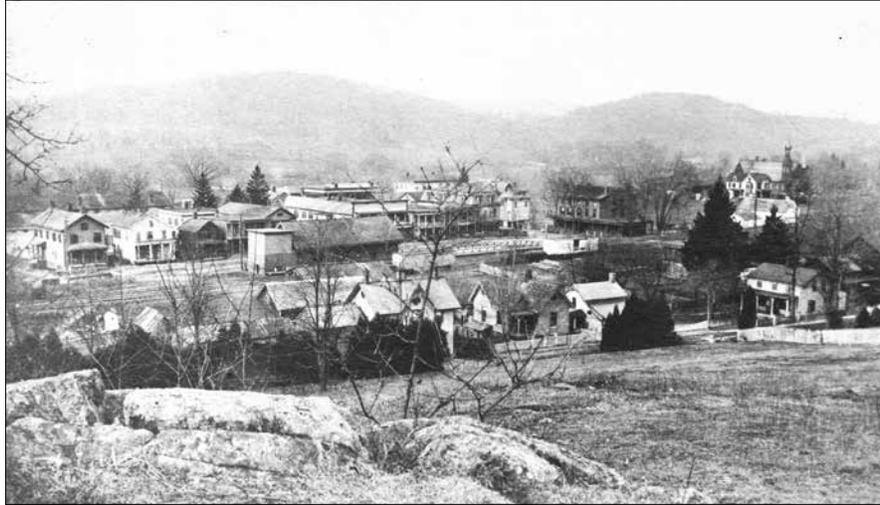
When primary schools on the west side of town were consolidated into the Croton Falls School in 1928, the property was sold, became a private home and was divided into four rooms. The next owner added a second floor apartment. And after 1989, the current owners connected the first and second floors into one home.



Students on the steps after the school was moved from the old village c. 1903. Courtesy of Debby Moore.



The village of Croton Falls. The arrow points to Route 22, formerly First Street. Beers, 1872



*The village
photographed
from Harvey
Birch Hill
c. 1890.
NSTH*

❧ CROTON FALLS ❧

Originally called Owenville, for early mill owner John Owen, the hamlet was renamed Croton Falls when the railroad came in 1846. As in Purdys Station, development quickly followed the arrival of the train. With the opportunity to ship directly to the city (replacing the tedious overland route to Sing Sing and the Hudson River), manufacturers built factories and mills to make everything from paper and lumber to toys and machine parts. Passenger service to and from the city meant hotels and shops would be needed for vacationers headed to Peach Lake.

Like his second cousin Isaac Hart Purdy, Joel Purdy saw opportunity. He had grown up in town, had become a successful businessman in the city and decided to bring his entrepreneurship home. Joel built many of the stores on Front Street, at least 14 houses, barns, stables, fac-

ories, a plaster mill and a grand house for his family: The 1864 House, now Prima Vera Restaurant. The little village thrived.

Then the expansion of the reservoir system took its toll. Homes on Routes 100 and 22 were lost, the Presbyterian Church was moved and many mills were forced to close. One Purdy mill had been leased to the Juengst family, when they lost access to water power in Somers for their Empire Sewing Machine Company. The Juengsts purchased water rights up the river for future mills and built homes on the east side of 22 north of town, including the one on p. 84. The Juengsts provided many jobs as they expanded their businesses to include machines for metal work and book binding. They also brought the first electric service to town.

🌿 Charles Decker House 🌿

Harmony Hill
8 Juengstville Road
c. 1904

Born December 24, 1873 in New York City, son of a hardware merchant and Civil War veteran, Charles and his family moved to Croton Falls in 1889. Charles was employed at age 16 by George Juengst & Sons and later the Higley Machine Company. At age 23 he was appointed clerk in the County Clerk's office and by 1897 he was Deputy County Clerk. This was the beginning of his political career. During that time he joined several county organizations and became a director of many.

C.J.F. Decker was Clerk of the Supreme Court from 1898 to 1926, leaving that position to serve as the newly-elected Westchester County Clerk. Decker was very active in supporting the war effort on the home front. He was also passionate about supporting the growth and the use of the automobile, recommending municipal parking and compulsory liability insurance laws. A great family man and community activist, well-known throughout the Republican Party, the county and state, he worked tirelessly into his seventies.



The house shortly after it was built. NSTH

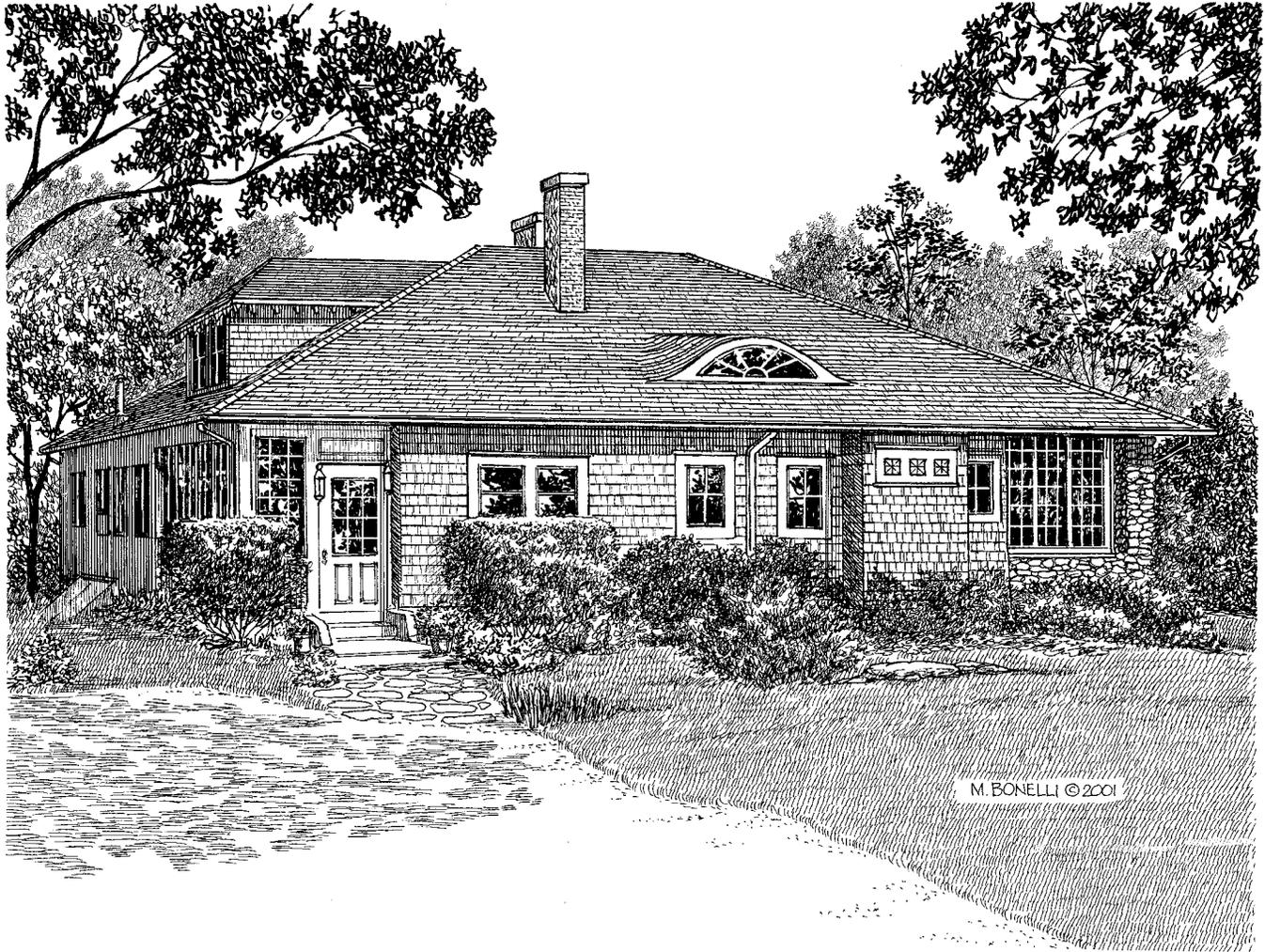
He married Clara Gregory in 1900 and they moved into their new home on what was then called Hillside Avenue (now Juengstville Road) next to George Juengst, Jr. Finding that home too small for their growing family (Madeleine, born in 1901 and Charlotte in 1908), the Deckers bought another home just a few hundred feet away known as “The Big House” in 1912.

This cedar-shingled residence in neo-Dutch colonial style dates to the early 1900s. The wrap-around porch at the front and sides took advantage of the hillside position overlooking the Croton River. The enormous entry, the high ceilings, the beautiful oak paneling throughout the house and the fireplaces speak to a late Victorian demand for comfortable family living on a grand scale. In the mid-20th century, dormers were added in the front and rear and clapboard siding was installed. In 1980, piano and harpsichord teacher Muriel Brooks purchased the house and named it “Harmony Hill.”

CROTON FALLS



CROTON FALLS



❧ Augustus Juengst House ❧

Crow's Nest
9 Juengst Road
c. 1912

Augustus “Gus” was the third son of George Juengst, Sr., a German immigrant who, with his brothers Peter and Louis, founded the Empire Sewing Machine Company in Amawalk, NY near the end of the Civil War. In 1871, when the Aqueduct Commission claimed the waters of the Muscoot River, the Juengsts no longer had enough water to power their mills. George then founded, with his sons George, Jr. and Charles, a machine shop in a building he leased from Joel Purdy in Croton Falls. George Juengst and Sons quickly expanded to larger buildings further up the river. With George, Sr. and Jr. the engineers and Charles the inventor, the family business flourished, producing finished tools and machines that were sent to all parts of the U.S. and abroad. With power from the river, they also founded the George Juengst and Sons Lighting Company in 1897, which produced and supplied the first electric power in the area. Gus was superintendent of the electric plant. In 1906 they extended their electrical service to Somers, then Lewisboro, Bedford Village and Cross River.

This American Craftsman or Bungalow style residence, built for Gus and his wife Harriet in 1912, features a shallow hip roof, with dormer, and widely overhanging eaves to form a porch at the front supported by heavy, stone pillars. Natural materials are emphasized: cobblestone, wood shingles, earth-tone colors, oak parquet floors, and ash, oak and cypress woodwork and wainscoting. There are built-ins, inglenooks, glass and lighting features in the Arts and Crafts style.

Unfortunately, Gus lived here for only six years before he was killed in a freak accident at the electric plant. He and a colleague had repaired a break, and his friend, Henry Myers, went to restore the power. Gus noticed a wire had fallen on an automobile. He didn't know his friend had turned the power back on and was electrocuted while removing the wire. The *Brewster Standard* reported on the inexpressible horror and sadness of the community. Harriet died the following year.



*View of the front door.
(The drawing is a
side view). Photo by
Richard Koser courtesy
of Maryjane Koser*

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- Westchester County Land Records
- And the local history buffs who add to our knowledge every day!

The Commission thanks the trustees of the North Salem Historical Society for their help with this book and for permission to reproduce many of their charming vintage photos, including the one on the back cover.

*In a simpler time — and when the mill pond on the Titicus River was larger — two unidentified women and a dog visited Balanced Rock.
From the Society's 1912 Keeler Album.*

