

Thomas Rooke House — Is It or Isn't It??

Just south of Lyons Village

QUESTION? Cobblestone house or not and where was it? We do have a photograph—an unidentified photograph from ~1940. We have a somewhat ambiguous 1955 statement suggesting that a cobblestone house was built by Tom Rooke which was within a half mile from the Westphal house and was a "complete ruin".

BEST GUESS CONCLUSION —>

See COBBLESTONE DATABASE for links to both references

Reference: "*The Cobblestone Houses of Upstate New York*", Dorothy Wells Pease, is a survey listing the cobblestones buildings she located in 1940. Includes corresponding photographs.

HINT #1: Among Pease's cobblestone photographs is one that is unidentified and does not match up with any known existing cobblestones and remains a mystery. In her accompanying 40-page document she lists the buildings along with terse descriptions and locations in the order in which she was encountering them on her travels. In the Lyons section (p.28) is 7-word statement: "**The Midbury house is near Lyons also**". She has no photograph identified as Midbury house. Given her trajectory, the photograph and the vague location in her report seem to align, more-or-less, with information we get from our other source (Verlyn Klahn). This aligns also with the 'Rook' notations on historical maps from 1853, 1858 (and by 1904 map it was owned by Jas. Dunn).

DWP Path —

27.09 ARC-4: 5598 Pardy Smith Rd

28.01 LYO-5: 1961 Brandt Rd

28.02 GAL-8: 8841 Lock Berlin Rd

28:03 LYO- : Unk - "Midbury House"?

28:04 LYO-4: 824 Pre-emption Rd then space and moves on to Ontario

Extensive research on the surname Midbury and sound-alike names yields no particularly relevant information. There was a local merchant named Amasa M. Medbery who may somehow be associated with this house, although there is nothing to substantiate a connection.

Reference: "*Cobblestone Structures of Wayne County*", Verlyn Klahn, Hoffman Essay Contest Winner 1955

HINT #2: In Verlyn Klahn's description and background of the Westphal house (his Lyons #8) he leaves the impression that three cobblestone structures were built within ½ mile proximity to one another; however his wording is imprecise as to whether or not the Tom Rooke house to which he refers was actually of cobblestone or not. He describes the house as "a complete ruin" and as having "stood a half mile east of Rt. 14 near the Clyde river and near the Waterloo road which is now the roadbed of the Fall Brook railroad". "T. Rook" does appear on 1853 and 1958 historic maps approximately in the target location. If Klahn's Tom Rooke house is not cobblestone it would have been just one of many area houses and seemingly wouldn't have warranted being singled out in Klahn's cobblestone structures documentation.

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So we have two MAYBEs here, with both trending towards PROBABLY, but neither can be definitively substantiated. We'll take what we have and make our best guess.

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WHO WAS THOMAS ROOKE?

Tom Rooke was the son-in-law of a wealthy landowner who owned 1,048 acres adjoining Lyons village on the south. "Judge Daniel Dorsey ... In 1797 he visited this section, and purchased of Captain Williamson 1,048 acres of land adjoining the village on the south. The next year he moved hither his large family ... Judge Dorsey died in 1823, aged sixty-five years ... The tax or assessment roll dated October 9, 1802 ... Judge Daniel Dorsey, 1,048 acres (between Clyde River and Alloway), \$9.53 ..."¹

He appears to not have been newspaper noteworthy except for one thing²:

RAN AWAY from the subscriber on the 18th inst., a bound apprentice, by the name of John W. Hannis. All persons are forbid harboring or trusting him on my account, as I will pay no debts of his contracting.

THOMAS ROOKE.

Lyons, May 23, 1834.

Thomas and Delia [nee Dorsey] Rooke rest in South Lyons Cemetery

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/81004268/thomas-rook> (2OCT1794 - 27FEB??)

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/81004269/delia_rooke (22MAR1785 - 18MAR1867)

married 1814

Thomas and Delia married in 1814. Daniel Dorsey died 1823 and his estate was distributed as to terms of his will. 60 acres were conveyed to Thomas Rooke by deed bearing the date of 24th May 1826 and being the same premises conveyed by Thomas Rooke and Delia his wife to James Dunn by deed dated 2nd August 1866.

Nearly a century later his descendant, [JAMES DUNN](#), sold the property to Lyons Central School District for the purpose of building a Junior-Senior High School on the site. The [results of a title search](#) were published so that voters could review the details on what it was they were approving or disapproving to purchase. The details are microscopically spelled out [here](#).

Long story short, after several months of wrangling about the appropriateness of the Dunn site, a different site was chosen, after which the [Lyons Chamber of Commerce](#) became interested in

¹ Landmarks of Wayne County, New York; © 1895; George Washington Cowles; <https://archive.org/details/landmarksofwayne01cowl/page/n263/mode/2up?q=Dorsey>

² Rooke ran announcements like this at various times when necessary: <https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%202/Lyons%20NY%20Western%20%20Argus/Lyons%20NY%20Western%20Argus%201834-1844.pdf/Lyons%20NY%20Western%20Argus%201834-1844%20-%200127.PDF>

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the Dunn site for possible industrial expansion. It was [advertised](#) and ultimately approved. The site was purchased and subsequently developed as intended, as it remains today.

This addresses the “Tom Rooke” property and what happened to it after it left his ownership. Klahn tells us the Rooke house was still there when he was doing research for his 1955 Hoffman Essay, albeit in ruins. No information has been found about when the structure was finally razed or to confirm that it was cobblestone.

It is likely that this house was the tenant house referred to in the ‘to rent’ ads, which presumably was the ‘T Rook’ house located near to the Clyde River and railroad tracks as shown on the 1858 map.

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WHO WAS MIDBURY? (actually [MEDBERY](#))

There is no record of any Midbury family in Lyons or in adjacent townships. After extensive searches on variants of the name we find the family name, Medbery (itself spelled variously).

Amasa Medbery was a merchant who owned a grocery and produce store and operated it for 68 years. He worked right up to the day (actually night) before his death in 1912—88 years old.

Newspaper accounts give his address as being on Water St. There are several other Medbery's listed in the '1867-1868 Street Directory for Town of Lyons', some of which are his children.

It appears the Medbery family may have settled early on in the Saratoga Springs area as there is a family cemetery in Greenfield, Saratoga County: <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2437768/medbery-cemetery>.

[Obituary & Relationship to Saratoga Medbery Family](#)

New York NY Sun 1912 Grayscale - 1438.pdf (3/7/1912)

Amasa Martin Medberry

LYONS N.Y. March 6—Amasa Martin Medberry, engaged in the grocery trade here for fifty-nine years, was found dead in bed to-day. He was born at Greenfield, Saratoga county, September 11, 1823, and came to Lyons in 1853. He attended to his store alone up to last night. One son, one daughter, a brother, Nathan Medberry of Saratoga, ... survive him.

No references have been found to link the name Medbery to what we refer to here as the "Rooke House". As the house appears to have been tenanted out, the Medbery name may have gotten associated with it in that way—or not.

PROBABLE CONCLUSION

Yes, the Dorothy Wells Pease unidentified photograph and her report reference to "The Midbury house is near Lyons also", which lacks a corresponding photo, probably match up. The structure in the unidentified photo is not remotely like any cobblestone in Lyons and area, and the sequence in which it is listed in her report, would suggest the same location Verlyn Klahn describes for the Rooke house. This conclusion is based solely on piecing together what we have, although we lack verifiable proof that the 'T Rook' house on old maps was of cobblestone or that it's the same as the 'Midbury' house in the photograph.

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Appendix 1: James Dunn

James Dunn (of 1866) appears to have been a farmer. He was not noteworthy from the newspaper perspective and little can be found about him.

However, we do know James Dunn, descendant of the James Dunn cited in the 1866 deed transfer, sold the property to Lyons Central School District in 1952 with lifetime use of the structures on the site.

The 1866 James Dunn

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262271413/james_dunn (1832-1905)

His son is John R. Dunn (father of "our" James Dunn) (Jno. Dunn 1904 map)

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262279093/john_r_dunn (1862-1912)

"Our" James Dunn

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262279555/james-lewis-dunn> (1900 - 1957)

[Lyons NY Republican 1957-1959 - 0106.PDF](#) (11/21/1957)

James Dunn, 57 Dies At Farm Home

James Dunn, 57 years old, Lyons RD 1 was found dead in his home ... natural causes. ... A sister, Frances Adams, died last January at the Dunn home. ... He lived on the Dunn farm which was purchased as a site for the Lyons Junior-Senior High School. The Dunns held a contract with Lyons Central School District 1 to occupy the property as long as they lived. Born on the Dunn property Oct. 23, 1900, Mr. Dunn was a son of John R. and Matilda Wolfe Dunn, and he always lived there. ... Burial was in South Cemetery.

[Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1957 b - 2323.pdf](#) (11/16/1957)

JAMES DUNN

LYONS, Nov, 15 — James Dunn, 57, of Lyons RD 1 was found dead in his home this morning. ... Wayne County coroner issued the certificate given cause of death as due to natural causes. Mr. Dunn for several years was a New York Central Railroad crashes employee. The Dunn farm is the one bought by the Lyons Central School district some years ago as the site for a proposed new school. The proposal was later defeated and the school agricultural department now uses part of the land for instruction work. Mr. Dunn's sister, Frances Adams, died there under similar circumstances last January. The two had life use of the residence during their lifetime under the school's purchase contract. Mr. Dunn, son of John R. and Matilda Wolfe Dunn, was born on the farm October 23, 1900 and always lived there. He is survived by his wife, Agnes E. Dunn ... Burial will be in South Lyons Cemetery.

[Lyons NY Republican 1910-1910 - 0111.pdf](#) (4/8/1910)

House to Rent — Eight room house with garden, one mile south of Lyons, near West Shore Railroad. Inquire of Mrs. James Dunn.

[Lyons NY Republican 1924-1924 - 0159.pdf](#) (4/25/1924)

FOR RENT — Single Tenant House, 9 rooms with garden. Inquire James Dunn.

Appendix 1: James Dunn

Lyons NY Republican 1952-1952 - 0078.PDF (3/13/1952)

The board has acquired an option on the 105-acre James Dunn farm south of the village, as a side for the school.

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The Medbery Family

Syracuse NY Post Standard 1912 - 1007.PDF (3/6/1912)

A.M. Medbery Dead — Lyons' Oldest Active Merchant Passes Away.

LYONS, March 7, 1912 — Amasa M Medbery died yesterday morning at his home on Water street after a short illness. Mr. Medbery was the oldest active merchant in Lyons. Although suffering from a severe cold, he had been in his store and retired at the usual time last night. Mr. Medbery was born in Greenfield, Saratoga County, September 11, 1823. On November 14, 1823 he married Matilda Wright. For 68 years he had been in business in Water street. Mr. Medbery was a member of the Universalist Church. He is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Andreas of Wilkes-Barre PA; one son Martin Medbery of this village, and one brother Nathan Medbery of Canada.

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031445/1912-03-07/ed-1/seq-5/> Wayne County Journal — Amasa M Medbery, probably the oldest business man in Wayne county, died at his home in Lyons yesterday. He was born in 1823 and had been in business in that place about 68 years.

Directory of the Town of Lyons 1867-1868

Medbery, Amasa M., (A. M. & D. D. Medbery)

Medbery, A.M. & D. D., (Amasa M. and Daniel D.) groceries, produce and apple dealers

Medbery, Daniel D., (A. M. & D. D. Medbery)

1867-1868 Street Directory for Town of Lyons

Medbery A. M., grocer, Water n Congress Hall, h do

Medbery Clara Miss, school teacher, bds Water n Congress Hall

Medbery Elmer, clerk, Water opp Congress Hall, bds Butternut n High

Medbery E. C., bus driver, bds Butternut n church

Medbery E. E., farmer, h Butternut n Church

Medbery Fred L., clerk, bds Butternut n Church

Medbery Ida Miss, clerk, Water n Congress Hall, bds do

Medbery Jennie Miss, bds Butternut n Church

Medbery Louisa, widow, h Butternut n Church

Medbery Martin, clerk, Water n Congress Hall, bds do

Medbery William, bottler, h Elmer Medbery Martin, clerk, Water n Congress Hall, bds do ...

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn88074192/1897-04-28/ed-1/seq-3/> 1897

"Dr Henry H Watrous, a well known citizen of Lyons, died Saturday morning at 7 o'clock at the residence of A.M. Medbery on Water street, aged 60 years ..."

Syracuse NY Herald 1908 - 0408.pdf (1/24/1908)

Lyons, Jan 24 — Mrs Matilda Wright Medbery died yesterday afternoon at the home of her husband, Amasa M Medbery in Water street, after a protracted illness. She is survived by one son, Ames M. Medbery, and one daughter, Mrs M.C. Andreas of Wilkes-Barre, PA ...

Appendix 2: Amasa M. Medbery

Note: Ames M. Medbery is Amasa M. Medbery

Son: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/89580386/amasa-martin-medbery> (1868-1932)

Medbery is tombstone spelling (Lyons Rural Cemetery)

Amasa Medbery, Sr. was brother to "Uncle Nate" whose death was reported in the [Saratogan on 1/17/1918](#):

" 'Uncle Nate' Dead, Past Century Mark

Nathan Medbery, better known as "Uncle Nate", who passed the century mark on July 26 last, died ... Mr. Medbery was born July 26, 1817 on the family homestead at Porters Corners, a member of a family of fourteen members. He was the last of the family, although all lived to remarkably old ages. His mother died at the age of ninety-nine, two brothers ... were in the nineties at their death; and three sisters attained long lives. He was a bachelor, living on the old home farm nearly all his life. It was not until eighty[-seven] that he retired ... Uncle Nate traced his ancestry back centuries. ... One of Uncle Nate's forbears was Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island. From Rhode Island, Mr. Medbery's fathers came to this section as pioneers and settled. ..."

The [Hudson Valley Times](#) reports: "The centenarian has lived a most active and useful life, much of which he says was composed of too hard work. He worked on a farm when farming was not conducted in the scientific manner of today and knows what manual labor means."

Nathan Medbery, 'Uncle Nate', in his Last Will and Testament explicitly mentions nephews Edgar E Medbery and Martin Medbery (A.K.A. Amasa Martin Medbery, Jr.) residing in Lyons N.Y.

[Saratoga Springs NY Saratogian 1918 - 0448.pdf](#) (3/7/1918)

... Edgar E Medbery, residing at No. 95 Phelps Street, Lyons, N.Y.; Martin Medbery, residing at Lyons, N.Y. ... last Will and Testament of said Nathan Medbery deceased.

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