

SAMUEL THORN HOUSE (Site)  
HISTORY SHEET  
General Information

Name of Structure: Samuel Thorn House

Address: 364 Whiskey Hill Rd

Tax ID: (452400) 02-1-32

Atlas: 1852: "Sam'l Thorn"; 1859: "H.D.Thorn"; 1874: "H.G.Thorn"  
Junius Dist 8, Lot 4

When Built / Mason: Unknown

When Razed: Ruins eroding in 1964, status of ruins today is unknown

Why: Fire, 8/23/1960

Original Owner: Samuel Thorn —> (son) Hugh D. Thorn —>

Subsequent : Hugh's son (John Thorn) —> John's sons (C Hugh Thorn, Paul D Thorn)  
1920 sold to Harrison Wheeler, ...  
~1959 purchased by Gordon Mills; seized for unpaid loans 1984

Original Use: House

Subsequent: Late 1930's was run down and occupied by farmers (reference below)

Pictures : Yes

Description:

Structural: 1½ or 2-story house. Not enough remained of the ruins to discern structural details.

Masonry: Carefully cut, uniformly sized limestone quoins. Multi-hued lake-washed cobbles, many set in herringbone style on the lower 32 courses, 4/Q; rounded small water-washed cobbles on the upper story (likely another 5-6 quoin lengths to the roofline). Presumably the herringbone was on the side facing the road, although it was set very far off the road, too far to be appreciated. A limestone watertable was on the herringbone side. Remaining two photograph show less detail, although one closeup shows larger water-washed rounded cobbles of various colors were used on another part of the house (no quoins showing). The closeup shows V'd horizontal joints and pyramids on the verticals.

Per Dorothy Wells Pease, 1940-41 *"Cobblestone Houses of Upstate New York"* on Pg 30, item 1: "There is another Thorn house in Waterloo-Clyde Rd between Marengo and Junius. It is on a hill to the west of the road, a 2-story gable front and ell. It was faced with lake-washed stones, laid 4/Q, slightly herringbone on the front. The place is very much run down and is occupied by farmers from another land and culture."

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## Ownership Trace

Three photographs of a cobblestone ruins taken in 1964 reference the then owner Gordon Mills and location Whiskey Hill Rd north of CR-106. In tracing backwards from Gordon Mills to find the location on early maps, then forwards using the names on the maps to find subsequent owners, there hasn't been a single reference to a cobblestone house or even a stone house associated with these owners or this property. Yet we have pictures.

## Junius Gazetteer and Assessment Records

1852: Two Thorn houses on the west side of today's Whiskey Hill Rd north of CR-106. The one on the south (cobblestone) labeled Sam'l Thorn, the one north labeled W.L.Thorn. Samuel and William may have been brothers. Research yields no information about either of these men.

The following trace is exclusively for the Samuel Thorn property.  
By 1859 Hugh D Thorn is owner of record.

Gazetteer and business directory of Seneca County, N.Y., for 1867-8

[https://www.tcpl.org/sites/default/files/content/archive/Seneca\\_Directory\\_p167to232.pdf](https://www.tcpl.org/sites/default/files/content/archive/Seneca_Directory_p167to232.pdf)

Thorn, Hugh D., Junius, farmer 110 (south on lot #4, cobblestone)

Thorn, Wm L, Junius, farmer 160 (north on lot #4)

1853 Assessment Town of Junius, Seneca County NY

<http://seneca.nygenweb.net/junius/1853juniusassess.htm>

Thorn, D. Hugh — Military Lot 4 — 100 acres (south on lot #4, cobblestone)

Thorn, Wm — Military Lot 4 — 100 acres (northerly lot)

Thorn, Sam'l (listed but no lot# or acreage)

## Cemetery and Ancestry Records and Newspapers

Hugh D Thorn dies, 1885

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111853818/hugh-d-thorn> (1822-1885)

findagrave site has nice writeup and obituary notice which confirms he was son of Samuel Thorn.

Obit: AUGUST 12. 1885.-ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

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"Hugh D Thorn died at his residence in Junius 8/8/1885, 63. He had been an invalid several years. His father SAMUEL THORN was one of the earliest settlers."

GRAVESTONE:      HUGH D. THORN  
                         1885  
                         AE 63 YEARS.  
                         ELEANOR, HIS WIFE  
                         1888  
                         AE 61 YEARS.

<https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/hugh-d-thorn-24-9m1lp1>

**Hugh D Thorn (1822-1885)** - Born in New York on 1822 to Joel Thorn and Rachel Laing. Hugh D. Thorn married Eleanor Reynolds and had 2 children. He passed away on 8 August 1885 in Junius, Seneca County, New York, USA.

Parents (Joel Thorn, Rachel Laing Thorn); (Spouse: Eleanor Reynolds Thorn, 1827-1888);

Children (Susie Thorn and **John L Thorn**).

NOTE: Joel Thorn is not correct. Per Hugh D Thorn's gravestone, Eleanor was his wife. Tracing forward the ancestry information aligns with newspaper reports based on Eleanor as wife and John as son. Joel Thorn (d.1866) is buried in Marengo Quaker Cemetery and findagrave website has no information, just a picture of his gravestone with only his name on it.

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1885 - 1771.PDF (8/12/1885)

**Hugh Thorn**, an old and greatly respected resident of the town of Junius, died of consumption at his home, near Ely's Corners, on Saturday.

<https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/john-l-thorn-24-cln72n>

**John L Thorn (1854 - 1898)** - Born in New York on abt 1854 to Hugh D. Thorn and Eleanor Reynolds. John L Thorn married Martha **Jennie** Decker and had 2 children. He passed away on 24 Apr 1898 in Junius, Seneca, New York.

Parents (Hugh D Thorn 1822-1885; Eleanor Reynolds 1827-1888)

Spouse (Martha **Jennie** Decker 1852-1941)

Children (**Charles Hugh Thorn**, **Paul Decker Thorn**)

Newspaper Auburn NY Daily Bulletin 1898 b - 0788.PDF (4/25/1898)

**John Thorn** died yesterday at his home in the town of Junius. He was 44 years of age.

Subsequent to John Thorn's death ...

John's widow **Jennie** and sons, **C Hugh Thorn** and **Paul Thorn**

Clyde NY Times 1906-1908 - 0807.pdf (5/28/1908)

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"Mrs Jennie Thorn and son Hugh moved recently from Seneca Falls back to the Thorn farm near Marengo."

Geneva NY Daily Times 1912 Oct-Mar 1913 Grayscale - 0041.pdf (10/22/1912)  
Real Estate Transfers ... ; C. Hugh Thorn and another to Paul D. Thorn, Junius, \$1;

Clyde NY Times 1911-1912 - 0701.pdf (10/31/1912)  
Paul Thorn has purchased his brother's interest in the Hugh Thorn farm.

These brothers sold the farm and moved to California (apparently taking their mother along).  
<https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/martha-jennie-decker-24-clngdm>

**Martha Jennie Thorn (1852-1941)**

Born in New York, USA on 25 Apr 1852 to George Decker and Martha Magee. Martha Jennie Decker married John L Thorn and had 2 children. She **passed away on 26 Mar 1941 in Los Angeles, California.**

<https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/charles-hugh-thorn-24-1k4m51f>

**Charles Hugh Thorn (1891-1958)**

Born in Junius, Seneca, New York, USA on 11 Oct 1891 to John L Thorn and Martha Jennie Decker. Charles Hugh Thorn married Nina D Closs. He **passed away on 29 Jun 1958 in Los Angeles.**

Parents (John L Thorn 1854-1898 & Martha Jennie Decker Thorn 1852-1941)

Spouse (Nina D Closs 1890-1976)

<https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/paul-decker-thorn-24-clpvxk>

**Paul Decker Thorn (1877 - 1962)**

Born in New York on 17 Sep 1877 to John L Thorn and Martha Jennie Decker. Paul Decker Thorn had 5 children. He **passed away on 9 Nov 1962 in Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California.**

Paul auctioned off farm animals, implements, and household goods in preparation for selling the farm and moving to California. In 1920 he sells it to Harrison Wheeler.

Clyde NY Times 1916-1918 - 0434.pdf (3/14/1918)  
<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%202/Clyde%20NY%20Times/Clyde%20NY%20Times%201916-1918.pdf/Clyde%20NY%20Times%201916-1918%20-%200434.pdf>

NOTE: 1½ miles is just about exactly where the Junius/Dublin was.

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AUCTION SALE — **Paul Thorn** will offer for sale Monday March 18 at 10:30 the following property on the premises known as Hugh Thorn farm 1½ south of Marengo —  
Seven horses, 13 head cattle, 7 shotes, 3 brood sows, mower, Johnston corn harvester, Johnston Harvester, ten-foot rake, drill, disc harrow, Spring Tooth harrow, smoothing harrow, roller, hay tedder, riding and walking cultivators, plows, 2 hay racks, lumber wagons, heavy bobs, buggy, log boat, harness, ladders, whiffletrees, cross-cut saw, fanning mill neck yokes, grain bags, apple press, hay, oats, and corn, hens, range, round hook, heater, three-burner oil stove, chairs, lambs, beds, and other household effects.

The Paul Thorn family departs for California.

NOTE: Found no research indicating when C Hugh or mother Jennie moved to California; ancestry records indicate they all died in died in Los Angeles, CA.

Clyde NY Times 1918-1921 - 0325.pdf (7/1/1920)

Mrs Paul Thorn is making farewell visits in this vicinity before leaving for Los Angeles CA. The Thorn family will start Thursday for their new home making the trip in their automobile.

Geneva NY Daily Times 1920 Feb-Jun 1920 Grayscale - 0195.pdf (3/1/1920)

"Archie Bruchim and wife will work for Mr and Mrs Harrison Wheeler the coming season and live on the **Paul Thorn farm which Mr and Mrs Wheeler recently bought.**

Waterloo NY Observer 1946-1948 - 0768.pdf (4/24/1947)

Mr and Mrs Harrison Wheeler have sold one of their farms, the former Thorn farm, to Edward Bastian.

NOTE: Nothing in research after this point as to ownership and use. However, in tracing back from the Mills family, Gordon Mills purchased the farm ~1959.

FIRE destroys house, 8/23/1960.

Waterloo NY Seneca County News 1958-1960 - 0721.pdf (8/25/1960)

JUNIUS — Fire of undetermined origin at 2:08 AM today gutted the interior of an unoccupied cobblestone house 1½ miles north of Dublin. No estimate of damage is available. The house was known as the old Lasher place.

NOTE: 1½ miles is just about exactly where the Junius/Dublin was (likewise just about the same distance from Marengo where the auction was held). Could find references to Lasher place / house but no one named Lasher can be traced to this area. Presumed to be an adjacent property.

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Geneva NY Daily Times 1960 Jul-Sep 1960 Grayscale - 0638.pdf (8/23/1960)

Junius — "A house on the William Lasher farm, formerly owned by Harrison Wheeler, was burned. The house on the Thorn farm near Marengo was also destroyed by fire."

So, here we run out of tracing forward—with the exception of the 1960 fire. Nowhere in researching did I ever find the Thorn house referred to as a cobblestone house.

However ...

File found in Cobblestone Society Museum's archives included a spotted map accompanied by a list of cobblestone structures in Junius. This list was made in the 1960s by John S. Genung with the entry:

"#6 Ruin of house. Burned and gutted house. Some wall standing. On lane between county road 107 and Wheeler road west side of 107, north of the Junius Presbyterian church which is at the corner of 106 & 107. Owned by Gordon Mills".

A second file containing Robert Frasch's color slide collection includes a slide dated JUL64 annotated: "Ruin Rd #107 Seneca County".

Present satellite image shows an unmarked lane at 364 Whiskey Lane (Rt. 107) to a house deep into a field to the west. This matches perfectly the depiction on the 1874 atlas.

Now, working back from the Gordon Mills reference in the 1960s.

Implication is that Gordon Mills purchased the property in 1959.

Geneva NY Finger Lake Times 1984 Feb 1984 - 0014.pdf (2/1/1984)

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2011/Geneva%20NY%20Finger%20Lake%20Times/Geneva%20NY%20Finger%20Lake%20Times%201984%20Feb%201984/>

<Geneva%20NY%20Finger%20Lake%20Times%201984%20Feb%201984%20-%200014.pdf>

**Junius farmers' property seized**

JUNIUS — Sharon Mills was home alone Jan 14 when Seneca County sheriff's deputy came to her door at 9 a.m. and handed her an order of seizure.

The papers informed Mrs Mills that all of the equipment, grain, tools and livestock she and her husband, Gordon, had acquired in their 25 years of farming were being seized.

Their property was seized by Production Credit Association, and agricultural finance cooperative that lends money to farmers, accepting their equipment and products as collateral. The company's dramatic and unusual action was prompted by the Mills' failure to repay more than \$200,000 in loans, according to legal papers associated with the seizure. ... Mrs Mills said she read the blue-covered seizure order

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and then noticed that tractors, trucks and cars had been parked along two sides of the farm at Birdsey and Whiskey Hill roads ... she watched helplessly as officials of the lending company directed neighboring farmers, who had been hired for the job, to haul away the family's livelihood.

'They took every bolt, nut, screw, and nail from the shop,' Mills said. 'They even took the flat tires.' For the next 3 days everything that could be moved from the farm was carried off, including some machinery that belonged to other farmers ...

The third generation of his family to operate a farm in Junius, Mills and his wife starting farming 25 years ago ... he was 18 and full of dreams.

Production Credit loaned him operating capital, Mills said, and he bought a 108-acre farm with a loan from Federal Land Bank ... The Mills' acquired more land until they owned their present 475 acres. ... They operated a dairy farm first. But as the industry modernized, Mills said, he realized he'd have to make a major investment or quite dairying. Seven years ago he became a cash crop farmer. ... "

The farm *may* have belonged to his father, Kenneth Mills, with the son purchasing it ~1959. No records found of any transaction selling the farm.

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1956 a - 3993.pdf (9/12/1956)

"Boy Wounded Fox Hunting. Waterloo, Sept 11 — Reported in critical condition tonight in Edward Barber Hospital in Lyons is 14-year old Gordon Mills, son of Mr and Mrs Kenneth Mills of the Whiskey Hill Road ... suffered a shotgun wound in his right chest and shoulder at about 10:30 last night while riding a tractor with two companions in search of a fox ... It is believed the 12-gauge double-barrel shotgun accidentally discharged and injured Mills from a possible jolt of the tractor ..."

After Gordon Mills lost his farm, the property was eyed for another purpose, but dismissed. We know because property records document the house on the site was built in 1980 and there's no air strip there.

Geneva NY Finger Lake Times 1986 May 1986 - 0913.pdf (5/22/1986)

JUNIUS — "Four possible airport sites told ... the former Gordon Mills farm at Country Road 106 and Whiskey Hill Rd ..."

Regardless, we know a cobblestone house once existed on this property, it was burned and the ruins were left to the elements in the 1960s. This property is now a home site in much the same footprint as indicated on the 1874 atlas.