

William Roberts' Blacksmith Shop (Site)

HISTORY SHEET

General Information

Name of Structure: William Roberts' Blacksmith Shop

Address: North side of Gulf Rd, 2nd property west of Tower Rd

Parcel ID: (563801) 36.7-4-37

Atlas: 1853, 1866: "B S Shop"; 1902: "B S"

When Built/ Mason: 1940

When Razed: Unknown

Why: Unknown

Original Owner: Unknown

Subsequently: William Roberts; Norman Strothers

Original Use: Blacksmith shop

Subsequently: Garage

Photographs: Yes (front and left side elevations)

Description:

Design Details: 1 story, long side faced rd. Left edge of wide double door was centered along the width of the frontage with one window to its right and two to its left. On the right gable end was one window. All windows had 12-over-12 double hung sashes. Window lintels and sills appear to have been of limestone as were the quoins. The BSS had a hip roof. The opening for the door was from ground to roof.

Masonry Details: Fieldstones of various colors, set 3/Q on both front and side. On front elevation, Horizontal mortar joints more apparent from midway up, cannot discern them below that level in the photos. Cannot discern vertical joint mortar detail. On the side the horizontal joints were strong, much more visible.

O v e r v i e w

Little information has been found about the BSS or its owners. The maps suggest it was conceived as a BSS from the beginning and continued to be used as such into the 20th century. We don't have details on the owners or how it was used after the death of William Roberts in 1915. In 1937 the shop was purchased with the intent of using it as a garage. The last known photograph was taken ~1940 and shows the shop in seriously deteriorating condition—likely beyond repair.

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R e f e r e n c e s

Dorothy Wells Pease, in her *Cobblestone Houses of Upstate New York*, 1940-41 writes: "An interesting old blacksmith shop at Wyoming shows the cobblestone construction where the wall has broken away. The rather coarse field cobblestone stones are laid three rows to the quoin." Her photograph shows the cobblestones falling off much of the wall to the right of the door. There's a pile of stones on the ground at the base of the front-facing quoin line. Between the quoin line and the window is the void where the structural stones, too, have fallen away. The erosion is in various states such that it is revealed that the entire structural wall was comprised of larger fieldstones of various shapes and sizes.

<http://genealogytrails.com/ny/wyoming/history.html>

History of Wyoming County, New York

Source: History of Wyoming Co., New York, F.W. Beers & Co., Copyright 1880

"... In 1816 Silas Newell built a woolen factory and carding mill on the site now occupied by William Reddish's house, on Church street. He built a grist-mill in 1817, on the site now occupied by the **stone blacksmith shop on Gulf street**. The building (grist-mill) is now used for a **wagon shop, and stands at the south side of the blacksmith shop.**"

Note: This helps to isolate which building, on the somewhat ambiguous maps, is the cobblestone.

Wyoming NY Wyoming Reporter 1913-1914 Grayscale - 0560.pdf (4/15/1914)

William Roberts & Son are about to install a gas engine, power bandsaw and other labor-saving machinery. To give more room, a 20x24 addition will be built on the blacksmith shop."

Warsaw NY Western New Yorker 1914-1916 - 0580.pdf (7/15/1915)

The blacksmith shop of William Roberts and Son has changed hands. R. W. Jones now has the management of affairs.

Warsaw NY Western New Yorker 1914-1916 - 0825.pdf (12/9/1915)

William Roberts died in his home in this village Thursday morning, Dec 2nd, after a long illness. Mr Roberts was the son of Amelia and William Roberts and was born in Longsutton, Lincolnshire county England, Feb 3d, 1844. At that place he married Miss Elizabeth Ann Knight, Dec 15, 1869. They came to America in August 1871 and to Wyoming, where Mrs Roberts had relatives. Mr Roberts soon became interested in the business life of the village. He purchased the "Old Stone" blacksmith shop and did most satisfactory work until failing health compelled him to retire. Mr Roberts owned and used a fine camera and many were the beautiful photographs of the surrounding country which he took and mounted himself with

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exquisite care. Mr Roberts is survived by his wife, one son, William ... burial in the Wyoming cemetery."

Note: Wyoming Cemetery, Wyoming, Wyoming County

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/94702396/william-m-roberts> (1844 - 1915)

Warsaw NY Wyoming County Times 1936-1939 - 0414.pdf (5/20/1937)

"Norman Strothers has purchased the old stone blacksmith shop on the north side of Gulf street. Years ago this was the William Roberts shop. Mr Strothers will open a garage there."

Leroy NY Gazette News 1938-1940 00327_1.pdf (2/22/1940)

"On the garbage truck one morning recently I saw a sled bound for the village dump. It did not look very old, but its days of usefulness were over. The sight took me back in memory to the sleds upon which we used to coast down the 'Pinnacle' hill in Wyoming. Sturdy sleds, they were, some of them having come down from fathers to sons. Many of them were made right there in Wyoming, the woodwork being fashioned by David Keith, the wagon maker, and the runners and iron bracing applied by William Roberts whose blacksmith shop was next door. No gaudy colors or flowery lettering adorning these sleds—for the most part they were painted in solid grays or browns and they were as sturdy as they looked ..."

Leroy NY Gazette News 1959-1961 - 0452.pdf (8/11/1960)

"... then, too, we had to spend time and use ingenuity in perfecting some of the equipment with which we played ... I will ever retain fond and grateful memories of William Roberts who ran a blacksmith shop and of David Keith, a woodworker on wagon wheels and boxes and many other things fashioned in wood. If they didn't exactly love us, they certainly were kind and tolerant and aided us in exchange for our running errands or performing some little chores a boy could do about their shop."

Warsaw NY Wyoming County Times 1962-1965 - 0090.pdf (11/1/1962)

"The Stone Shop In Middlebury Erected In 1840

The following talk was given by Mrs Max Tillotson about some of the village's early history. It is known "Newell's Settlement", which was the name of this community, must have included in its 400 acres that were acquired in 1809, so we of the sites of the building now located on Gulf Street and an 1866 map indicates that a so-called "Stone Shop" was erected on the site of the Silas Newell grist mill (the latter having been erected in 1817). History records a blacksmith shop operated in those early days by Phillips and Dixon and soon there after, blacksmiths in the village by the names of Davis & Tillotson, William Tillotson and son, and William Roberts without identifying their places of business.

I do, however, have a picture of "The Old Stone Shop" erected in 1840 with William Roberts and son as proprietors and probably those of you of the older generation will

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remember the wagon shop of David Keith next door to the east. ... Products of the shop also included metal runners for sleds, braces for barns and other buildings, iron tires to be shrunk onto the wagon and carriage wheels made by Dave Keith next door, and many types of hinges and straps ... "Word of Mouth" also gives us the information that the first pieces of fire-fighting equipment, a hook and ladder truck for the Wyoming Hook and Ladder Company, was fashioned and completed by William Roberts and David Keith.

But the "Old Stone Shop" erected of cobblestone with two sky lights in the roof, builder unknown, ox-shoe suspended over the door and wisteria clustered over the windows is now only a memory, is architecture forgotten, and its trades no longer in demand."

The article finishes with a poem: The Village Blacksmith Shop

Under a spreading grove of trees
That grew at the foot of a hill
There too a Village Blacksmith Shop
Not far from the old grist mill.

Its cobblestone walls were covered with vines
Wisteria, prettiest of all
And woodbine gave it splendor
When it turned red in the fall.

When the double doors were opened wide
The forge was plain to see
And besides it stood Will Roberts
A might smithy was he.

The children coming home from school
Paused at the open door
Then sauntered in to sit on the bench
Placed on the wide-planked floor.

T'was fun to watch him form a shoe
And fit to the horse's hoof
To see him pump the bellows
That threw the sparks clear up to the roof.

They knew this smith to be their friend
From his works, he had time to pause
For if he could help a little child

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T'was considered a good cause.

Ofttimes he'd fix the wheel of a cart
Or make and fly a kite
Which he'd staple to the old shop door
Once it was put to flight.

And to the east, not very far
Was Keith's woodworking shop
Where a man or child might bargain
For a wagon wheel or a top.

The smithy gave him a helping hand
Though his was a different trade
Spokes were fashioned, iron shrunk
Wagons and sled were made.

The blacksmith had a score of friends
He made many a heart rejoice
For lending a helping hand each day
Seemed to be his choice.

So thanks to him—a worthy friend
For the kindness that he wrought
May we sometimes try to remember
The lessons that he taught."